

charge, while kindergartens have parental fees. Private education, regulated also by the *Private Education Act* of 2003 (with the last amendments of Jan, 1, 2014), is still not very common, particularly not on primary and lower secondary level.

Education is organised in a lifelong learning perspective to meet changes in society constructively. This perspective is also the framework for the current National Curriculum (LK06 - *Kunnskapsløftet*, Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006, with latest amendments Aug. 2013). Transitions between the different levels in the education system have been defined as a challenge, and have in recent years been a point of focus in the government initiated ESL work NyGIV ('New Possibilities').

The Norwegian White Paper 22, *Motivasjon – Mestring – Muligheter* ('Motivation-Mastery-Opportunity') from 2011 (Meld. St. 22 2010-11, Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2011) was especially addressing lower secondary education, and is focusing on how to give curriculum and subjects on this level a more practical and varied approach to theoretical knowledge in order to reduce ESL through enhancing teaching and learning, making students in lower secondary school more motivated to learn, through experiencing a more 'practical, varied, relevant and challenging' education (National Research Council, 2003, Smith et al, 2005, Willms et al, 2009, Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010, Slavin, 2010, Dæhlen et al, 2011).

However research reports from different educational contexts also show that the ESL challenge in fact can start much earlier than when students actually drop out, and that it subsequently is the responsibility of people engaged on all levels of education (Sabine Wollscheid, *Språk, stimulans og læringslyst - Tidlig innsats og tiltak mot frafall i videregående opplæring gjennom hele oppveksten*, NOVA-report 12/2010). In accordance with this knowledge the RECIPE team from Karmøy decided to focus on both pre-primary and secondary education when deciding on case study targets. The initial case study plan for the two REC supported programs chosen is in the following first shown in a survey table and thereafter the actual progress is described individually in more detail. Initially we aimed to perform three case studies (ref. our State-of-Art report, 2014). After an internal evaluation of these we decided to focus on the two studies represented in this report.

In Karmøy the REC services are organised as part of the DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE – MUNICIPALITY OF KARMØY. The services are spread on two main bodies, *The Educational Support and Advisory Centre* (OKE – Staff) and *The Educational and Psychological Counselling Service* (PPT). The two case studies reported in this paper are initiated and supported by both of these.

| WHAT | WHY | HOW |
|--|---|--|
| <p>The Incredible Years in Kindergarten We want to investigate the effect of this programme. Does it work? How? Why?</p> | <p>The Dep. Of Education and Culture in Karmøy has been and is presently supporting this training programme for the staff in Kindergartens.</p> <p>We started the programme in august 2011 and 10 kindergartens have participated.</p> <p>The Dep. wants to analyse and evaluate the programme in relation to ESL prevention.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Interviews (staff) in 2 pilot kindergartens 2) Questionnaires (staff and parents) in these kindergartens 3) Interviews with leaders in schools having children from the kindergartens participating in this programme |
| <p>Vågen Learning Centre What has happened to former students? What works? Where? Why?</p> | <p>The alternative school system in Karmøy has been working according to the same intentions and ideas for approx. 25 years. Through a case study like this the Dep. of Education and Culture and the school itself will receive more evidence to back up the choices of methods and activities.</p> <p>Lately there has also been experienced an increasing need to know more specifically what has happened to former students, to be able to answer frequent questions about this.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Current students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Questionnaires b) Interviews (teachers/students) c) 2-3 Narratives (?) 2) Former students' status in education, work and life <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Statistics on those we can find b) 3-5 narratives about representative students |

1.2. CASE STUDY 1 - "The Incredible Years"

1.2.1 Description

The Incredible Years (TIY) is a series of interlocking, evidence-based programs which promote positive relations between children and between children and adults. Some of the programs are universal preventive, others are indicative preventive and the rest are facilitated for intervention of behaviour, emotional and social problems among children. The long term outcomes are intended to be reducing conduct disorders, criminal activity and drug and alcohol problems as well as increasing academic achievement. The overall aim in all this is reducing school dropout rates. You may find more details about the program on www.incredibleyears.com

The municipality of Karmøy has chosen to put emphasis on these programs:

1. The School- and Kindergarten program (described in 2.1.1 below)
2. The Kindergarten program: "The Dinosaur School" in small groups 3-6 years
3. The Parents' Program. Pre-school 3-6 years

1.2.1.1 The School and Kindergarten Program

This is a universal preventive program aimed at children in the age group 3-8. The program is aimed at kindergartens and schools, i.e. all staff members in an institution will receive in-service-training in the program. The staff at the schools/kindergartens will, through the program, qualify in how to handle serious behaviour problems. The aim is to develop professional class- and group management skills, thus providing employees with the ability to create positive inter-relations as described above, bringing children into a learning environment, preventing unrest and negative behaviour and handling these problems when they arise.

The basics of the program consist of 6 in-service-training days, 7 hours each, with an interval of a month between each training day. The program starts with a focus on how to build relationships between staff and the children and between kindergarten and parents. This is followed up by focusing on strategies on how one gets the child's attention, how to keep the child's attention, how to use the staff's skills to regulate the behaviour of the children and how to be calm in transitional or unstable situations.

The program also focuses on motivation. In this respect the staff is trained how to use praise in a purposeful way and how to use systems of reward in helping children to learn. Staff members receive support in how to develop plans of behaviour. These plans are continuously revised throughout the course, adapting necessary consequences with regards to serious behaviour and violence. The course is very practical using short film sequences, discussions, practical discussions and group exercises.

1.2.2 Implementation

Two advisors from the staff at the Department of Education and Culture, one from the *PPT section (Pedagogical-Psychological Advisory Office)* and one from *The Educational Support and Advisory Centre (OKE – Staff)*, were initially trained in the TIY program. In the next instance these two ran courses for staff in kindergartens as well as being advisors for the kindergartens. The two were followed up with frequent guidance from the University of Tromsø.

Initially in 2011 three kindergartens and two schools were offered to begin with the TIY program selecting some of their staff to participate. From 2012 the University of Tromsø demands full intervention, i.e. that everyone in the staff must take part in the program. The schools therefore had to leave the program because they were not able to put aside other projects for all the teachers. Several kindergartens have received, after their own wish, continuous in-service-training in TIY.

In 2015 15 of 35 kindergartens in Karmøy have completed the course led by five certified course leaders/advisors, three from PPT and two from OKE - Staff. Having completed a year in-service-training kindergartens were followed up by having four network meetings a year to implement the program.

The implementation phase is obligatory and runs over two years.

In the autumn of 2014 three kindergartens began with "The Dinosaur School" for the age group 3-6 years. These kindergartens have earlier completed The Kindergarten Program. Members of staff, together with the advisors, were trained by UiT prior to starting the program. The kindergartens now run the groups themselves with support from external advisors three times per half year.

The Parents's Program aimed at parents of pre-school children aged 3-6 years also began in the autumn of 2014 supported by two external advisors. Six couples of parents met every week for 18 weeks with the aim to strengthen their skills as parents.

1.2.3 Aims and methods

We wanted to investigate the effect of the TIY program. Does it work? How? Why?

1. Interviews (staff) in 2 pilot kindergartens
2. Questionnaires (staff and parents) in these kindergartens
3. Interviews with leaders in schools having received children from the kindergartens participating in this program

After an evaluation in the RECIPE case study group and OKE staff it was agreed that the results from interviews described in '3.' would not be reliable or valid enough because of the time aspect. It will be too early to be able to determine that any change in child behaviour is due to the TIY program in kindergarten. The OKE staff will follow this up through an evaluation report later.

1.2.4 Findings

When finishing in-service-training the participants take part in an extensive evaluation. They evaluate the whole program, the strategies used in the programme and the advisors.

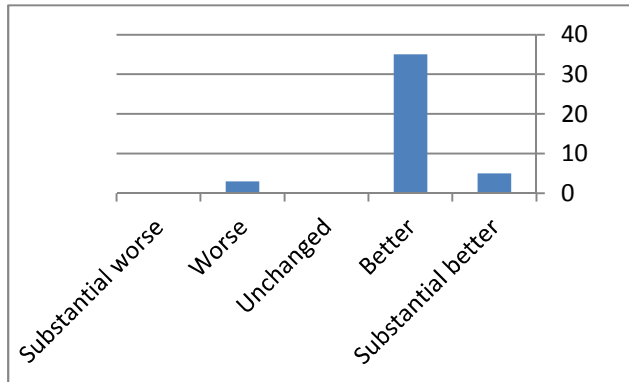
We have decided to look into the results of this evaluation for two of the kindergartens taking part in the first group of in-service-training. Kindergarten 1 had 17 respondents and kindergarten 2 had 27

respondents. One is run by the municipality and one is private. They are representative for the kindergartens in Karmøy. The most interesting findings will be commented in the following.

1.2.4.1 Overall comments on the program

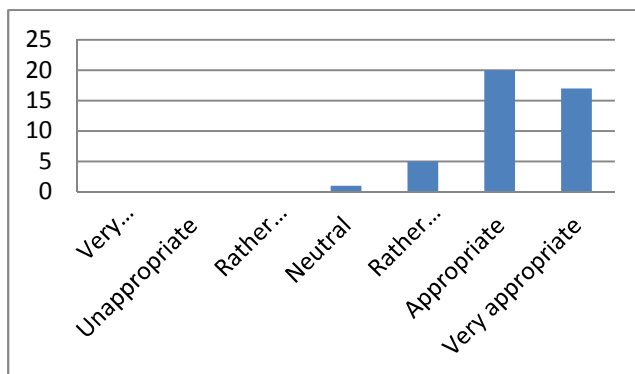
Both kindergartens point out that children behaviour has improved during the period of TIY in-service-training.

Fig 1.2.4.1.1: Behaviour of children given a special behavioural plan has become:



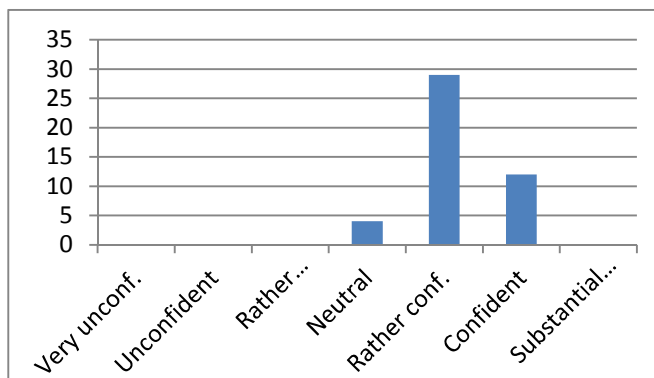
Respondents find that methods used to change children behaviour according to the principles of TIY lead to better or substantially better behaviour.

Fig 1.2.4.1.2: I find the approach used to change children behaviour:



The respondents find the TIY approach appropriate or very appropriate when it comes to moderating children's behaviour. There are none of the respondents in the kindergartens that are opposing the strategies used in TIY.

Fig 1.2.4.1.3: How confident are you that you will be able to take control of behavioural challenges in your group:



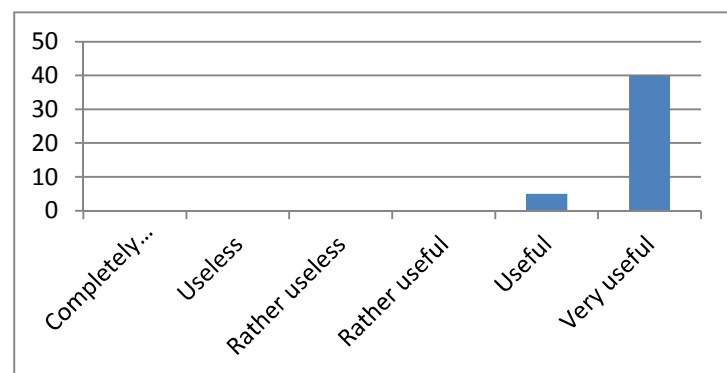
Concerning how confident the employees are that they will be able to deal with behavioural challenges in their groups, most of the respondents say that they are rather confident or confident.

Comments: OKE staff interprets this as evidence that the participants through the TIY program have achieved confidence and strategies in how to deal with behavioural problems in their group. This was the main reason why Karmøy applied for establishing TIY and decided that our Regional Educational Center (OKE staff and PPT) should be part of this project. Consequently this finding appears very satisfactory.

1.2.4.2 Strategies used in TIY:

Giving positive feed-back and encouragement is the most outstanding strategy mentioned by the participants.

Fig. 1.2.4.2.1: How useful do you find giving positive feed-back and encouragement in training children:



Comments: This is the strategy kindergartens detect as the one having the most immediate effect. Children always want attention from adults, such as positive feed-back, praise and warmth. This is what builds relations and it gives employees a good feeling when they can handle and guide the children with positive strategies. Both children and adults become more positive in their approach to each other, which again enhances a positive culture characterized by collaboration and motivation.

'Clear messages (Household rules) and clear limits' is also a strategy that participants give a high score. Local kindergartens used to have many rules, some of them rather unclear. Some made for indoor-activities and others for outdoor-activities and sometimes even hard to sort out which one to use. Employees appear now, due to training, proactive and more confident setting limits for behaviour and social interaction. They communicate with children in ways that make it easier for children to understand how to behave. This makes children able to improve their social competence and solve problems themselves which is necessary in a well- functioning group of children.

'Time-out' is the strategy reported to be less practiced, but useful in violent situations. When starting the program, participants were sceptic to this strategy. They now report that as they are made aware of using positive communication and collaboration all over, they hardly need to use time-out.

Activities like *'roleplay'* etc. used to enhance social and emotional skills are reported as useful. They find it positive to rehearse together with children in reflecting on emotions, talk about how to behave and how to solve problems.

1.2.4.3 Interviews

Interviews have been made with head teachers in the same two kindergartens. Questions were referring to the final evaluation made after the period of in-service training. The most interesting findings in the interviews were:

1.2.4.3.1 Which part of the program did you find most useful? And why do you find it useful?

Both the kindergartens point out building good relationships and using positive strategies as the most useful methods in the program. These methods have led to a change in attitude among employees. Awareness according to positive collaboration with children has increased and become the necessary base to be established before moving on to taking new methods into practice.

1.2.4.3.2 In what way has this had an influence on kindergartens pedagogical platform/ way of thinking?

Respondents report to have developed a collective platform using a positive focus. One experiences that employees are more confident than before when acting in different situations. They have become predictable adults to the children.

Employees have moreover developed a collective literacy concerning behavioural difficulties and social skills development. This common conceptual understanding and language is used in daily-life conversations with children and colleagues, making the collective platform stronger.

Practice has also changed in the way that employees hardly take directly to consequences like time-out or lack of privilege. They more often take to strategies like building relation and positive collaboration when children behave challenging. Focus has turned to reflections followed by a search for better approaches next time. Individual behavioural plans for children in need of it are a useful tool making it easier to make good plans and enhance awareness in employees. They act more collectively which helps the child at risk changing its negative behaviour. Kindergartens find it a privilege being able to take part in TIY. It is a method helpful in change of approach to challenges that might occur.

1.2.4.3.3. In what way has this had an influence on children in the target group according to social skills and self-efficacy?

Positive responses and praise have an effect on most children, and head teachers can observe that there is a progress. Kindergartens use behavioural plans when needed. They find it helpful according to enhancing social skills.

Kindergartens are focusing more on self-efficacy now. They find that both aggressive children and the silent ones have improved. Those children hardly dare to talk is now taking part in conversations. They claim their rights and are eager participants in gatherings.

1.2.4.3.4 How has TIY influenced cooperation with parents/ guidance given to parents?

Employees are more aware of the effect of focusing on positive aspects. They see it as important to build positive relations between kindergarten and parents like having an account to withdraw from when problems are to be addressed, making it possible to communicate. They more often have a positive approach (forward neck), when talking with parents about their child, rather than telling them about negative situations.

Head teachers are more comfortable giving parents advice because they have got a collective literacy and are confident with methods in use. Parents ask more and they get more information. Employees find it easier to talk with parents about expectations and the importance of the home supporting methods used in kindergarten.

TIY is an element in communication with parents. The importance of positive collaboration is held high. Parents are reporting that they are using the same methods at home and that it is working well. Behavioural plans focus on how one can cooperate with parents on which strategies to choose.

One kindergarten responds that they experience being proud of their professional approach. Being professional has become more visible so that they experience more respect paid to the work done and to their knowledge.

1.2.4.3.5 What do the kindergartens do to keep implementation of TIY strategies in focus?

TIY is always part of staff meetings. Strategies are discussed and repeated regularly. Workshops with reflections in different groups are used to establish a collective understanding. TIY strategies have become part of Kindergarten. Regular participation in learning communities has been useful.

Developing plans, reflecting and sharing experience with other kindergartens is reported to be useful as well.

Head teachers claim that theory is shared and presented in a good way. It has been adapted so that it is easy to share with their employees. It is compatible to their former knowledge and experience.

1.2.5 CONCLUSIONS Case Study 1

Members of OKE staff find that knowledge and competence among employees is the main key to enhancing quality work. TIY strengthens competence in preventing behavioural problems and dealing with them. Kindergartens report that attitude has changed. Employees are more positive in collaboration with children and their thinking is more pro-active.

Children being part of well functioning groups with good relations between participants in the group is considered a preventive factor according to early school leaving.

Our Regional Educational Centre through the collaboration between OKE staff and PPT has made it possible to give support and training in TIY. It would not have been possible for our kindergartens to take part in this schooling without RECs contribution. Counsellors in PPT and OKE staff report that it is easier giving guidance to these kindergartens taking part in TIY. They find that there is established a fundamental understanding and knowledge among the employed. Common attitudes and systematic work is important to succeed in managing behavioural difficulties.

Kindergartens ability in dealing with behavioural issues is also visible when studying the number of children being reported from kindergartens to the PPT for guidance related to this kind of problems. The support service confirms that it has decreased substantially. In spite of an increase from 2200 to 2700 children in Karmøy kindergartens during this period (2010-2015), the amount of children given special educational help has decreased from 100 in 2010 (4,5 %) to 80 in 2015 (3%) (OKE Karmøy, 2015). This has made it possible for PPT to reduce staff giving special educational help to individuals and increase staff giving advice in how to prevent these problems to occur. An REC with competent and updated staff within the psycho-social area giving guidance through professional learning communities and in-service training courses will be able to enhance the kindergartens' competence and thus contribute in making the TIY ideas sustainable.

Based on interviews and questionnaires presented in this study and empiric data referred to above, we have reason to believe that children given the ability to reflect on emotional aspects and being able to handle their feelings using language and acceptable methods, are better equipped when they meet academic challenges in school. They are more likely to take part in social activities and games with other children and they more likely will experience mastering in many different situations. In the long run this competence will be of great value when it comes to completing an education (ref. NOVA report mentioned above).

1.3. CASE STUDY 2 - “Vågen learning Centre”

1.3.1 Description

Vågen Learning Centre at the time of our study consists of four different projects, all based on the National Curriculum (LK06) and at the time geographically spread in three departments as shown below. Our case study is focused on the first two, and in the following our report will only include these.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Holmen School (1990) | | Lower secondary level Full time 7-9 students Behavioural problems Majority of boys | <i>Close contact with adults Interaction between theory and practical activities in accordance with national curriculum. Vocational learning The most spectacular and long-lasting project over the last 12 years has been building a 52 feet sailing vessel, “Alma”, from scratch. Pupils and teachers worked together. Launched on May, 29th, 2012.</i> |
| Tårnet School (2007) | | Lower secondary level Full time 7-9 students Complex emotional problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, school reluctance) Majority of girls | <i>Close contact with adults in a small group environment Traditional school subjects in accordance with national curriculum, but includes more practical activities than in the ordinary school: arts and crafts, outdoor activities, food making, technology.</i> |
| ‘Bøtoppen’ | The farm | Primary and lower secondary level Part-time 20-25 pupils (half to two days a week) | <i>Farm life activities Fishing, outdoor activities Workshop for agricultural machinery and carpentry Integrating activities in a school curriculum context</i> |
| | School intervention team (since Jan, 1 st 2012) | Mainly primary level Observation and guidance in ordinary schools when difficult situations arise Small group initiative for children at risk when necessary → Full time for short, intensive periods | |

Vågen Learning Centre has a vision of being an alternative school for children and young people in Karmøy who fail to complete the ordinary education for a variety of psycho-social reasons. A short-term target is to offer these pupils a school alternative that promotes and enhances belief in their own capacity and resources, giving them an experience and feeling of dignity. A long-term target is to build up the pupils’ competence, both social and in school subjects, enabling them to have a meaningful adult life. Respect, justice and relations are concepts that define the values the education at Vågen is based on.

1.3.2 Implementation

Since 1990 Karmøy has had an alternative learning arena for lower secondary pupils. Before this strenuous efforts had been made to offer all pupils education in the ordinary schools. This did not

however meet all pupils' needs as too many dropped out. Schools found it at that time especially difficult to handle boys with behavioural problems and this was a great challenge for the schools. The motivation among these boys of going to school was minimal and their capacity to learn consequently was very low. To meet these needs the Education administration in the municipality decided to establish an alternative school, and the local political government agreed to this. Holmen School was started.

After some time there seemed to be a need for offering girls who started to drop out of school a full day school alternative as well. Their problems could be social anxiety, depression or other psycho-social reasons for not going to school. Tårnet school was thus created through a similar process as described above.

The Department of Education and Culture in Karmøy with its support services has served as a regional education centre in both the establishing of the alternative school system and in the overall responsibility for quality assurance in accordance with laws, regulations and curriculum referred to above (*Norwegian Education Act, 1998 with Regulations and later amendments, National Curriculum, LK06 Kunnskapsløftet, 2006*). In addition this REC role applies to continuous support on all levels. Necessary expansions and re-organisational processes have also been a part of this.

1.3.3 Aims and methods

As shown in the survey above, the aim for conducting this case study was to gather more evidence concerning methods and activities employed in the alternative school system in Karmøy. There has been a prevailing view in the Dep. of Education and Culture and in the school itself that Vågen students were given a greater possibility to complete their education and thus be able to lead a satisfying adult life than if they were remaining in the 'old' system, but this was based on individual thoughts and ideas rather than systematic evidence.

Lately there has also been experienced an increasing need to know more specifically what has happened to former students, to be able to answer frequent questions about this.

Intended methods and progress in the RECIPE case study of Vågen can be seen in the survey table above. Due to technical and practical reasons occurring, some small changes proved to be necessary. In spite of that we believe the study to be as valid and reliable as a study of this kind can be:

- a. An interview guide was drawn up in collaboration between the RECIPE board in Karmøy and head teacher of the school

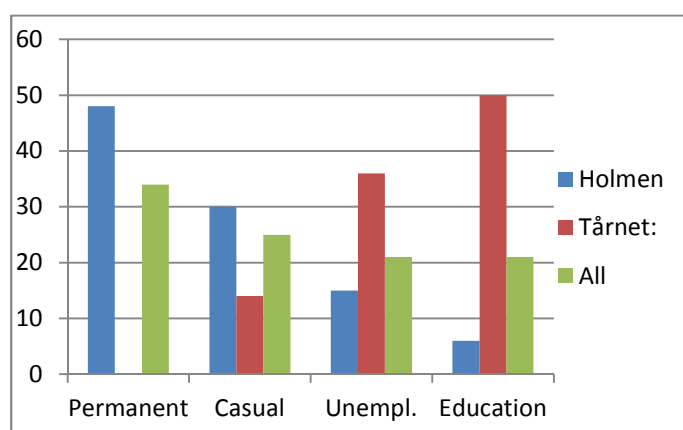
- b. Vågen Learning Centre students ‘graduating’ in the period 2000-20012 (Tårnet 2007-2012) were listed
- c. Telephone interviews were then carried out by two teachers. They were able to get in contact with 33/74 (Holmen) and 14/14 (Tårnet) respondents.
- d. The questions were connected to the following themes:
 - i. *Where are you now? – employment and life conditions*
 - ii. *Education – what is your competence now?*
 - iii. *Positive experiences at Holmen/Tårnet, which you think were important for your personal and educational progress? Focusing on ‘What works? Where? Why?’*
- e. Performing in-depth interviews with two of the respondents as a base for narratives about them
- f. Collecting additional comments and an overall impression from the interviewing teachers

1.3.4 Findings

When interviews with a number of young people who have been or still are at risk for falling out in education, work and society, is given some degree of quantitative analysis, there will always be a possibility that important feedback gets ‘lost in translation’. To meet this challenge our findings will be presented on three levels. First the graphs showing the quantitative results on the focus questions, each of them followed by explanation and comments. The next step is the two student narratives, and the third is a presentation of the two interviewing teachers’ overall impression from the conversation they had with the students. Finally, in part 4, we will aim to draw some qualified conclusions based on the findings we have presented.

1.3.4.1 Focus question results

Fig. 1.3.4.1.1 The current work situation



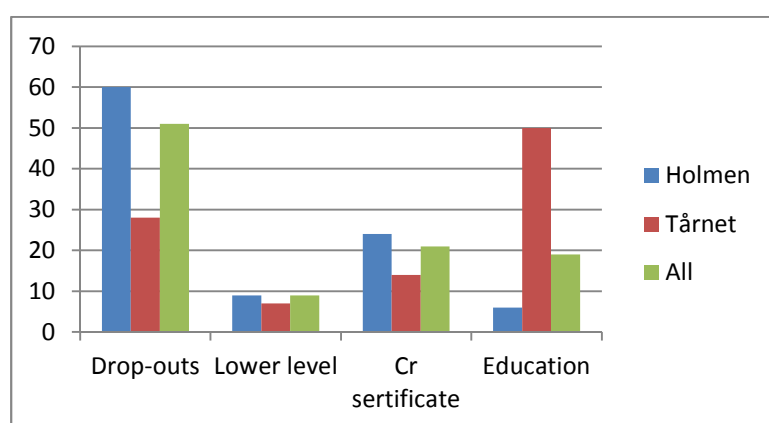
48% of the Holmen pupils asked reported to be in permanent job situations. Another 30% are casually or temporarily employed, 15% are unemployed and 6% are still in education.

No Tårnet pupils reported to be permanently employed, while 14% are in casual or temporary work. 36% of these are currently unemployed and 50% are still in school.

Comments: Holmen students have traditionally often been boys with behavioural problems. Being introduced to and given the possibility to develop competence in craft trades seems to have released energy in a different way than what the ordinary school is able to offer, and use it as what here is seen as a positive asset. A substantial part of these boys have become reliable workers through the way they were met at Holmen.

Tårnet students on the contrary, mainly girls, but later also an increasing number of boys, suffer from psycho-social problems. These kinds of deeply rooted challenges will have a tendency to stay on and even develop when the environment appears less safe and more demanding. The outcome seems likely to be regression to issues concerning absence in education or work and thus different forms of social care initiatives.

Fig. 1.3.4.1.2 Education



The interviews showed that 51% of the Vågen students could be classified as 'drop-outs' in upper secondary education (Holmen 60%, Tårnet 28%).

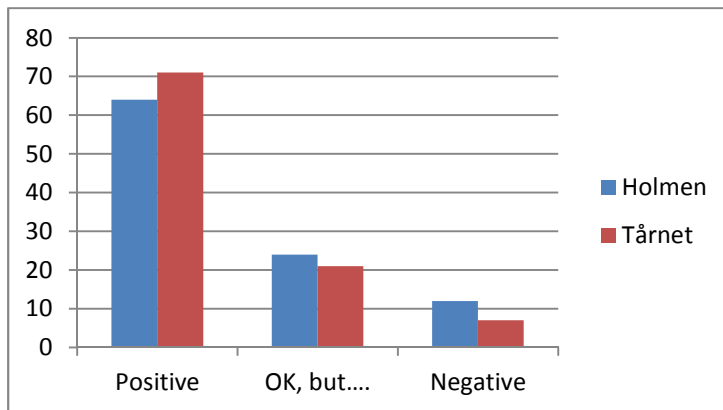
9% of the respondents had completed a lower level of upper secondary education, and 21% had reached a CR certificate. 6% from Holmen and 50% from Tårnet are still in education.

Comments: One of the reasons for the difference between the two departments on this matter is the number of years since they left Vågen. A great part of the Holmen students are older and thus more likely to be in work engagements.

A traditional Holmen student often has a 'hate-relation' to the ordinary school. A professional capacity to build accepting, affirming and positive relations to children who are not main-stream is important, but not always the case in traditional school organisations (Palludan, 2005, Juhl, 2009). It takes extra attention and effort to keep these on the educational pathway, and when upper secondary schools fail to further support this, they are likely to drop out.

It is necessary to add here that according to Norwegian statistics on drop-out rates correlated with lower secondary education results, less than 10% of the pupils in question here would be likely to complete a vocational or academic education on upper secondary level within a five year period.

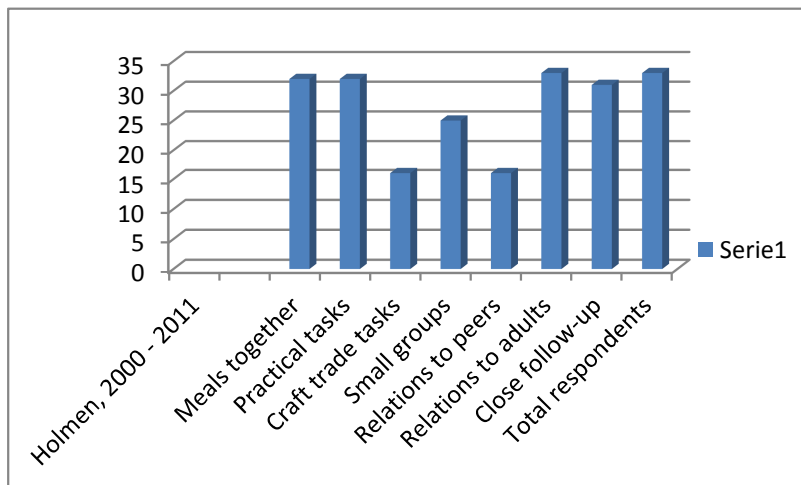
Fig. 1.3.4.1.3 Life situation



This graph shows that 65-70% of the respondents, having attended Vågen (Holmen + Tårnet) between 2000 and 2012, claim to be in a positive life situation. More than 20% say their life is ok, but they still feel there are challenges they can not altogether cope with. Less than 10% of the respondents experience a negative life situation

Comments: Looking at the responses to this particular question, we can see that the difference between students attending Holmen or Tårnet has more or less disappeared. It is fair to say that a substantial part of the respondents describe their life situation as positive. Those who do not, tend to have psycho-social problems dating back to early childhood.

Fig. 1.3.4.1.4 What was positive about your time at Holmen?



This question was only put to the 33 respondents from Holmen.

It is interesting, but not surprising that 100% answer that the relations to the adult staff was of crucial importance to them. This correlates with both the research by Palludan and Juhl referred to above and with e.g. John Hattie's

meta studies where 'a positive and supportive student-teacher relation' has been given an effect size of 0,72 (Hattie, 2009: 297-300). Other relational answers like 'meals together' and 'close follow-up' confirm this. It is also interesting to notice that 'relations to peers' is rated far less important than relations to teachers. Another observation is that practical work in general and small groups are given a high effect rating.

The results support the interviewing teacher's personal impression from the interviews. The respondents used phrases like: 'was saved', 'not too difficult', 'big family', 'well-being', 'nice', 'fantastic teachers'.

1.3.4.2 Narratives

1.3.4.2.1 “Tilda” – Situation and development

“Tilda” was a Tårnet student from 9th grade. She had challenging absence issues in the ordinary lower secondary school, but this was greatly improved after she started at Tårnet. A combination of depression, social anxiety and lack of individual and personal drive to even get up in the morning had made things difficult.

After completing lower secondary school she went on to an adapted vocational program within “Technology and industrial production”. She was a student there for close to three years, doing one day of theory and four days of practical work at the school. From March to June in her last school year she was a trainee at an asphalt company. She stayed on there for three months and liked it well. However, due to extensive absence she was fired after a while.

Now “Tilda” is on social benefits through the public welfare system. She is registered as a job applicant, but is currently not capable of working full time because she suffers from periods of depression and is not able to be among and together with too much people. She therefore wants a part-time job.

1.3.4.2.2 “Otto” – From problem to success

“Otto” was transferred to Holmen at the start of 8th grade. It is very unusual that pupils are part of the alternative school system in Karmøy for the entire lower secondary period, but this decision was made because of a primary school history which had seemed to develop negatively due to increasing psycho-social difficulties resulting in severe behavioural issues.

After a while the background for his problems was diagnosed as ADHD. During his first year at Holmen “Otto” settled in satisfactory. He still had concentration problems in classroom activities, but gradually he learnt to read his own challenges and to avoid conflicts. He spent the three years at Holmen achieving mechanical skills and also developing his administrative interests. However it was also important for him to attain “enough” academic knowledge, this in order to be able to make his dreams for the future come true.

Throughout his years at Holmen he had a work agreement with a local mechanical business. This relationship developed further after he had completed his years in lower secondary school. “Otto” started an adapted vocational program, but terminated that after one year because he was offered a permanent position in this local firm. His capability and capacity for work as well as impeccable work ethics has made him both a charge hand in the business and a secure, stable adult today.

“Otto” expresses a profound belief that the years at Holmen were decisive for his positive development. A difficult and challenging school story was turned to one of success.

1.3.4.3 Overall observations from interviewing teachers

***Teacher 1:** What I experience as the overall impression these interviews have left me with, and which I think does not show clearly enough in the survey results, is how positive and grateful the students are to be allowed to be a part of this alternative school. They express a feeling of having been ‘seen’ for who and what they were and see the close relations to the adults in the system every day as a reason for that. The fact that they were given the chance to be part of a small group is defined as one of the most important factors for coming to school at all. Even though they at the time did not understand why we were always ‘on their backs’, they now appreciate that we never gave up on them. They genuinely believe this was what was needed for them to now be attending or having completed upper secondary level of education.*

***Teacher 2:** One of the striking factors to me after having spoken to so many former students, also pupils from before my time at the school, is how Vågen plays a different role in the pupils’ lives compared to what the ordinary school does. The interviews gave me a deep feeling that in many cases the school had become a kind of ‘substitute home’ for most of them. Like the school for some important years was their anchor in a more or less turbulent life. I was not surprised to learn this, but perhaps what was a bit unexpected, was the number of students in stable work situations. As I judge it, the most essential success factor is the role the teachers are allowed to play in this system. As an example, being at the spot and having built robust relationships opens up for a possibility to conduct social and emotional training when the actual conflict situations occur. I also see that lowering the school theory pressure is vital and instead teaching these kids to succeed through practical work. The feeling of success and dignity will very often lead to a way in to theoretical knowledge as well.*

1.3.5 CONCLUSIONS Case Study 2

Looking at the sum of findings above and viewing them in an ESL perspective, it is likely to claim that the alternative lower secondary education Vågen pupils receive at Holmen and Tårnet schools reduces drop-out numbers in our area. The fact that as many as 60% of the students at Holmen in the study period are classified as having dropped out from upper secondary programs could indicate the opposite, but when you compare this with the national statistics, our allegation is substantiated. According to government statistics less than 10-15% of the pupils with similar backgrounds and academic qualifications are likely to complete upper secondary programs (*Norway Statistics*, sept,

2015). To this should also be added that, as shown in the figures above, the number of former pupils in permanent or casual work situations far exceeds the number of those who have completed their education.

The municipal educational support services and administration have, as far as we can see, been an important key to what can be seen as a success in the alternative school system of Vågen. They have employed teachers with relational competence as well as practical skills, been involved in providing relevant CPD courses and being directly involved in teacher guidance and administrative follow-up tasks.

It is thus likely that REC support is one of the reasons why this study seems to confirm that the program at Vågen learning center and the staff working there, over years have succeeded in supporting young people at great risk for ending up on a side-track in life for various psycho-social reasons, with a new possibility to discover and show their potential. According to the findings shown here, the alternative school system in Karmøy thus fulfils the core issue for educators on all levels by giving the young people attending the two schools in the study a genuine feeling of individual value and dignity as a gateway to learning on theoretical, practical as well as social levels, and through this opening up for a future they might not have reached without it. This quote from the film 'The Imitation Game' puts it into words:

“Sometimes it is the people no one imagines anything of who do the things no one can imagine”

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