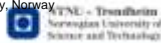


Work environment in the educational sector in Norway

Baseline of a longitudinal study on workplace intervention

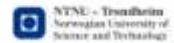
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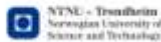
Background

- In 2008-10 the Norwegian Labour Inspectorate (NLI) carried out a national campaign in the educational sector.
- Their main focus:
 - Psychosocial work environment
 - Participatory processes
 - Conflicts, violence and threats
- Based on these inspections the NLI issued injunctions
 - Legally binding. The NLI decides what is satisfactory.
 - Organisational routines
- Aim: to reduce riskfactors for work-related health complaints and sick leave.



Methods and material

- 5+5 (3) schools in 2 municipalities in Norway
 - lower to middle schools
 - Owned and funded by the municipalities
- Electronic survey to all employees
 - Indexes, single items, open questions
- Response rate: 72,2% (N=301)
- In-depth interviews with the principal, union representative and a minimum of one teacher at each school (N=32)
- Group interviews with heads of school administration in the municipalities



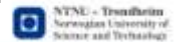
Research questions

First wave:

- What do the employees find to be most rewarding/most challenging about their everyday work life
- What type of strain is most prevalent
- What kind of health complaints do we find and are they attributed to work
- Sick leave

Second wave: (data gathered as we speak)

- Did the intervention improve the psychosocial work environment and health? If not, why?



Results

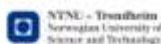
Psychosocial factors dominate both the most rewarding and most challenging aspects their everyday work life

Most challenging:

- Work tasks
- Resources (mostly time)
- Students acting out
- Interaction co-workers
- Recurrent changes
- Organizational factors
- Physical work environment

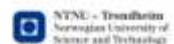
Most rewarding:

- Interaction co-workers
- Interaction students
- Interaction leaders
- Work tasks
- Organizational factors
- Control



Work tasks: from food for thought to food for lawyers

- Too many tasks
 - and counting
- Short deadlines
- Increasing complexity
 - both in variety and difficulty
- Unclear what is «good enough»
- Decreased control
- Unpredictable
 - Both short term and long term
- A shift from core tasks to documentation
 - «I feel I do everything BUT teaching at the moment»



Work tasks: a matter of perception

Work tasks:

Solve conflicts
Documentation
interaction co-workers
Meetings
Cover for absent co-workers
Teach/core tasks

Time thiefs:

Conflicts
Documentation
interaction co-workers
Meetings
Cover for absent co-workers

Key question: Does it improve student (or parent) related tasks?

Strain

«How much strain would you say you have experienced from the following factors in relation to your work in the last 6 months»

Scored on a VAS-scale from 0-10

Variables	Mean	St.dev
Mental strain	5,3	2,4
Emotional strain	4,3	2,4
Physical strain*	3,8	2,6
Social strain	3,0	2,5

*problematic due to the word «time pressure» in the description

Health complaints

Variables	Mean	St.dev
Neck and shoulder pain last 6 months	3,4	2,7
Neck and shoulder pain last week	3,3	2,8
Lower back pain last 6 months	2,3	2,4
Lower back pain last week	2,2	2,4

Scored on a VAS-scale from 0-10

90,1% attribute their shoulder or neck pain full, or in part, to work related factors

72,3 % attribute lower back pain to work.

Health and sick leave

- 44,7 % attribute their overall health complaints to work related factors.
- Only 9,4 % attribute their sick leave to work related factors.
- 85 % have gone to work even though they were so ill they should have stayed at home
 - Feel bad for co-workers and/or students
 - difficulties getting competent substitutes
 - Have to prepare for the substitute anyway
 - Tasks don't disappear, more to do when you get back
 - Basicly don't have the time

The follow-up

- Questionnaire with focus on:
 - actual changes in the every day work life
 - The change process
 - Descriptions of a stressful situation the last week
 - Actual strategies for reducing and/or coping with stress
- Establish the processes that run parallel to the intervention
 - Merges
 - Cut backs
 - New leaders/co-workers/students
 - New ways of organizing
 - Etc.

Contacts and acknowledgements

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