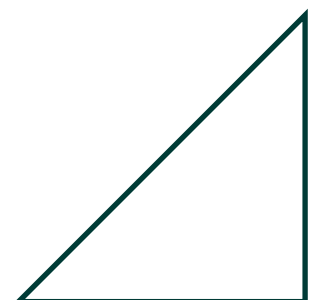


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**National management training programme for
kindergarten directors. Final report**





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Kindergarten directors are required to have a pre-school teacher qualification or other equivalent pedagogical qualification. There is no formal requirement for management competence, but a dedicated management training programme was established in 2011. This is the final report from the project examining the national management training programme for kindergarten directors. In the report, we summarise key findings and provide some recommendations.

The study consists of three sub-studies: the first examines the characteristics of the study programmes offered by different providers (Bråten et al., 2022). The second investigates to what extent the management training provides the skills and tools that directors believe they need in their daily work to manage and develop their kindergarten (Svalund et al., 2022). The third sub-study explores whether external factors and framework conditions, such as size and ownership, impact on the extent to which directors benefit from participating in the management training programme (Svalund et al., 2023).

We applied a methodological approach that combines different types of data: a survey sent to all kindergarten directors in Norway, annual surveys of participants in the management training programme in the period 2018–2020, qualitative interviews with providers of study programmes, as well as written documentation and qualitative interviews with a small sample of directors.

Variation within a set framework

For the period 2020–2025, seven educational institutions offer the management training programme: UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Queen Maud's College of Early Childhood Education (DMMH), Norwegian School of Economics (NHH), OsloMet, Norwegian Business School (BI), the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) and the University of Agder (UiA). These providers include both traditional professional education institutions (DMMH, USN) and more management-oriented institutions (BI, NHH). Based on a document analysis and qualitative interviews with administrative staff and/or academic coordinators at the seven institutions, variations were found in academic profiles and approaches. Among the seven providers, NHH stands out with a more general or strategic management orientation. BI also has a clear management approach but with a stronger emphasis on professional expertise. The professional education institutions DMMH and USN have a more distinct kindergarten focus, while the management training programme at UiA has a notably stronger political science perspective.

In terms of the organisation of the programme, however, we do not find significant differences between the providers. The programme is structured around in-person sessions, with a strong emphasis on practical assignments. Much of the coursework is in the form of group work. More variation was found in terms of working methods and the analytical tools that are emphasised.

Management training and kindergarten management

Most participants who have completed the management training programme for kindergarten directors feel that the programme has given them a stronger foundation to reflect on their own leadership practices and has enhanced their ability to develop their organisation and further improve the kindergarten.

We find that the choice of institution impacts on what participants gain from the training, and that this aligns with the academic profile of each institution. Those who completed the training at NHH are somewhat more likely than others to agree that the training has provided a foundation for *reflecting on their leadership practices*, which may be linked to NHH's emphasis on general and strategic management. In contrast, participants at DMMH and BI are more likely to feel that the training enhanced their ability *to further develop the kindergarten*. DMMH, in particular, takes a kindergarten-specific approach, with a stronger focus on the everyday realities of kindergartens than NHH and UiA.

Those who have completed the management training programme for kindergarten directors at UiA are more likely than others to report that the training has changed how they relate to their surroundings. This includes their relationships with owners and politicians, as well as how they address the kindergarten's role in society. This is in line with UiA's emphasis on the kindergarten as a societal institution. The institutions' varying academic approaches to the training programme appear to shape the directors' perceptions of their own competence in their subsequent work.

We also examined whether, and to what extent, the management training provides the skills and tools that the directors themselves feel they need in their daily work to manage and develop the kindergarten as an organisation. A key finding is that those who have completed the management training and other leadership courses feel significantly better equipped during times of change compared to those without any management training. No such difference was observed in terms of the pedagogical work within the kindergarten. We interpret this to mean that pedagogical work and responsibilities are well covered in the pre-school teacher education programme.

In terms of accounts and finances, a significantly higher proportion of those who have not completed any leadership training find this challenging. Meanwhile, those who have completed the management training express a desire for more expertise in this area. This may reflect the increasing complexity of the financial work in kindergartens, as well as the fact that it is the area where directors generally feel they have less competence than the position or role requires.

Management training and the significance of external factors

We investigated whether the directors' assessments of the management training were associated with organisational characteristics of the kindergarten, such as ownership and size. The key finding in the evaluation is that the directors view the knowledge gained from the management training as both valuable and useful for their daily work. Factors like ownership and size appear to have little impact on directors' perceptions of the usefulness of the training. It seems that the management training is effective regardless of whether the directors work in small, large, private or municipal

kindergartens. Where we have identified a difference is in medium-sized kindergartens (22–29 employees), where directors more strongly express that what they have learned about parents' rights, accounts and financial management, and how they relate to their surroundings, has been particularly valuable. We attribute this to the fact that directors in medium-sized kindergartens have more extensive and demanding tasks than those in smaller kindergartens. It may also be that these directors have less access to support and assistance compared to directors in larger kindergartens. This could mean that the knowledge and tools learned in the management training are especially relevant for directors in medium-sized kindergartens.

Management training programme and careers

We also examined the significance of the management training in a career perspective. The main picture that emerges among directors who have completed the management training programme is that it is considered important for their career trajectory. This could mean that it is viewed as useful in the more comprehensive and demanding day-to-day work at the kindergarten, or it might indicate that having leadership training has become necessary to even secure a position as a director. Participation in the programme also provides participants with a network that could be valuable in the future. We find that many directors become acquainted with other directors through the training programme, and that these contacts are important, particularly in the first few years after the programme. The survey shows that younger directors place greater emphasis on the importance of the management training for their career path, and that the choice of institution impacts on how they consider the education in the context of their career.

Conclusion and recommendation

The directors feel more confident in their leadership role after completing the management training. The education fosters reflection on their own leadership practices and has improved their approach to leadership. The academic approach of the institutions shapes the training programmes and influences the directors' practices. The recommendation is to maintain and further develop the management training programme.

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