

SUMMARY

During the period January -August 2017, Rambøll Management Consulting has conducted FoU-project no. 164003 "The municipality as a learning arena" on behalf of KS. The main issue of the project is as follows:

"How can collaboration between the municipal sector and universities/university colleges increase quality of service through increased relevance and quality in health and welfare education?"

The aim of the project has been to identify the characteristics of municipalities and universities / university colleges which through collaboration ensure quality and relevance in study programmes. Furthermore, we have considered how laws and framework, as well as costs associated with having students in practical training have an impact on the collaboration and how the participants assess the results of the collaboration. The project is limited to collaboration regarding programmes within medicine, nursing and social work studies.

The project has been carried out through document studies, register data analysis and qualitative interviews with employees and students in five municipalities and associated universities / university colleges.

Key findings and conclusions

Collaboration agreement and cooperation arenas

The project shows that formalized collaboration is central to ensuring that municipalities and the university- and university college sector (UH-sector) prioritize cooperation. It is an advantage to prepare cooperation agreements between the parties as well as establish formalized cooperation arenas.

- ***The size of the municipality, distance to the UH-institution and centrality are of great importance for collaboration***

Large and urban municipalities are more inclined to have collaboration agreements with the UH-sector than smaller and rural municipalities. Furthermore, the project shows that distance to the UH-institution is of great importance for formal collaboration.

- ***The collaboration agreements have major inequalities, both in terms of theme and degree of detail***

Review of collaborative agreements with universities and /or university colleges in the five municipalities show variations in content and scope. Some are general and include several subjects, while others only deal with practical studies. Most of the overall collaboration agreements relate to (student) practical training as well as research and development, but there are major differences when it comes to how detailed the collaboration is described, including description of objectives and meeting structure.

- ***Research and professional development more often part of the collaboration agreements***

Findings from interviews in the five municipalities indicate that collaboration on research and development between municipalities and UH-institutions has increased in recent years, as it is or will be included in the collaboration agreement between the municipality and the UH-institution.

- ***The municipalities believe that the collaboration agreements have a positive impact***

Findings from the KS` employer monitor ("Arbeidsgivermonitoren") show that the collaboration has led to study programmes being developed in line with the sector's needs. Other important results are increased supervisor skills and an increase in the number of study places for practical training. Increased collaboration on research and professional development has only become a result over the last couple of years.

- ***The municipalities participate in formalized collaboration arenas, to a varied degree***

The project shows that, in part, there are large variations between the municipalities as to how many joint collaboration arenas they have with the UH-institutions. This varies from a one-day meeting per year to larger collaborative projects involving both parties. Findings from the interviews indicate that big municipalities have the closest and most extensive collaboration, whereas for smaller, rural municipalities, collaboration depends on commitment and priorities, as well as future labour needs. Inter-municipal collaboration arenas allow smaller municipalities to be seen and heard by associated UH-institutions. The project shows that many municipalities lack formalized arenas of collaboration. This appears to be one of the main reasons why the municipalities do not collaborate with the UH-sector on issues that might be relevant.

Content and results of the collaboration

- ***Increased focus on collaboration and more municipal perspectives in education***

The project indicates that there is ongoing and increasing collaboration between the UH-sector and the municipalities. When it comes to the content and results of collaborating, there are variations between municipalities. However, it is agreed that increased collaboration helps ensuring the municipal perspective in study programmes, although there is room for improvement.

- ***The UH sector is responsive to needs of the municipalities***

Informants from the five municipalities give the impression that the UH-institutions are responsive to the municipality's needs and wishes. However, several from the municipalities state that some of the challenges lie with themselves as they do not prioritize dialogue and presence on the collaboration arenas with the UH-sector.

- ***The municipalities want more collaboration on learning outcome descriptions***

The project shows that the municipalities are not involved in developing learning outcome descriptions, but they want more collaboration on this. They also see the need for these descriptions to be better adapted to the needs of the municipalities. The UH-institutions, on the other hand, include the municipal perspective in learning outcome descriptions in several ways, such as through the representation of municipalities in working groups and by recruiting staff with experience from the municipal health sector.

- ***Research and professional development take place on the UH institutions' premises***

The project shows that the municipalities lack the needed competence and resources to conduct research and development work. If the municipalities are to prioritize research and development, there is a need for both cultural change and increased competence.

- ***Shared positions are considered a good way of safeguarding the municipal perspective in the UH-institutions***

Several of the UH-informants state that shared positions are an important source of competence sharing and a good way of safeguarding the municipal perspective in the UH-sector.

Collaboration on practical studies

All the five municipalities included in the project receive students for practical training, i.e. students who have practical training in the municipality as part of their studies. Four of the five municipalities included in the project have an overall agreement on practical training between the municipality and the UH-institution (s), whereas in one of the municipalities there are only agreements between the UH-institution and each workplace.

- ***Coordination of practical training requires a lot of resources from both UH-institutions and municipalities***

The project shows that administration of practical training in the municipalities is very resource-intensive for the UH-institutions and much more resource-intensive than administering practical training in the specialist health sector. In addition to collaboration with the municipalities, a lot of the collaboration takes place with the actual work place that receives students. The municipalities also use a lot of resources on administering practice studies, especially large municipalities receiving a large amount of students.

- ***The municipalities do not take overall responsibility for the practice of medical students in general medical services***

In the case of medical students, the project shows that the UH-institutions do not collaborate with the municipal administration, but make direct contact with the individual general practitioner's (GP) office. This is due to the fact that the municipality has no responsibility for education, and that the municipalities cannot manage the general medical services. The UH-institutions, however, want the municipality to take greater responsibility for the practical training of medical students. It is resource-intensive for the UH-sector to coordinate practice at GPs as this requires follow-up of the individual GP at the individual GP-office.

- ***Supervision of practical training leads to financial loss for general practitioners***

The project suggests that compensation for GPs who receive medical students is far lower than the income they receive for patient consultations. This makes it even more difficult to recruit GPs as supervisors for medical students.

- ***Dissatisfaction with different types of funding for practical training within municipal and specialist health services***

The Coordination reform and constantly new tasks for municipal health and care services is one of the arguments for strengthening the framework for practical training in the municipalities, including legal requirements and funding. This is expected to ensure the capacity and quality of practice arenas in the municipalities.

- ***Practical training is an important recruitment channel for the municipalities***

Several municipalities are struggling with recruitment to positions within health care services and believe practice studies is an important recruitment channel for graduates.

- ***Practical training contributes to professional development in health care services***

Having students in practical training contributes to professional development for the supervisor, the work place and the municipality as a whole. Practical training periods give municipalities' access to new theoretical knowledge and professional curiosity. This is sharpening and stimulating - for both supervisor and the work place.

- ***Increasing formal qualifications for supervisors is important, but difficult***

The municipalities state that it is often too expensive and resource-intensive to provide formal supervisor education, despite the fact that the UH-institutions offer both shorter and longer supervisor training and education. Several also offer decentralized study programmes.

- ***Professional guidance from the UH-institutions is resource-intensive, but important***

The project shows that the UH-institutions are concerned that the supervision can be better and more efficient. Several are setting up routines for video follow-up when practice periods are conducted far from the university/university college, which is important in order for rural municipalities to receive students for practical training.

What distinguishes municipalities that collaborate well with UH-institutions?

- ***They formalize collaboration through contracts and collaboration arenas***

The municipalities are committed to formalizing the collaboration in agreements /contracts. The collaboration agreements must contain all the topics the municipality wants to collaborate on with the UH-sector. In addition, the municipalities take active steps to ensure formalized collaboration arenas. In this way they have a forum where they are heard.

- ***They are proactive and look beyond the challenges***

This project shows that management and employees in municipalities where they work well together also work actively and proactively to find solutions to long-standing challenges.

- ***They are focused on raising competence in the municipality***

Municipalities that collaborate well with UH-institutions are focused on increasing competence, among other things, by recruiting staff with master's and PhD degrees. Common for these municipalities is that management prioritizes more than just the daily operation of the municipal health and care service.

- ***They recognize the municipality as an interesting place to work***

Municipalities that collaborate well with UH-institutions recognize that the municipal health service is an attractive workplace with challenging and exciting tasks. Management is committed to knowledge-based work to safeguard the municipality's new tasks and know that this requires collaboration on research and development. In addition, they are concerned that the quality of practical training should be good, as practical training is an important recruitment channel.

- ***They want to be more than a research object***

Municipalities that collaborate well with UH-institutions are keen to be a premier supplier for health and care research. They require that research they contribute to is relevant to the municipality. Management in these municipalities actively assesses what research the municipality will contribute to in order to ensure good resource utilization.

- ***Collaboration with the UH-sector is rooted at the senior management level and known to the entire municipal organization***

The municipality's leadership prioritizes collaboration with the UH-sector. The collaboration is rooted at the top level, but much of the real collaboration happens further down in the organization. Management is furthermore concerned that the services should know the value of the collaboration and how the collaboration will provide better and more efficient services in the future.

- ***They have cultural understanding and willingness to change***

The municipalities are aware of major cultural differences between municipalities and UH-institutions. Some municipalities have employees in management with experience from the

UH-sector. Knowledge of both sectors provides a good foundation for collaboration. Changing the cultural differences is a priority and one is aware that this is a long-term effort.

What distinguishes UH-institutions that collaborate well with municipalities?

- **They have anchored the collaboration at the top level and they collaborate at the appropriate level**

The project shows that UH-institutions that collaborate well with the municipalities have anchored collaboration at senior management level through an overall collaboration agreement and that collaboration is a priority. Most of the operational collaboration, however, happen further down the organization, at the most appropriate level, and is usually formalized through separate additional agreements.

- **They facilitate shared positions**

The UH-institutions prioritize shared positions. In this way, employees receive direct experience from the municipal health care services which they can bring in to work at the UH-institution.

- **They are actively seeking research projects in the municipal health care services**

UH-institutions that collaborate well with the municipalities are working on adapting the projects so that they are relevant to the municipalities. This is done through dialogue on topics and common development of issues and research questions.

- **They are focused on interdisciplinary cooperation**

UH-institutions that cooperate well with the municipalities want the education to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration. In addition, it is important that they address topics that are relevant to both larger and smaller municipalities, including problems relevant for only smaller municipalities.

- **They include lecturers from the municipal health care services**

UH-institutions that work well with the municipalities want employees from the municipal health care services to hold lectures for students and they work closely with the municipalities on this.