



UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

# “The Second Step program vs. the Be Together program”

A comparative analysis on the Second Step program and the pilot program Be Together

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*This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.*

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## Abstract

A comparative analysis of the Second Step program and the Be Together program

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**Background.** The Second Step program has been around since 2001. In 2011 a new program was introduced to a selective number of kindergartens in West and East Agder in the South of Norway, the Be Together program. The two programs had several obvious similarities and some that were not so obvious. This brought curiosity to equation.

**Purpose/Problem.** The intension for this study was to compare the programs and see whether they actually did compare. By doing a comparative analysis of the two programs one would be able to see if there was a need for a new program or if a new program would put an overload on kindergartens that are already facing stress and a lack of resources. It would also pose the immediate problems that each program is facing in order to be the one that succeeds as a primary program for kindergartens all over the country.

**Selection.** The research is a qualitative individual focus study that is based on 4 professionals, whom has previously worked with the Second Step program and is now working with the Be Together program.

**Method.** Semi-structured interviews

**Results.** In regard to the staff material the informants preferred working with the Be Together program and in regard to the children's material a majority of the staff preferred the Second Step program. The minority of the informants did not think the program would succeed and neither would it take of the role of the Second Step program.

**Conclusion.** The result provided gave a clear understanding that the Be Together had a long way to go in order to replace the Second Step program and there was hope that the Be Together program would be evaluated in such a way that the program eventually could become a primary program in the selected kindergartens.

## Foreword

Twenty Norwegian kindergartens in the south of Norway are currently using a new program called “Være Sammen” (Be Together) which is a trial program that is supposed to be implemented nationwide in kindergartens order to teach children social competence and to enhance the competence of the staff. The Second Step program has been around for a decade and is widely used by a large number of Norwegian kindergartens. This program also has a goal of teaching social competence to children in the kindergartens. This gives reason to compare the two programs on several levels.

The teachers of the University in Agder deserve special thanks. Without their helping hand and the fact that I was able to make use of some essential material to write this thesis, I would not have reached the goal of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank the kindergarten staff for their willingness to let me interview them at work during their work hours. This made it possible to collect all the material needed for this program to take form.

I am responsible for the analyzing of the data that was collected, the development of the results and the progress of the assignment.

I would like to thank my workplace for letting me take time off to do interviews and for the moral support that they have shown.

Last but not least I would like to thank my girlfriend and child with my inner most gratitude. Thank you for letting me work in the off hours into the night, for letting me write when I needed to write.

The work on this thesis has made me see opportunities and let me have contact with interesting people that I would not else have gotten to meet and know. It will be interesting to follow this program in the future and to see how it may help change child pedagogy as we perceive it today. It will also be interesting to see if this has any long term effect on the children of today and in their future.

Only time will tell

Kristiansand, November 2012

Mikkel Manzenski Hansen

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

This thesis is partially based on research and evaluations from the Second Step program and empirical research done in the field. The research on the Be Together program is currently not available and therefore this thesis is only referring to the material of the program and the empirical research that has been done through interviews.

Since the Være Sammen (Be Together) program has not yet been evaluated and since it is so new, finding the material needed to compare the two programs has been rather difficult.

Therefore, it is necessary to compare both the evaluation done by the committee for children that evaluated the Second Step program, the data collected by Bente Granberg (1999) and the empirical research found in two kindergartens in Kristiansand who are currently participating in piloting the Være Sammen (Be Together) program and are or currently has been using the Second Step program.

## **1.1. Rationale for choice of theme**

The interesting aspect of comparing an existing program with a new program is to see how they differ. Especially when there is an obvious link between the two programs and when the programs are aimed at getting to the same outcome. This became one of the reasons for choices made to write this thesis. Another strong inspiration to write this thesis came from an interview done in a kindergarten in my third semester. Here the topic changed towards this new and interesting program, the Be Together program, but already at this point they had some problems with the whole layout, this made it intriguing to do more research on the program. It was also interesting to see the resources that were put into the establishment of doing a new program, not only from the economical aspect but also the human effort that the program required for it to work. Here I am talking about the hours of competence enhancement and time spent to settle into a new idea. Especially for a staff and children that has not worked around these kinds of programs before. Fortunately for the staff at the two kindergartens it appears not to have been particularly stressfull settling into a new program, since they have already been working with a similar program beforehand, the Second Step program.

The economical challenge is an aspect in itself, the commitment needed for starting a new program; from the hours spent after work to the time spent studying the material can be astronomical, especially on the budget that the kindergartens in Kristiansand have had in 2012. I will devote additional attention to this issue because there is a lack of available information around the costs of the program and the issue of economy goes beyond the purview of this thesis.

Now choosing such a theme for this thesis can mean that one needs to take all aspects into account. This is not possible with the amount of space given. However by picking out the essentials needed to draw some conclusions, it is possible to get the job done.

It is also a fact that I have my own experiences with the Second Step program. I have been using the Second Step program in the kindergarten where I am currently employed and find the program very useful both with children that have little language development, apparently due to their second language, children that are fully Norwegian, which means that both parents are from Norway, and the “in between” whom have a parent that is Norwegian and a parent that has immigrated to the country.

The program in my understanding is useful in the sense that it helps the children understand the emotions that they can have, they gain more social competence both inside the institution where adults are always present and outside on the playground where there can be a lack of adult present. The children in most instances embrace the program, they relate to the program, they understand the program and they take the program with them to other institutions.

I find the program easy to use, easy to prepare and I see that the children groups of children in the institution gain a lot more social competence, they gain more empathy and they talk about the program when it is not being taught. The reason I am presenting my own perception of the Second Step program at this stage is that I find it important that I understand the program and that my perception of the Second Step program, does give an interest in the comparison of the two programs.

Another reason for the choice of this theme is from an article that was read a couple of years ago. This article was called *Barnehagen som arena for sosial utvikling* (The kindergarten as an arena for social development) Martinsen, et al. (2009), the article was useful for gaining knowledge about previous studies and was also useful in the sense that it was relating to this thesis in several ways. Firstly it was a pilot program that would be mapping the kindergarten children’s behavior and social competence, secondly they would research which conditions that the kindergartens contribute to in the children’s development. The pilot program was done from 2008-2012. Even though neither the Second Step program nor the Be Together

programs are mentioned in the article, the research had similar ideas on which factors played important roles in order for the kindergartens to be good arenas for children's social development. Just to mention a few of these it was; the staff, good adults, the staff should be consistent and they should avoid conveyors and there should be availability of good temps during illness. Some of these factors are seen later in this thesis as important to the two programs.

Due to the dilemma that the Be Together program has two important parts to its program; the adult material and the children's material, it has been necessary for this thesis to incorporate both parts since this is a comparative analysis of the programs and not just sections of the programs. The dilemma is also that the Second Step program has a little dedicated part in the program about the adult role. This part states that the adult attitudes and actions play a large role in how the children experience themselves, others and their surroundings. (Egge et.al. 1991) they state further more that "in order for the children to develop a positive self image, people that has an attachment to the child should meet the child with a positive and acknowledging attitude" (Egge et.al. 1991, p. 20)

So the Second Step program is more or less lacking the adult section or has a diminished section which can easily be overseen, where the Be Together program has an extended section on the material for the staffs. The staff theory material is without a doubt raising the Be Together program to a higher level.

The thesis has also incorporated the material for the staff on the Be Together program because it alone stands strong in the program and the informant's perspectives on the material and theory for the staff seems to play an important role of this comparative analysis.

## **1.2 Problem**

From looking at the Second Step program and looking at the Be Together program it was obvious that there were some similarities. These two programs had something in common which was interesting. The programs were not identical but in some ways they seemed as though they were. Even though they are a little more than a decade apart they are still reaching for the same age group, they are both focused on how to improve children's social competence. Therefore it was necessary to compare the programs and see which was better. The question was therefore asked:

*How does the Be Together program compare to the Second Step program?*

*-Does the material for the staff of the Be Together program compare in any way to the material for the staff of the Second Step program?*

*-Does the material for the children of the Be Together program compare in any way to the material for the children of the Second Step program?*

*-Which of the Be Together program and the Second Step program will succeed in this comparison?*

### **1.3 Disposition of Thesis**

This thesis is build up into various sections with separate, brief conclusions. This is to make the thesis more comprehensible to the reader. The separate conclusions are subsequently combined in a single final conclusion which attempts to answer the study's central research question.

The literature in which I placed most focus is presented in the introduction of the thesis. After this, restrictions that were visible from the start are described. Then, there is a section on the past research that has been done in evaluating and describing the outcome of the Second Step program.

After this section the theory portion begins with the Second Step program, this will include a chapter pertaining to the issue of empathy, and a chapter on social competence.

After the theory portion on both the Second Step program and the Be Together pilot program this thesis will evaluate and compare the material used by the staff, the material used in lessons with the children and the material given to the parents or guardians. This will be concluded with comparisons and differences.

Lastly there is a theoretical section describing the interview procedure. This chapter focuses mainly on the Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) method of doing qualitative interviewing, and is supported with the actual interviews and the results that were developed from these. These results will again be compared and concluded.

In the end of this thesis there is a summary of all the separate conclusions made in the thesis and thereby giving the reader a collected conclusion.

After the final conclusion I discuss potential areas of future research.

### **1.4 Use of literature**

The literature used in this thesis is based on the handbook for guiding the staff through the Second Step program and the booklets that is provided with the Be Together piloting program.

For the use of qualitative interviewing most references are based on Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as a primary source of gathering knowledge, their book on “det kvalitative forskningsintervju” (The qualitative research interview) is essential in the making of a qualitative research interview. Their book contains chapters that will be used in this thesis such as: the ethics in interviewing, how to have quality in the interviews, the transcribing process, and of course the basics of reliability, validity and generalization of the interview questions and how to analyze the material that will be collected.

Using supplementary literature to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the book “Designing qualitative research” by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman (1995) will be used. Also the book “Qualitative Research methods for the social sciences” by Bruce L. Berg (2004) will be used to get more insight on focus group interviewing, validity, and reliability.

Furthermore the use of the book called “Steg for steg I praksis, en kasusstudie” (Second Step in practice, a case study) by Tone Marete Heggli and Ragnheidur Karlsdottir (2002) will be very useful, the book contains the thoughts behind introducing a new material to a staff. But also shows the process the staff goes through in transforming the material into their own, in order to reach every student/child in every age and on every academic level.

The research that has been found on the Second Step program is primarily from the Committee for Children. This is a committee working on preventing bullying, violence and child abuse. The Committee for Children released a review of the evaluation of the Second Step program in early learning in 2011, the early learning can therefore also be used in the kindergarten arena.

## **1.5 Restrictions**

The *Være Sammen* program will be translated into *Be Together* program to keep a more uniform language. This is a direct translation that does not change in meaning.

The Second Step program is aimed towards all children in the age range of 2-12 years old. This means the Second Step program is taught both in kindergarten and in school. Whereas the *Be Together* program is only aimed at children in the age range of 4-6 years old or until they begin school. Because this is mainly a comparative study, I have made the decision to focus the attention on the kindergarten material only. It is also important to for the reader to know that the Second Step program for kindergarten comes as a package and contains both material for the ages; 1-3 years and 3-6 years. For comparison purposes the decision to leave

out the material for the 1-3 year old has been made. This material is not investigated in the current study.

As mentioned earlier there is the restriction of the lack of staff material in the Second Step program, even though this is lacking, this thesis will still include the staff material of the Be Together program due to the importance it plays in this comparative analysis seen from my own point of view and the informant's perspective which can be seen later on in the thesis.



## **2. THEORY OF THE PROGRAMS**

### **2.1 Background and previous research**

The Be Together program and the Second Step program are ultimately working towards the same goal, or so it seems. Their goal is as stated in the Second Step program: to learn social skills put into a system as an easy to use recipe. The Second Step program will provide tools that will help children associate themselves with other children, it will help them to relate and interact with other children and this is the most valuable a child can learn throughout childhood.

Even the Department of Education in Norway (2005) states in the national kindergarten curriculum, called “Rammeplanen”; social competence is not congenital; it does not evolve by itself and does not happen through maturation or random learning. It has to be acquired through specific targeted leaning and a child’s own experience by participation. Further examining this section in the curriculum plan for the kindergartens, this thesis seeks to emphasize that with the targeted leaning programs used in this comparative analysis, is it possible to change a child’s state of mind to teach him or her and to learn efficiently and to acquire increased social competence.

Research shows that children perform better in school from having pro-social skills. There has recently been more focus on the social skills training programs used in school and in kindergarten. Authors have pointed to research that provides results that show that low social skills in kindergarten correlates with low academic performance in school, and high social skills are related to higher academic performances among children in the lower grades of school. This could mean that a kindergarten child with high social skills has a bigger chance of having higher social skills later in life.

In addition, McClelland and Morrison (2003) points to research which shows that there is a high percentage of children that enter the kindergarten class, that have little or poor social skills resulting in poor behavior, peer rejection and low levels of academic achievement

A growing body of research has underscored the importance of children’s early social behavior in school adaptation and achievement. Young children entering school with poor social behavior often have a plethora of problems including peer rejection, behavior problems, and low levels of academic achievement. In addition, teacher



reports suggest that children come into school with differing levels of social skills and that these skills are critical for early school success. For example, a recent monograph emphasized the importance of social and emotional competence in preschool children for a successful transition to kindergarten. (McClelland and Morrison 2003, p. 206)

Furthermore McClelland and Morrison (2003) found in the importance of leaning-related social skills that research point to one or more benefactors of learning-related social skills and “found that children’s classroom participation and their ability to be cooperative and independent in kindergarten was an important predictor of early school achievement.” (p. 208). They also found that from the teacher’s point of view that the students that were listening to an instruction and complying with directions did have most success in the kindergartens.

Most of the research in this area has originated in the United States.

There have been few scientific evaluations done on the Second Step program in Norway. And since the Be Together program is in the process of being piloted throughout 22 kindergartens in the west and east municipalities of southern Norway, there will not be any formal evaluations on this program, for at least a year. The Be Together program will eventually be evaluated by the University of Agder in cooperation with the University of Stavanger.

In a master thesis conducted by Bente Granberg (1999) called: “Læring av sosial kompetanse og sosiale ferdigheter gjennom undervisningsprogrammet: Steg for Steg (Learning from social competence and social skills through the program called Second Step” Granberg writes that test subjects who received the program showed significant changes in social skills. This means that the children using the Second Step program score better results on all tests than a control group whom not involved in the program. This information could be useful at a later point of this thesis due to the fact that the results of Granberg (1999) were so significant.

Due to the fact that there is no quantitative evaluation on the Be Together program at this point it will be difficult to compare such results at this time.

The background research that has been done on the Be Together pilot program has been done only from an observatory standpoint. For example, in my work in kindergarten, I have observed the program being introduced and seen the program in use among the children. As for the theory behind the pilot program, I have read through the material thoroughly and researched related sources to gain more knowledge about its use.

The theory section of this thesis is split up into 3 parts. First the Second Step program theory will be presented, then the Be Together pilot program theory will be presented and a conclusion will discuss to what degree, from a theoretical perspective, the two similar or different. This conclusion is only a partial conclusion and will be used in the final conclusion to give an overall comparative analysis.

## **2.2 Second Step program**

The Second Step program first saw the light of day in Seattle in 1988. The program was developed both for kindergarten and school by the Committee for Children. It was first used on a range of schools in Seattle and interviews were done of the children participating in the Second Step program before and after it had been presented. These interviews were afterwards compared to interviews done to children not participating in the program at all. The results found were astonishing according to researches, and shows that children who had participated in the program had a higher level of empathy, problem solving skills and were better at handling anger and aggression. The teachers participating in the program also confirmed through observation that the program had given positive results and that the student environment in the classroom had improved. (Egge et. al. 1991, p. 40)

In 1989 the program was introduced to American schools and kindergartens and is today used by 10 percent or 13000 schools in America.

The material came to Norway approximately 10 years later in 1998/99. Norway was the first country to translate and adapt the Second Step program and in 2001 the revised material was introduced, this was more user friendly for the Norwegian schools and communities. As of summer 2002, more than 60 percent of primary schools in Norway have been taking the Second Step material into use. But it was not until 2002 that the National Association for Public Health of Norway decided to make the material available for kindergartens, which comprised translations of the Danish material, the American material and parts of the first grade material.

Granberg (1999) sought to investigate whether children's social competence was improving and if there was a reduction in problem behavior through the use of the Second Step material. In her research she used school aged pupils; student and teacher valuation, student observations, student socio-grams and evaluation forms. Her main findings was that there were better scores on the test children with social skills compared to the control children whom were not involved in the program. These test children scored higher on social skills,

assertiveness, self-control, cooperation and empathy. She also found through observation that there were fewer interruptions in the classrooms where Second Step was used and the children had more inner control.

The Second Step program ranges from early learning or kindergartens through middle school. The focus of my investigation is kindergarten.

### **2.2.1 Empathy**

The development of empathy is seen as the basics for development of social competence. The development of social competence can be explained through two main definitions:

In Norwegian Public Reports (NOU, 2012) it is stated that empathy is congenital but can be formed and molded through experiences. Empathy is bound to emotional learning and emotional regulation; therefore aggression control is naturally connected to these two aspects of empathy.

”Utviklingen av sosial kompetanse kan forstås gjennom to hovedbegreper; empati som handler om å leve seg inn i og forstå andres følelser, og prososial atferd som er den sosiale kompetansens uttrykksform.” (NOU 2012, p. 26 In translation this would be: Empathy is where one can live themselves into another individuals feelings and be able to understand these feelings. This will result in pro social behavior that is the social competence expression.)

In the Committee for Children’s research on the Second Step program they also state that empathy is an important aspect of social behavior and define empathy as being “a central aspect of emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Empathy is an emotional response that stems from recognizing and understanding another person’s emotional state or feelings.” (Committee for Children 2011, p. 3). In the same research thesis the committee states that empathy is an all important aspect of pro social behavior this in turn is linked to the way children interact with each other and pro-social behavior is thereby a product of empathy. But this ability to show empathy is a matter of skill inside the child. The child will have to be able to understand emotions and how to regulate emotional behavior. By being able in doing this, other children can connect with the child on a positive level. This way pro social behavior is leading to the gain of good relationships and being able to maintain a positive relation with other child. The research shows that “empathic children with good perspective-taking skills are less likely to be physically, verbally, and indirectly aggressive toward peers.” (Committee for Children 2011, p. 4) Research also “shows that young children with higher levels

of empathy tend to be less aggressive, better liked, and more socially skilled, and make greater progress in school than children with lower levels of empathy.” (Committee for Children 2011, p. 4) From looking at a kindergarten perspective, then more socially skilled children can therefore achieve better when they reach school than children who has not been taught social skills.

The program is built into different units which in turn will provide the children with different tools to handle their emotions; the empathy unit is one of these units. The different units are interconnected and relate somewhat to each other. This means that the empathy unit can be linked to the other units of the program such as the emotional management unit and the friendship skills and problem-solving unit.

In the *Second Step* early learning program’s empathy unit children build their emotional literacy by developing skills for identifying and labeling a variety of emotions in themselves and others. Increasing children’s empathy helps create a foundation for the units that follow. In addition to building empathy, these lessons help prepare children for the Emotion-Management Unit by increasing their awareness of what they are feeling so they can identify and cope with strong emotions. (Committee for children 2011, p. 4)

The Second Step program also teaches the children to manage their emotional behavior; this means that the kindergarten teacher will teach the child the differences in emotion, how they are expressed and how to deal with the negative emotions. This in turn will give the child emotional management skills which they in turn can use to gain pro social skills.

Negative emotions can be expressed in different ways and are for a child who does not know better hard to handle. Hitting, kicking, biting or slapping is “normal” negative emotional reactions to a child who has been subjected to other children’s bullying. But by teaching the child different coping techniques the child will be able to settle the conflict in a different and eventually positive way. These skills are taught as either group exercises in a given setting with dramatic plays that shows what to do in a given situation or they are taught in the field when the child experiences an action of negativity that it is not itself able to cope with.

In order to work in the field the staff of the kindergarten is going to have enough competence on the subject of emotional management that he or she is able to pull out different solutions to a conflict that are still within the borders of the Second step program. The Early Learning review of research states that “children who can manage their feelings in emotionally charged

situations are more successful in the transition to formal schooling. More emotional competence at ages 3 to 4 increases children's social competence both at age 3 to 4 and in kindergarten." (Committee for Children 2011, p. 5)

Carolyn Webster-Stratton (2005) describes empathy as the key for social success. "The ability to take other peoples worries, goals, and feelings into consideration"(Webster-Stratton 2005, p. 263) The way Webster-Stratton (2005) describes a method of training empathy is not unlike the methods used in the two programs that are being compared in this thesis. Firstly, training the essential and basics of an apology, how to give compliments, being polite, friendly and honest. It is also important to teach the children how to offer someone a helping hand, and withstand group pressure and temptations. By giving the children made up situations and by letting the children solve the problem, can boost a child's self esteem to a level where they remember the skills of being an empathic being.

### **2.2.2 Social competence**

Bringsli (2004) states in an article from the Barne-, likestillings-, og inkluderingsdepartement ( Child-, Equality-, and Inclusion department) of the Norwegian government that when a child ends his or her period in the kindergarten, the child should have developed a good social base and competence. This means that the child has developed and mastered interpersonal interaction skills with adults and other children and the child has developed an ability to understand and comply with the social situation it is in.

In the framework plan for kindergartens it is determined that when children finish kindergarten they should have developed a good social competence. This means to master the skills of interpersonal interactions, and have the ability to understand and adapt to the social situation that one is in. (Bringsli 2004, p. 1)

Bringsli (2004) presents furthermore that competence is not only acquired through structured situations but is gained through everyday life. Therefore it is important that the preschool teachers and assistants working in the kindergarten use a reflected practice. In this way the teacher can evaluate which social skills each individual child is in possession of and which they lack, and it is possible to find out how they best learn these social skills that are poor or absent.

### **2.2.3 Problem solving**

The Second Step program is very much about how the children problem solves a situation among themselves. The program uses mascots (see attachment 1) and visual posters (see

attachment 1) to guide the children through the process of problem solving a conflict. Carolyn Webster-Stratton (2005) writes in her book “how to promote Childrens social and emotional competence” (2005) how to go through this process on a step by step basis with the help of toys, dolls and role play. Here she lays out a process the children can learn. In this manner, they learn how to solve their problems, conflicts or other disagreements in a civil manner. This is basically the same as the two programs are using, by referring to the programs they children has to remember what they have learned during the lesson, also the method of using dolls and toys are highly comparable, by first looking at the Second Step program the use of two stuffed animals to symbolize the children in a conflict are used and toys are used to describe the item the conflict is about, the program uses the posters which can lead to a discussion around a conflict or even how to act. From the Be Together program the magnetograph (see attachment 2) is giving both figures (see attachment 2) and items which the children can place anywhere in order to symbolize a conflict, and then by resolving the conflict, they learn problem solving and furthermore they learn social competence.

Webster-Stratton (2005) has 6 methods for this:

1. What is the problem? (define the problem and the feelings that are involved)
2. What is a possible solution? Are there more solutions? (make an idea brainstorm to find solutions)
3. What are the consequences? What happens afterwards?
4. What is the best solution or the best choice? (evaluate the consequences of the solutions. Use terms such as, safety, justice and good intentions and good choices.)
5. Am I following my plan? (follow though)
6. How did it go? (Evaluate the result and strengthen the skills)

Webster-Stratton  
(2005, p. 221)

Webster-Stratton’s method for problem solving a situation is a little more detailed than the one the Second Step program uses but it involves essentially the same steps. The only difference between Webster-Stratton’s method and the method of the Second Step program is that step 5 and 6 are left in the Second Step program.

### **2.3 The Be Together pilot program**

The Be Together program is a program in the piloting phase that has an aim of being implemented into a selected number of kindergartens in autumn of 2011. The program would

be implemented during 2011-2012. After the implementation it will get evaluated by the University of Agder. According to a brief conversation with one of the authors of the Be Together program, Eivind Skeie, during a Parent meeting in a kindergarten, the program originators were planning to broaden the number of kindergartens and begin with the second phase. This phase should include more kindergartens. During the time the program is running it should help increase the competence of the staff in the kindergartens through guidance groups and further education. Eventually after the implementation of the program into the kindergartens, the kindergartens will become a “Lion kindergarten” (a kindergarten which has dedicated themselves to the program) the lion represents the program and is also used as the programs mascot as well as a central character in the teaching material. By being a “Lion Kindergarten” they would also receive a shield (see attachment 2) which was mounted to the kindergarten thereby visualizing that the kindergarten was in fact working with the Be Together program.

The theory of this program is based on the booklets written by Midthassel, Fandrem and Godtfredsen (2011) “*jeg låner deg mitt øre*” (*I borrow my ear to you*) a book on guidance in colleague groups, Roland and Størksen (2011) “*kanskje er det du som gjør meg glad igjen*” (*maybe it is you who makes me happy again*) a book on early intervention and handling of challenging behavior and “*Alle barn på jorden har den samme rett*” (*all children on earth has the same rights*) a book on the authoritative adult role and relations work in the kindergarten.

The four booklets presented above are booklets for the pedagogue (i.e., kindergarten teacher). In addition to the three booklets given to me, a fourth booklet deals with the implementation of the program. This booklet will not be described in this thesis due to only recent availability to my research. The three booklets deal with the theory behind the program in order to inform the staff on extended information as to what the program is trying to accomplish and how they can change and how they can improve their own approaches in accordance with the program. The booklets offer general knowledge about the program and gives extended knowledge on theories that are usable on how to be as a preschool teacher. In order to implement this information, the kindergarten staff needs to reflect on how to let the children become participators in the program.

The booklets also give knowledge on how to be as an adult, this change in adult should be reflecting the program itself, such as “am I being an authoritative adult or am I being



neglecting?” an idea originally written about by Baumrind (1991) and which is referred to in the next chapter, or “how much quality time have I used with that child, have I been too strict with the child or am I being too kind to the child” this last bit is referring to a later chapter containing the idea of a “time bank”

### **2.3.1 Building competence**

The first booklet in the series of four called *I lend you my ear* explains how competence is a major aspect of this program. Providing more competence to the employees of the kindergarten is one of the programs main goals. In the program the authors specifically turn the perspective toward the competence in being able to deal with children that are show challenging behavior as well as being able to do more relationship building and being more inclusive. In this way, the individual children become important participants in the kindergarten community.

As we go back to the first booklet the booklet will concentrate the attention of being able to give guidance to other colleagues in the workplace. This means guidance to the staff that have not been able to attend the training courses or staff that were otherwise not included in the training due to lack of resources.

There is also a chapter on the communication between the guidance seeker and the guidance giver. In this section the authors address body language that is present in the meeting.

Last but not least, the booklet states that it is important that a guidance group is consistent over a period of one to two years. This way there will be continuity and opportunity for maximum learning and development for each individual. But it is also important to bring in new people in the group such that their work does not to stagnate. In order to do this it is important to change the group dynamics and change the group composition. This will in turn give new impulses and will eventually give the groups individuals a better opportunity for learning. The building of competence is not only being taught to the children but also to the adults, the adults are receiving competence enhancement throughout the booklets and this will in turn drip down on the children as the children see a change in adult behavior.

### **2.3.2 The authoritative adult**

Baumrind (1991) developed a diagram that shows how the different adult roles come together, this is the two axis in the diagram are called the relationship axis and the control axis. The



control axis involves elements such as demands on behavior, limits, predictability, routines and the learning of the kindergarten's norms.

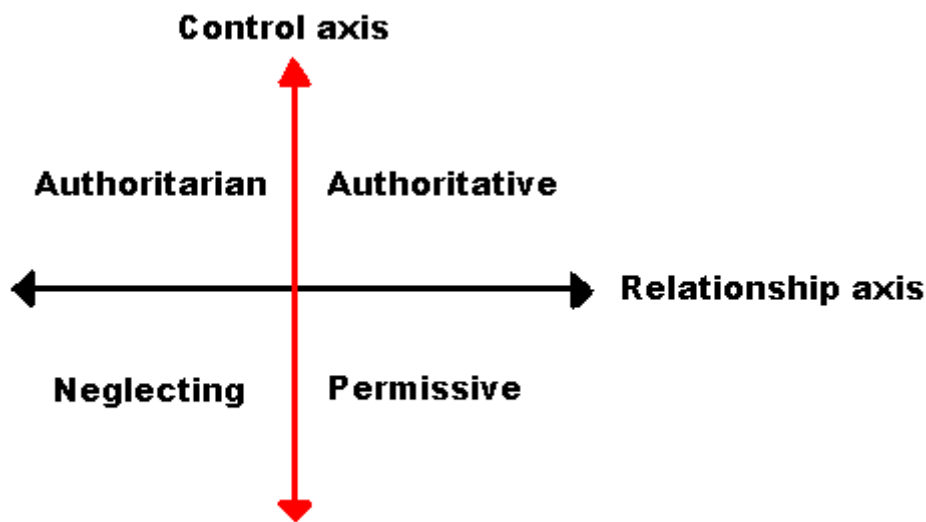


Figure 1. The Authoritative adult role

In the diagram, one can see that the authoritative adult role is in possession of both the relationship with the child but also has the ability to demand a certain amount of behavior, the adult is able to set limits, is predictable and has established routines. All in all, this authoritative adult is a professional pedagogue. The combination of the control axis and the relationship axis decides the outcome of how a child adapts to the many situations it is being exposed to on a day to day basis. Below these four roles an adult may or may not have is explained further.

In the booklet called: *All children on earth have the same rights* Roland and Størksen (2011) write about being authoritative adult, how to implement this in the daily routine and how this in turn will affect relations to the children. In order to implement this, Roland and Størksen (2011) say that “this require that the staff use time to talk together and reflect over the situations that occur during a workday. A team then becomes more consistent and will after a while reach a common understanding among employees” (Roland and Størksen 2011, p. 27) they continue and argue that the “children will meet more consistent and predictable adult that are working from the same principals.” (Roland and Størksen 2011, p. 27)

They also write about the four types of being an educator. These four are called the authoritative adult role, the permissive adult role, authoritarian adult and the neglecting adult.

First the authoritative adult role states that the adult shows warmth and care towards the child, the adult works towards making a good relation with the child and shows an accepting behavior. They also have respect for the children's autonomy and promote democratic principles. This affects the child in a positive direction even with children that show challenging behavior.

The permissive adult role is a role that includes a responsive and supportive style towards the children. But there is a challenge for the adult in showing control and setting limits, this in turn is challenging for a permissive adult when it comes to children with challenging behavior, if an adult that has a permissive role is not able to deal with the challenging child, the child feels unrest and insecurity, which will eventually make the child even more challenging.

The authoritarian adult role is an adult that is generally concerned with control and who is able to set clear limits. They have specific rules for how a child should behave and how they want the children perform in any given situation. This can be a problematic since the perspective of the children and the inclusion of the children are not accepted. The authoritarian adult also does not contribute to overall relationship building. This in turn will create an imbalance between the focus of control and the relationship with the child.

Last there is the neglecting adult role. This adult does not show any emotional behavior towards the child, neither does he or she participates in the children's interests and is not concerned with control in the group. This role can strongly influence the child in a very negative way; the child can be emotionally damaged and can, in worst case scenario, fail to develop into a positive child. This role is also associated with neglect.

The conclusion to the booklet is that the children has the best opportunities if the child is met by an authoritative adult that is able to set the correct limits and the correct times but who are also able to show warmth and care for the children. This adult is able to guide the child in its emotional development and influence the child in a positive way. The research shows that this adult is able to give the best results when it comes to children's integration into the kindergarten environment. The authoritative adult is also associated with the professional pedagogy that the program is aiming towards. This role is beneficial in both the behavior aspect and the learning aspect of a child.

### **2.3.4 Early intervention**

In Roland and Størksen's (2011) booklet called *maybe it is you who makes me happy again*, they discuss the differences between proactive aggression and reactive aggression, they also discuss the different methods of early intervention and handling of challenging behavior. This includes definitions of behavioral problems, internalized aggression and externalized aggression and methods for dealing with these behaviors. They also write about prevention in the early stages of childhood or early stages of kindergarten.

Challenging behavior does not have one definition; it can be behavioral problems, aggression, psychosocial difficulties, social and emotional difficulties, or behavioral disturbances.

According to Roland and Størksen (2011), the primary focal point is on behavior problems and aggression. The main point for this thesis is how they work against these two concepts and what outcome they intent to see. Again, the authors explain the importance of having adults in the kindergarten whom are authoritative. These adults, they explain, are able to provide care and see the children for who they are. Most important, they are able to set limits and can pass on the knowledge to children about how to show positive emotional and physical behavior.

### **2.3.5 Problem solving**

Even though none of the booklets are use this particular phrase, it evident that the program itself has this element as a factor for social competence. By looking at the magnetograph (see attachment 2), which is used as an element in the program to make the children aware of how to see problems, discuss problems and solve problems, in a group or individually, the Be Together Program definitely appears to have this element as a goal of the program. In order to make this goal happen, it is essential that the preschool teachers guide the children, help the children and participate with the children in problem solving discussion, and in the end letting the children take over to solve the problems seen on the magnetograph. This is intended to eventually teach the children to solve problems by themselves, without an adult present.

## **2.4 Comparison: Differences in theoretical findings**

It seems from a glance that the booklets from the Be Together program is filled with tools that reinforces what the program itself wants the staff to be like. "A change in staff and behavior from the adults will ultimately change the child" This method is barely noticeable in the Second Step program. Hence the differences on the theoretical part of the two programs are practically unmatchable.

Or are they?

From looking from a Second Step perspective (and here it is important to remember that the program was instated in the Norwegian kindergartens ten years earlier than the Be Together pilot program) one can argue that the theory of problem solving is not totally different. This can be one of the connections of the two programs. But there are more connections to be found. For example, the empathy training chapter in the Second Step program is very closely connected to the empathy chapter in the Be Together program. Not necessarily with regard to the “getting there” part, but more as a final goal of the Be Together program and the stated aim of the program is itself.

## **2.5 Conclusion part 1**

By looking at all the booklets in the pilot program Be Together and comparing them with the theory given by Granberg (1999), as well as Heggli and Karlsdottir (2002), it is hard to find a direct link that gives any reason to believe that they are on the same path. One might rather say they are going down parallel paths to teaching children about the same social skills. Both programs deal with the teaching of empathy, self-control, aggression management, etc... Yet, whereas the Second Step program is rather shallow on the staff front, the booklets from the Be Together program have implemented a whole range of material that is supposed to help the teacher/preschool teacher transform. This transformation happens as the staff works further with the material and lets the material change their actions and way of thinking.

The Second Step program is also further developed compared to the Be Together program in relation to research and implementation. Implementation takes time, even for small programs, as the kindergartens need to re-establish their way of thinking in an already stressful day, where routines and teamwork is very important. The piloting process will in time be over, and the program will at some point in time just "work". Then there are other factors that have not been taken into consideration. For example, how transferable is this program from one pedagogue to another? Is the program easy to learn?, What about the new staff or newly educated pedagogues? How will they gain the same theoretical knowledge of the program as the ones that were there from the beginning? All these unanswered questions can only be answered over time. Therefore, at this point, this thesis will not explore these potential future challenges.

It is also important to highlight that the Be Together program theory is related to changing the thoughts of the pedagogical approaches of the institution, whereas the Second Step program

focuses on helping the staff in the institution to understand the material and how best to use it in relation to the children. At the same time it offers direct links to the actual work that the staffs are going to be doing with the children; Such as the problem solving section and how to get the children to participate in this exercise.

It is also evident that the problem solving parts of the two programs are very similar. Both programs have this element in their procedures but where the Second Step program shows more realistic situations; situations that the children can relate to and therefore are easier to remember, the Be Together program is more vague. The characters have hard to remember names, feelings and emotions that are harder to teach and the many colors are distracting, which in turn will make it harder to remember.

## **2.6 Comparison: Differences in material findings**

### **2.6.1 Second Step program material**

The Second Step material is composed of 3 parts: (a) the employee guidance book, (b) the box of material used by the employees to educate the children and (c) the parent information material, used to inform the parents of what the children will be educated in.

From the guidance book itself, Egge et.al. (1991) states that the Second Step program is:

A system whose purpose is to teach children pro social skills and reduce the negative impulsive and aggressive behavior. The system is build up around the following goals:  
(3-6 years)

- I. Enhance the ability to:
  - Remember the signs on feelings, so it is easier to understand what one self and others are feeling
  - Place oneself in another person's position.
  - Show compassion and concern for others.
- II. Develop the ability to remember and moderate anger reactions by:
  - Noticing how anger feels.
  - Noticing what make one angry.
  - Train on how to use techniques to control the anger.
- III. Give alternative methods on how to act when we are going to solve a problem by:
  - Using a method for problem solving in social situations.

- Train the social skills

(Egge et.al 1991, p. 49)

### **2.6.1.1 Material for staff**

The staff material is a handbook that is very comprehensive. The book is divided into four parts, the theory and method (part 1), the practical and theoretical specialization (part 2), a part for copying originals (part 3) and an elaboration of the lessons of the program (part 4) Part 3 is not relevant for this thesis but part 1, 2 and 4 are, part 3 is not relevant due to the fact that this part is only for copying purposes. Granberg (1999) describes the material for the staff as follows: “With the Second Step program, it is the learning of social skills put into a system which gives the teacher 'a good and easy pattern' for teaching, it gives a possibility to adjust the program to the class and the teacher's needs in such a way that it is not necessary to follow the program word for word” (Granberg 1999, p. 27).

The staff material is not only used as a guide for the staff to use, it is also important that the staff understands the material they are using. In the book, “Steg for Steg i praksis, en kasus”, Heggli and Karlsdottir (2002) argue that it is of course important that the staff understands the material they are about to teach, but it is equally important that they understand it to a higher level or several higher levels where they can incorporate it into other subjects. “The goals are outside the program, but it is difficult to reach the goals if one has not understood the purpose of the Second Step program. When one has understood the contents and the purpose of the program one can transform this knowledge in such a way that one can teach the student/child in a pedagogic way. One can adapt it to the student/child’s ability and background” (Heggli & Karlsdottir 2002, p. 69)

Heggli and Karlsdottir (2002) also argue that transformation from a mediated action occurs when a new mediated tool is introduced. It transforms the action itself along with the thought around this action. This means that when the Second Step program was introduced to the preschool teachers, their actions changed along with the program. Thus, from having social lessons on the playground, which could be informal and random, such events in the Second Step program are formal and systematic (Heggli & Karlsdottir 2002, p. 34).

From an own perspective it is obvious that the Second Step program is transforming the attitude of the preschool teacher as the program progresses, the teacher needs to stay true to the program and not deviate themselves from the program. An example could be that the teacher is teaching about the necessity to share a toy, different ways of doing this could be to

let the children say “*Well if I can borrow your toy you can borrow mine, and then we can change back later*” or “*We can play together and that way we can share the toy*”. If the teacher then says something like “*No (child’s name), this is not your toy, you should not just take it and you should not share with (child’s name)*” it would be to stay untrue to the program and to not follow up the lessons. This means that the teacher has to change in order to follow the program, even when the program is not being taught.

### **2.6.1.2 Material for children**

The children are not given any written material but are provided with the lessons once every week; these lessons come in a box which includes pictures of children in any given situation. These situations include feelings and emotions, conflicts, friendship and empathy and an anger management part. Here the children are asked, either by role playing, singing or normal conversations to take part in deciphering the picture and finding plausible ways of settling the conflict that they observe in the pictures. By doing this repeatedly the children learn important codes of social interaction. They also learn how to manage their feelings and to recognize what other children are feeling. Last but not least, they learn to be more empathic towards their peers.

Role playing is a major part of the program and is done either by the staff of the kindergarten or by using the program's mascots (a stuffed snail and a stuffed dog) provided in the program. Also in the box one finds a mirror which is used for children to see what they actually look like when they are expressing different feelings.

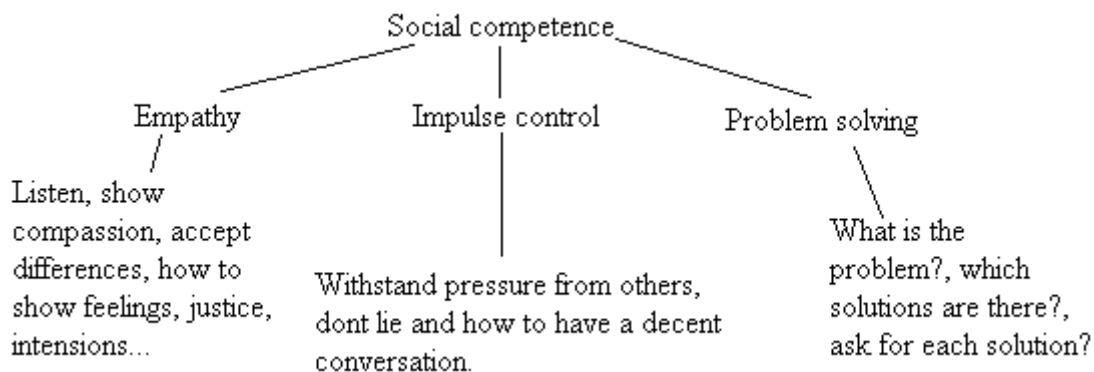
### **2.6.2 The goal of the Second Step Program**

Granberg (1999) describes the goal and purpose of the program as:

to get the children to reflect over their actions. The teacher asks the questions but the student finds the answers. There is no right or wrong answer. It is the students who discuss and find the solutions. The teacher is just a guide...it is not the teacher as teacher but one who begins a process inside the students (Granberg 1999, p. 28).

Furthermore, Granberg (1999) describes how the program has an aim of “reducing negative behavior such as aggressiveness and reduce and better the social competence for children” (Granberg 1999, p. 28). This is done by introducing them to skills such as empathy, impulse control and the control of anger or anger management. Therefore the goal of the program is simple; to eliminate anger within the child group, get them to show more empathy with each

other, and get the children to learn about impulse control and how to manage their impulses. This in turn will teach the children social competence. A diagram of this is shown below.



All these aspects go into each other and thereby give the children social competence.

### **2.7.1 Be Together pilot program material**

The program is divided into 3 main sections of educational material: (a) the material for kindergarten teachers and assistants, (b) material used for educating the children and (c) parent/guardian material used to reinforce the material that the children have learned.

#### **2.7.1.1 Material for staff**

The guide to the program has already been presented in the theory part of this thesis, but as the program states, “Five themed booklets are written for the staff. These booklets are used by the staff through lectures, studying, and discussions with colleagues and in practice” (Midthassel, Fandrem and Godtfredsen 2011, p. 3).

The material for the staff is set up in such a way that it is bound to be discussed in the staff group. It is intended to be used in such a way that the entire staff of the institution knows about the material such that it is discussed among the employees. This is intended to make them more aware of how they behave, what they say and how they act around the children. The awareness method will help change the staff and through colleague guidance and staff meetings, they will help each other change to be better adults and work more professionally.

There are several different booklets that help the staff through this process.

Eventually the staff that has been prepared through this material should be able to teach other staff at the kindergarten. During this process, the whole institution will be schooled and be able to work with the program.



This might not be the case of every kindergarten, since not all kindergartens have the resources available, to let the staff educate each other.

The awareness process is believed to be very important in order to reach the full potential of the program, one should be aware of how they interact with the children on any given time, this method does also do competence enhancement and at the same time does it give the staff a chance to be true to the boundaries which lets the adult be clear, warm and predictable to the children.

### **2.7.1.2 Material for the children**

The material presented to the children comprises a series of booklets and a mascot called the Rainbow Lion and a Magnetograph (see attachment 2).

The Magnetograph presents problems in a make believe kindergarten, Here they are given problems in order to get the children to solve their conflicts and disagreements by themselves. By giving the children a hypothetic problem for them to solve it strengthens their ability to solve their own problems. An example of such a problem might be the following: “Someone has taken the toy that you brought to kindergarten and will not return it to you, what do you do?” The problem itself is obvious, but by letting the children solve the problem with the help of an adult, the program teaches the child to stand on their own two feet when an actual situation arises. In this case, the children can solve the problem together and come up with a solution that makes everyone happy. The pilot program introduces the problem through a magnetic board that acts as a backdrop with an image of either a playground or a “classroom”. On the board the teacher shows and explains the problem through little magnetic figures.

The Rainbow Lion (see attachment 2) acts as the mascot for the program and represents the “Lion Law” (see attachment 2) which is

“Do you know the lion law?” (point at each other)

“I should be me” (point at oneself)

“but give space to others” (fold out your arms and be open)

“So they become themselves, care about someone else” (clap someone on the cheek)

“Help when I can, this makes life better” (Raise your arms)

“For children in every country”

This theme song should make the children more aware of others, it should help the children care about others, help others, be open to others and is directed towards children's rights. Some of the points in the children's rights convention state that all children should have the right to be heard, to be seen and to be safe. (reddbarna.no)

### **2.7.2 Goal for the Be Together Program**

The goals for the Be Together Program are as follows: to give more competence to the professionals in the profession of working with children, to teach social competence to the children in order to make them more prepared for school and life and to teach the children about empathy and problem solving techniques which will help them throughout life.

Another goal for the program is to enhance the competence of the staff of the kindergarten. The enhancements increase the reflection process that the staffs are having. They also increase the staff awareness of how they are around the children on how to be a good adult. The program also seems to want to change the overall behavior of the staffs in the kindergartens in such a way that they are all behaving literally the same way. This in turn will increase how they think as a team. Which seen from the children's perspective is making the adults more predictable.

## **2.8 Conclusion part 2**

Both programs come with a mascot (the Second Step program has two mascots). These mascots are the connection between the children's world and the real world. This may be the most significant similarity of the two programs but smaller similarities are also visible.

For instance, the material for the staff is just a further development in the Be Together program. The ideas behind the program are basically the same. The mediated tools (Second Step teacher guide and the Teacher guide for the Be Together program) do the same job by changing the minds of the teacher to work in a more systematic and formal way.

In one way, the kindergartens that have worked with the Second Step program at an earlier point will likely have an easier transformation into the Be Together program. They will not have to change their actions very much since they are already in the state of mind they are supposed to be in.

Another important point, which links the two programs, is the fact that the material is not the preschool teachers' own, but only partially their own. The relationship between the tool and the human is to be characterized as "appropriation" which is a term used when one "borrows"

material from others and makes it their own. Thereby using half the material and half their own (Heggli & Karlsdottir 2002, p. 36). Both programs are in this state in order to make it as educational as possible for the individual child.

The material for the children is not very different in terms of their goals. However, they are presented in two different ways: looking at the way the problem solving part is presented with the Magnetograph from the Be Together pilot program and the pictures from the Second Step program, their aim is surprisingly the same. The difference here is in the way it is being disseminated.

The difference about the two programs in regard to the material is that the Be Together program is not only putting its focus on the children but the focus is equally important on the adults. The Be Together program does provide the adult with lots of extra tools to enhance their competence whereas the Second Step program is lacking this all together.



### **3. METHOD**

In order to study these two programs further, the decision was made to conduct several qualitative research interviews with the users themselves. In this way, the practitioners using these two programs could provide evidence as to how the programs were related or unrelated to one another on multiple levels.

#### **3.1 Phenomenological research interviews**

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the qualitative interview and use of phenomenological research are intertwined. In this thesis one should find that the phenomenological term is aimed at finding and understanding the social phenomenon as seen from the users' perspective and to describe the world as it is perceived by the informants. In this case, it is the informants' perspective regarding the use of the two programs that one is aiming to understand and compare. It is, in other words, the reflections and perspectives about how the users experience the two programs. It is not be up to me to judge their perspective, but rather to open a window for the reader to see how the users think.

Furthermore, this phenomenological study is applied when doing a semi structured life world interview. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) this entails, "that it is neither an open conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It is formed by an interview guide (see attachment 5) that circles around a certain theme, and which consists of questions one can ask" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 47).

Using semi-formal and semi-structured open-ended interview as a method for interviewing the users of the Be Together piloting program requires the use of asking the same open-ended questions to the interviewees. This approach allows access to faster interviews that could be more easily analyzed and compared. The interviews also bring out the life experience of the informants, a valuable aspect of this thesis because the life experience (the essence of phenomenology) was the only thing that can actually tell which of the two programs were in fact better, equally good or worse.

Use of the semi-structured interview is the approach that I chose. The reasons for this choice was that the interviews become flexible by staying with the interview guide but also being able to ask questions that were outside the interview guide as well. It was also possible to gain

more information on questions asked by further investigating the answer given during the interview. Bruce L. Berg (2004) in his book *Qualitative research methods, for the social sciences*, writes that “questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared standardized questions.” (Berg 2004, p. 81) This means that the questions this thesis asks should be in a consistent and systematic order, going from one program to another and then, in the end, comparing the programs with questions to reflect the comparison idea.

In order to reach out to all informants, a predetermined time and date for the interviews was selected. This prepared the interviewees for the day to come and the interviewer time to prepare to ask the desired questions. The four interviews in the kindergartens were arranged ahead of time such that they fell on a date and time agreeable to the staff's availability. The interviewees had little free time on their hands due to several complications. Two interviews were set at a later date than first decided due to illness and one interview was postponed to a later date due to the fact that the informant was otherwise engaged.

The type of interview conducted in this study is not easily categorized. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) is needed to determine which category they fell into; the closest category that one might use to describe the interviews is that of the the focus group interview. However, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) focus group interviews consist of six to ten interviewees and the interviewer does the moderating, whereas in the interviews that I engaged in were one on one interviews. Some essential elements of the focus group interviews were needed which could be linked to individual interviews as used in this thesis. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) say that these interviews are used to evaluate social programs (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). These are also interviews that provide the elements of the interviewees own perspective and meanings on a given subject. The justification for conducting individual interviews was, firstly, due to the fact that in order to get as much individual feedback as possible, this appeared to be the logical path to take. Secondly, as the study progressed I found it hard to find institutions that lived up to the criteria for inclusion in the study. First, they had to be working with the Second Step program or had to have been working with the program previously. Second, they had to be currently working with the Be Together program.

### **3.2 Participants**

Even though the Second Step program in Norway is a “national” program, it is far from all kindergartens that use the program. This limitation was found during the recruiting process in which I attempted to identify kindergartens that were using the Be Together program and were still using (or had used) the Second Step program. When this process, one would think that every kindergarten would have been involved in using the Second Step program, due to the fact that the program is used most kindergartens in Norway. Yet, after further investigation I found that this was not the case. Some of the pilot kindergartens had in fact used the Second Step program many years ago, but had been overloaded with other programs or programs and had therefore prioritized these programs instead. Some kindergartens did not know about the Second Step program at all and some were in fact still using the Second Step program along with the Be Together program, but these kindergartens were understaffed or otherwise engaged in other demanding tasks, which made it impossible for them to set aside time to participate in this study.

Therefore, it required a great deal of work to find kindergartens that were (a) able and willing to be interviewed, (b) were using today, or had been using previously, the Second Step program, and (c) were at currently using the Be Together program. In the end, two kindergartens were found and were willing to set aside time and make staff available for the interviews.

The participants in this study comprise the 4 staff members working in two kindergartens who in the past had worked with the Second Step program and who are currently involved in piloting the Be Together program. The kindergartens had been selected via convenience sample selection and geography only played a small part in the selection. The reason the kindergartens were chosen were the fact that I had no transport which could take me to kindergartens that were too far away; therefore the geographical concerns were handled in a way where I could within a radius of about 20 km do interviews.

In the two kindergartens, 1 preschool teacher and 1 assistant who had experience with the two programs had been selected. The two participants in the interview were selected by the head teacher in the kindergartens. He/she was able to select the two staff members that were most capable of answering questions in relation to the topic. The head teacher also had more inside knowledge about who would be most competent at participating in the interviews and who had been most dedicated to the two programs.

It was a goal to identify 4 participants for the study that were able to judge the two programs, including how they compared them, used them, which one they preferred using, which they saw as more valuable, what views in general they had about the two programs, and other important factors that may have emerged during interviews. All of this would later be more clearly defined in an interview guide.

By doing individual interviews, the advantages gained were that each informant could give their own life world perspective on what they felt about each program. Also, it was possible to gain as much individual information about the two programs as possible. By using interviews, each participant individually gained insight from both preschool teachers and from other staff. This was an important aspect given the aim of getting both informant views and not a collective view from them as colleagues.

### **3.3 Implementation**

The interviews were conducted during the opening hours of the kindergartens and ranged from approximately 15 minutes to 35 minutes. One of the four interviews was conducted in the middle of the day. This period of the day is when there is normally the most strain on staff and if one staff is required to leave their class to do an interview, then it can create a lot of stress on the other staff.

The place chosen to conduct the interviews was selected by the participants themselves, but was in each case a secluded room, such as an office, where noise from other people could hardly be heard. Also, during the interviews a sign was put on the door to tell other staff that the room was not available and that an interview was in progress. By doing this, the possibility of being interrupted was reduced. This gave a quiet environment with the possibility of reflection, and increased the chance of getting a better conversation going. There was only one interruption during all of the interviews and even though it put both me and the informant briefly off track, we quickly returned to the interview guide. This interruption did not have any implications on the data collected.

### **3.4 The interview guide**

In a semi-structured interview it is necessary to have an interview guide- The guide provides the interviewer with a set of potential questions to follow during the interview. Even though the interviews were semi-structured, the set number of questions were somewhat structured.



In preparation for the interview it was important to develop questions that were related to the topic, but should not be too specific. It was also important that one use a language that was comprehensible to the people being interviewed. This meant that the language should not contain “slang” or professional terminology not used in the kindergarten. By doing this, one gets better answers and results.

A cover-letter provided the interviewer with background information. This information contained the participant’s name, age, gender, number of years employed, and the amount of time spent getting to know, or working with the programs. I found that some of this information needed to be eliminated in order to protect the participants’ anonymity. For example, I decided to cut out the names, ages and number of years employed.

It was also advisable to get to know the space, place and people that I was going to interview. This helped me understand the settings in which the programs were conducted. I also asked about the number of employees, but found that this information was of little use to the thesis. What I did find interesting and useful was the fact that I asked how many minority children each kindergarten currently had. This I found useful because it applied an aspect I had overseen on why the programs were harder to teach to some children than other children and why one kindergarten had more trouble in using the program as well.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe optimal interview questions as being “short and simple” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 146), they further propose that the interview guide should be “a manuscript that structures the interview more or less tightly, the guide can contain some themes that should be covered, or be a detailed sequence of carefully formulated questions” (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, p. 143). This approach as it is described by Kvale and Brinkmann was similar to the one used in this thesis. A number of carefully sequenced and formulated questions aimed at getting information about the problem at hand, in order to connect the questions given to interviewees with the theory chapter of this thesis. I also put a considerable amount of time into organizing the questions in a way that would make them easy to look over after the transcription process and make it easier to extract data needed for the thesis.

The interview guide was not sent to the informants beforehand, this was partly due to the fact that it was very hard to find informants that fell under the criteria that were set and because the informants had a very short notice on the interviews themselves. Instead the interview guide was given to the informants so they could follow the questions as we went through them.

### 3.2.1 Questions

The questions asked should begin “easy” in order to gain the confidence of the interviewee. Easy questions such “how are you today”, “how long have you worked here” and so on can settle the participant’s mind and give the interviewer background information about the subject and the institution they in which they work. The questions, “Are you, or have you, used the ....Program now or earlier?” is the primary question with which the interviews began.

Berg (2004) writes that interviews, “typically begin with mild, nonthreatening questions concerning demographic matters; these questions tend to be easy for the subject to answer and allow interviewers to develop rapport through eye contact and general demeanor. As the interview conversation proceeds, more complex and sensitive questions may be introduced” (Berg 2004, p. 90).

The questions in the interview guide should of course be related to the topic at hand. In this case, how the participants related to and used the Be Together program compared with the Second Step program. Of course, underlining this question with a set number of questions that are more specific, such as, “which program do you find more useful?”, “how much resource have you put into each program?”, “which program would you think the children would prefer?” and so on.

The questions began such that they either fell into categories that were relevant for the specific topic or organized in such a way that they complemented each other. This could be done by first asking questions relating to the Be Together program, then asking questions relating to the Second Step program. The last set of questions asked the interviewee what he or she would say about both programs if they were to compare them.

One should also be prepared to change either the order of the questions or be able to invent new questions as the interview goes on. This is useful if the interviewer did not get answers that speak to the research topic or if they find new questions useful for the later result.

There were nine sets of questions asked. It was not necessary to use them all, but in one way or another during the semi structured interview, the I used several of these.

The first question asked was an introduction question to let the interviewee know what the questions were about (e.g., “Please tell me about the programs you use in this kindergarten”). This was followed up with questions that let the interviewee elaborate on the answer given (e.g., “What do you mean by this?”). Next, came a set of probing questions to access more specific information about what the interviewee is talking about. Direct questions let the interviewee describe his or her thoughts more specifically on a given question (e.g., “How did

you react when a new program was introduced?") and indirect questions were able to give a broader perspective on the question from the interviewee (e.g., "What does the other staff think about the programs?"). This could be followed up with a question that showed whether the interviewee agreed or disagreed with the rest of the staff. By moving on to a new question, one used structured questioning (e.g., "I would like to move over to a different topic"). Last but not least came an interpreting question, which allowed for more depth in the responses that were given. This was useful if the answer did not offer a response that was particularly relevant to the research questions. By offering interpretations during the interview I was able to get to more specific answers (e.g., "Does this mean that you like both programs but if you could choose, then you would choose X?")

During an interview it is necessary to allow pauses and silences. This gives the interviewee time to reflect and to elaborate on a given question. Silence is considered important in helping the interviewee proceed to answering the next question. After reviewing the interview guide above, and more specifically, the questions necessary to answer my research problem, I refer the reader to attachment 1.0, the interview guide.



## 4. ANALYSIS

No program was used for the analysis of the interview transcripts. As only four interviews were conducted, they were considered manageable enough to transfer them manually into the thesis. By highlighting the answers given by the informants using a system of color codes for the different themes I investigated. For example, pink was used for answers to the question, “Do you still use the Second Step program?”, green for “Which program do you find more useful?”, blue for “which staff material do you find more useful?” and so on.

By using the color coded analysis of the data collected, it was easy to plot the data into the themes of the results chapter and thereafter develop a conclusion about each interviewee’s perceptions. I was then able to combine these ideas across the different participants leading to a collective conclusion on all the empirical data collected. By giving myself this overview during the whole process, I was able to give more details in my findings offer more specific conclusions with regard to my research question.

### 4.1 Transcribing

When transcribing the interviews from verbal to written form, the interviews begin to be organized and structured. In this way, they become easier to analyze. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) offer guidelines as to how to do the transcription procedure. They argue that one important feature in this process is to write in detail how the transcription report was done. If more than one person has transcribed the interviews then the same factor applies for all involved. Since this is not the case in this study, where only one person will transcribe the interviews (the researcher himself) this issue does not apply.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) writes that it is normal for a phenomenological research interview “to be transcribed, and the written text and sound recordings together provide the material for the following analysis of meaning” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 47). In this case, the analysis would include the comparison of the two programs seen from the interviewees’ life world perspective. This means that the programs were seen from the interviewee’s perspective in an everyday setting, how they experienced them and how they used them.

Since the questions would be asked in Norwegian and then would be translated into English during the time of transcribing process, the translation and meaning of the answers might have lost some contextual information. Therefore, I chose not to translate from Norwegian to

English during the transcribing process. Rather, I waited until I was in process of presenting the results of findings in the following chapter before translating the interview texts into English.

## **4.2 Reliability**

“Reliability has to do with the consistency and credibility of the research result. Reliability is often treated as being a question of whether the result can be reproduced at other times by other researchers” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 250). In other words, if another interviewer asks the same questions to the same interviewee and the interviewee changes their answers then the research is not reliable.

Reliability of the interview can also be questioned if the interviewer asks leading questions. This can in many cases influence the answers which therefore become less credible. This was done on some occasions in order to help the interviewee find the correct words, such as when it seemed as if the interviewees were struggling on some part of the question. Other times, the questions had to be asked in a different way in order to get the informants to understand the question’s intention.

Even though it is possible for the interviewee to change their view on their answers they should still be more or less reliable if another researcher does the same research.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that “even though it is wishful to get a high reliability in the findings of the interviews to withstand subjectivity, a too strong focus on reliability can hold back on creative thinking and variation” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 250). The authors go on to say that it is important “that the interviewer uses their own interviewing style, improvises as they go and follows up on hunches along the way” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 250). I was able to improvise along the way to some degree as the interviews were going on. This helped in getting more information and also made the interviewees feel more comfortable. For example, one of these questions was, “Do you feel like you have to change the way you behave as an adult in order to be true to the Be Together program?” Of course this question was applied to all of the following interviews to increase reliability of findings across participants.

As mentioned above in the presentation of the interview guide, it is important that this aspect of changing the questions, adding questions (improvising as you go) and using an own style of interviewing within a set boundary (using the interview guide) is not in conflict with ensuring the reliability of findings. I did not feel that as the interviews progressed, rather, the reliability was strengthened by doing this.

### 4.3 Validity

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that one cannot tell in a research interview whether the findings are valid or not. This is because one is not able to tell the validity of the interviewee's answers. In other words, the information given could be untrue or false. But, in the case of this study it is not justifiable to say that an answer is untrue or false since the answers given are valid only in the eye of the beholder. Only the interviewee knows whether the answer given is true or not. Therefore, it is very hard for an interviewer to determine the validity of the answer. Even though this is the case, I found that one informant did question whether the informant should be totally honest with me. I suggested that only a totally honest answer would be the right path to take. This scenario causes one to possibly question the validity of the other interviews done. If one informant felt that it may have been reasonable to provide less than truthful answers, then others may have actually done so. However, my own interpretation is that most informants seemed to be very honest. They were at least able to answer with a level of certainty and consistency.

One way to assess the validity of the interviewees answers are multiple questions about the same topic. If the interviewee changes their answers, one can question whether they are valid for the research. But Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) interpret this in the following manner:

If the interviewee during an interview frequently changes their answers about their attitudes towards for example immigrants, it is possible that it is not because of the unreliability or an invalid interview technique, but it can show that the interview techniques capability of getting different nuances and liability towards social attitudes (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 257).

I used this method on several questions, by applying the same question in the end of the interviews, but by asking the question in a different way, each time this was done the informants answered as they had previously.

Another method for improving validity in an interview study is through the process of triangulation. This method involves combining more than one technique in qualitative research. Here, one can combine observation and interviewing and then proceed to find the validity in the attitudes towards the two programs. This is also called pragmatic validity. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) there are two types of pragmatic validity. "One is whether the knowledge statements given are followed up with action and the other one is

whether the statements given contribute to a change in action” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 262). In the first case, if the interviewee states that they are happy using the Be Together program and expresses this during lessons with the children then one can judge the pragmatic validity as being high. Yet, if the preschool teacher or assistant does not show any genuine acceptance of the program during lessons with the children and during the interview says that the program is very pleasant to use, then the validity can be considered low.

Thus, one can determine the validity by combining verbal statements with observational research. By using triangulation to clarify how valid the verbal statements of the interviewees are. This method was not used due to the lack of time given to me at each kindergarten, and the fact that the lessons were not scheduled. Consequently, I did not know when they were having the lesson. This made it a problem to do observations and this approach was therefore excluded from this study. In other words, it could have been done to improve the validity of the findings of this thesis.

#### **4.4 Generalization**

For research to be generalizable it should be transferable to other research situations. The questions asked should also be transferable, giving the same results in a given interview within the same theme. However, some researches argue that when one is interviewing only a few people it will be more difficult to generalize answers. For example with this thesis, the selection of participants is limited. This means that generalization from only two kindergartens with a total of only four informants is quite difficult. I also found that the informants did not have the same answers to the same questions. One informant enjoyed using the Be Together program more than the Second Step program, whereas three informants preferred the Second Step program. This makes it hard to generalize on the basis of participating kindergartens using both programs. This may also be because of how the Be Together program has been implemented in each kindergarten, or how many of the children understand the program (i.e., a better understanding often gives better results).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that one should consider whether generalization is a local interest or if it should be applicable to a whole population. First and foremost, the research is not applicable to a whole population because of the limitations of kindergartens participating in the research. Second, it is not all participating kindergartens that are working with or have been working with the Second Step program and the Be Together Piloting Program



simultaneously. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe 3 different forms for generalization in a case study: (a) naturalistic generalization, (b) static generalization and (c) analytic generalization.

“Naturalistic generalization is based on personal experience. It rests on tacit knowledge about how things are and gives expectations rather than formal predictions. It can also be expressed in words, and thereby go from tacit knowledge to explicit, concrete knowledge” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 266).

Static generalization differs in many ways and is applicable to a random selection of interview people. “Static generalization is possible for an interview survey with a small number of participants as long as they are randomly selected and the results are quantifiable” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 266).

“Analytic generalization involves a reasonable valuation about whether the findings from one study can be used as guidance for what could happen in a different situation” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 266).

By using these three forms of generalization it is possible to pick out aspects of each and use them in this thesis. First, the study sought to find analytic generalization. This means that one should be able to see whether the results from one kindergarten using the two programs are the same for other kindergartens using the two programs. However, one should also keep in mind that this is a naturalistic generalization which is based on personal experience (i.e., each interviewee’s own experience concerning what they feel about the Be Together Program is compared with their feelings about the Second Step program). Therefore, findings should not be transferable to other kindergartens that use the same programs because they may or may not have a different point of view.

Last, there could be an argument for static generalization since the selections of participants are randomized to the selected kindergartens and since the amount of interviewees are small. Yet, one should keep in mind that the smaller the amount of people in the research study, the weaker the generalization is (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue lastly that the results of an interview are not able to be generalized. They state that “the number of interviewees depends on the objective of the research. In postmodern conceptualizations of social sciences the goal of universal generalization is replaced by the possibility to transfer knowledge from one situation to another, with a focus on the social sciences context and heterogeneity” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 181).

It was found that aspects of all 3 forms of generalization were indeed found in the interviewing of the two kindergartens. Naturalistic generalization did appear as the interviewees had their own experiences with the two programs, but their answers were not transferable to the other kindergartens due to the fact that they were two kindergartens with two different groups of children; one had more minority children with Norwegian as their second language and the other had more children with Norwegian as their first language. Static generalization did not apply due to the amount of informants. The small handful of informants makes generalization of this type very weak. Last but not least, there is analytic generalization, where it was found that the answers given at the first kindergarten did not correspond to the second kindergarten. This again could be due to the fact that one kindergarten had a different group of children than the other.

Berg's (2004) presentation of the generalization process can be usable in this thesis. He explains that when a finding in an interview has been analyzed, it is possible to see whether this applies for other kindergarten staff. He argues that even though a finding is specific to the understanding of that particular individual, it does not mean that the same findings apply to all other staff or even staff at separate kindergartens. Rather, it "suggests an explanation for why some other" (Berg 2004, p. 259) staff are likely to think the same way.

This leads to the conclusion that generalization in this study is based not on whether the findings can be directly transferred to all kindergartens using the two programs, but that the staff of other kindergartens may have reasons to think the same thoughts as participants in this investigation.

## **4.5 Ethical considerations**

One should consider that ethical dilemmas are not bound to the period in which the interview is being conducted, but pertain to all aspects of the research.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state:

Interview research is a moral search. It is bound to the moral question, both in the interview study's findings and its goal. The human interaction in the interview influences the interviewee, and the knowledge that is produced during the interview influences the interviewer's perspective on the human situation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 80).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest seven ethical situations one should consider before, during and after the research interviews. These are as follows: (1) the thematic, (2) planning,

(3) the interview situation, (4) transcribing, (5) analyzing, (6) verification and (7) reporting. These are described in detail below.

The thematic implication, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) put it, “should not only discuss the scientific values of the knowledge that is being sought after, but should also consider improvements in the human situation that is being explored” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 80).

The planning phase should “include the interviewees’ consent to participate in the research, ensure their confidentiality and consider which implications the research may have for the interviewees” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 81). During the planning phase and up until the interviews were conducted I decided to make the informants as anonymous as possible by not making them identifiable in any way. This was in order to ensure that the data collected was in fact confidential. By doing this I found that it was more ethical and that the informants also showed more trust in me.

The interview situation should include the assessment of the implications for the interviewee. This would include changes in perception of their self-esteem and their experience of stress during the interview. It was not clear from the transcripts whether the informants were in fact stressed from the questions they were given, but as they were told that there was no connection between myself and the actual evaluation of the Be Together program, and that I was doing this thesis on my own initiative, they seemed to be more relaxed. This also proved to be a strong element as the answers they gave appeared to be more trustworthy.

The transcription phase should also be considered confidential, and take into account “what it means to do a loyal written transcription of the interviewees verbal statements” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 81). During the transcription process, it was clear that I should be loyal to the confidentiality of the informants, therefore no personally identifiable elements were transcribed and names and places were changed to pseudonyms or removed all together.

The analyzing process should also involve ethical considerations as to how deep the interview should be analyzed and whether the interviewee should participate in the process of analyzing their statements. The informants were not asked to take part in this process. This was due to the lack of time available for analyzing data. It also seemed as if the informants had little time to devote to such an activity.

The verification process should consider ethical implications for the researcher. This means that the researcher should report their knowledge so that it is as verified as possible. “This includes how critical questions can be asked of the interviewee” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 81). The questions asked were not more critical then they needed to be in order to answer

the research question for this study. They did not damage the informants in any psychological way. Arguably, they contributed to getting thoughts going with regard to other work being done by the informants. For example, they were also engaged in an evaluation of the Be Together program during the same period of time.

Lastly, ethical implications concerning the interviewees' confidentiality should also be highly considered during the reporting phase. The kindergarten and staff did not suffer from the interviews, the data collected were held to a high level of confidentiality. None of the kindergartens or staff are recognizable in the presentation of findings in the following section. This, I believe, makes the thesis stronger and more ethical.

As for the study as a whole, I did not find any ethical complications before, during or after the interviews. The kindergartens were prepared for an interview and were also prepared for the use of a recording device to record the interview beforehand.

In addition, an information letter (see attachment 3) was given out before the interviews began. This gave the informants a written statement saying that all information would be handled in a confidential way and fictive names would be used.

An application was sent to the Norwegian Social Science Data service (NSD) in order to do interviews in the kindergartens the response from the application was received (see attachment 4). This letter provided written proof that no personal information would be registered during the writing of this thesis, and that there were no reason to report to NSD in order to conduct the interviews.



## **5. RESULTS**

During the interviews, questions were asked and answers were given. The questions that were asked followed the interview guide chronologically. In the same manner, the answers that are presented in this thesis follow the chronological line of the interview guide. The presentation of results is as follows:

First an interview summary will be presented, which will provide the reader with a summary of all the interviews and what they say as a whole. This is done so that the reader will not necessarily have to read the actual interviews that support this thesis. Second, the thesis will present selections of the interviews and in the informants' own words.

### **5.1 Informant information**

In order to organize the informants, or interviewees, into groups of preschool teachers and other staff from the kindergartens, the preschool teachers will be called Pre 1, Pre 2 and OS 1 and OS 2, where Pre will stand for Preschool teacher and OS for Other Staff. Other staff in this instance, were staff that were educated and had some degree of training in the field of education, and could be working either as assistants or has educational knowledge and with some pedagogical background. The corresponding number will tell the reader whether the interview was from kindergarten 1 or kindergarten 2. In order to keep true to the ethical standards of the study, the names of the kindergartens will not be provided and neither will the names of the staff, all informants were in fact female and therefore they are either referred to in this chapter with female pronouns such as she or her. Also, the interviews have been translated into English, in order maintain continuity of the thesis.

### **5.2 Comparison: Differences in empirical findings**

### **5.3 Summery of interview findings**

What was found in the interviews was easy to analyze when looking at the Second Step program with its lack of theoretical basis on how to carry oneself and what to do in order to follow the program. This finding was clear to the extent that the program is missing a key element. This element was in fact present in the Be Together program. The program materials include chapters that address many theory rich approaches such as: (a) the authoritative adult, (b) banking time, (c) am I a good adult to be around today?, (d) warm and caring adults and

(e) warm but still firm adults were all embraced by all of those who had exposure to the program. This was true regardless of whether they leaned more towards preferring the Second Step program, where in the “middle” or held preferences for the Be Together program. Every informant agreed that these were important lessons that made them better professionals within their field. It was also clear that this part of the Be Together program was discussed a lot, applied in practice and, more important, informants reported that it worked.

When looking at the children’s material of the Be Together program it was clear that none of the informants were very keen on this. There were a lot of missing elements. For example, the children’s material lacked a presentation of goals, it had hard to read figures and the figures were too small. In addition, the material was hard to use and took too much time to set up. Half of the informants reported that the material was unusable in conflict situations and three out of four would rather have used the children’s material of the Second Step program. This meant that only one of the informants was truly dedicated to the Be Together program.

For half the informants their critical view was due to the lack of resources and that the program was used language that was somewhat hard to understand. This was because 9/10 of their children came from another country than Norway and their language was not good enough, which meant that they did not understand the humor of the material. They did not understand the lessons built into the material and they generally not gained very little from the material. One informant who had a lot of Norwegian children in the class said that even though they had good language skills, they found the material hard to understand. The humor did not catch on, the language was viewed as “old fashioned,” and three of the informants mentioned that the songs were too much like psalms.

One informant thought that the Be Together program was too colorful which gave the children too much stimuli. This overshadowed the seriousness of the program and put a damper on the overall meaning of the program.

Overall the informants gave clear results. By combining half the material from the Be Together program (the theory books) and half the material from the Second Step program (the children’s material) one of the staff of one of the kindergartens said that they had a very useful program that could go a long way.

## 5.4 Answers

### 5.4.1 Do you have any previous knowledge of the Second Step program?

The first question that was asked, was whether the interviewees had previous knowledge of the Second step program. They answered that they all had experience with the program one way or the other, none of them had not been attending any courses in the Second Step program but they had a lot of knowledge about it. Not only from reading but also from their coworkers whom had been attending courses when the program was first launched. Pre 2 had in fact been around from the beginning, when it was first launched and had also been involved in the implementation process in the kindergarten.

### 5.4.2 Is the kindergarten still practicing the Second Step Program?

When I asked whether the kindergartens were still practicing the Second Step program the interviewee Pre 1 had to admit that this was still the case. The reasons Pre 1 stated were that a lot of their staff had considerable of knowledge of the program, they “*had it under their skin*” and they already had the material for the program. Also Pre 1 reasoned that the program was safe, good, it worked and was very simple to use. Pre 1 explained further that this is the program that she reaches to when there is a conflict on the playground.

*Pre 1: “Yes, I like the fact that when you see someone that is sad and the conversation that you get going, it gives the possibility for the guilty one to heal for what he has done, you have a possibility to change. And that is what I find nice.”*

Pre 1 explained furthermore that the guidance teacher for the Be Together program had said that the Second Step program rubbed the material into the children. But this was not the way Pre 1 experienced it.

*Pre 1: “ I experience that one is put into responsibility and that is what I think I right... it is about using words instead of actions and the ability to handle it in a simple way, with the help of the tools given by The Second Step Program. And have the possibility to clean up. And then of course one hopes that after several times they understand it.”*

OS1 said that she still used the program even though it was over 6 years ago since she was first introduced to it-. She uses the Second Step program only with individuals and sporadically, when she finds that nothing else helps.

*OS1: “Yes sporadically, on a one on one occasion, when we think it is useful, then we pull it out”*



Pre 2 was the only one of the four informants who had worked with the program since it was originally introduced into the Norwegian kindergarten system a little more than 10 years ago. This meant that Pre 2 had used the program from the beginning.

*Pre 2: "Yes I have worked with the Second Step program for about 10 years"*

Pre 2 also told me that she was still using the Second Step Program

*Pre 2: "I use it with individual children who have a hard time with social competence (...) and then I use it with the intermediate children, the four year olds, because we use the Second Step program with them"*

OS2 said that they were in fact using the Second Step program, but did not use it with the oldest children.

*OS2: "yes, for the 3 year olds, the youngest in the big class, there the oldest have Be Together and the 3 years olds have the Second Step program."*

### **5.4.3 How much time and resources have you put into getting to know the material for the Second Step Program?**

When I asked whether the interviewees had put in a lot of time and resources in getting to know the material of the Second Step program Pre 1 answered that she had not put a lot of time into this because she has had a lot of staff around that know the material well. It has made it easier for Pre 1 to get to know the material because she has been able to get a hold of her colleagues and this way get to know the program itself and how to teach it.

OS 1 answered that she had the program running for 3 years and that for her, it was easier to get to know, as it was both easier to use and easier to remember.

*OS 1: "it is a little easier to remember in a way, and then it is easier to pull out. One can just pull out one picture at a time and then get them to fit with the conflict at hand and then use it. So, I would say it is rather easy to use."*

Pre 2 did not give a time frame for how much time she had put into getting to know the Second Step program, but from Pre 2's statement it seemed like it was a lot.

*Pre 2: "yes and I have worked with it so many times that now I know it. Now I have it under my skin."*

OS 2 explained that she had worked mostly with the youngest children but that she had put most of her resources and time into learning the Second Step program.

*OS 2: "I have worked mostly with the youngest, I have worked with the pictures and the material that follows, but it is a lot of the same that the oldest are working with."*

OS 2 also said that she had put far less time into the Be Together program than she had put into the Second Step program.

*OS 2: "Not fully as much time as for the Second Step program, I am not normally the one that teaches the material but I have read the books, but it is not me who has dedicated myself to it the most"*

#### **5.4.4 How useful is the Be Together Program in conflict situations and relationship building?**

When asked whether The Be Together program has been useful in conflicts and relationship building. The interviewees answered as follows:

*Pre 1: "Do you want me to be honest? Well I am not fond of the Be Together Program at all. I have been sitting with it day in and day out on courses and I have been on the starting rounds when it was launched, and I should know a lot about it, since it is me who has been the front-figure for it, but we have a lot of minority children...there it does not work! It is far too...it has too many words, it has too many nuances in the feelings for it to work. We also tried using it for relationship building in a girl group that had a lot of girl intrigue...We tried role playing and everything and it just stops at a point...It is the transferring process...it is the maturity of the child...but it is too theoretical in the setting and it is when you are outside that you need the tools. It is outside that the most conflicts happen. In the Second Step program, I don't need to get a hold of anything; I don't need to show a book...I mean I have myself... Maybe I have not implemented it enough, but it is too based on the material. It is good material, it is good that we have a program for the children, but it is just too based on the fact that I need to get something, I mean I have to make it concrete, and putting it in the everyday routine is hard."*

Pre 1 went further and said that the material was more useful for adults. There was just too much adult related humor in it, and the humor that was in the program made it seem ridiculous.

Pre 1 even explained during the interview that it seemed like an adult man had been playing to get most of the humor out of the program and that the program did not really fit the age of the children that it was estimated to work on.

*Pre 1: "It is something about the fact when you are working with such small children, then it does not work. There are a lot of terms that the children do not understand. The theory for the children demands too much abstract thinking and I feel the it fits children in elementary school better than preschool children."*

OS1 found the Be Together program to be too difficult to implement which was reasoned with the fact that the assistants and staff that were not preschool teachers had little training in the program. OS1 explained the situation as follows:

*OS 1: "The first thing is that we had very little training. The second thing is that there are so many more things.... One should be able to rig it and it takes time before one can actually use it, so I have not really used it. I have to admit that, maybe, it is because it is so new, maybe, it is because I have not been trained in it. Maybe others use it more."*

Pre 2 said that she used the Be Together program a lot, but there was especially one element of the "chest" (see attachment 2) that was used the most.

*Pre 2: "(...) I use the rainbow lion and the lion law, what he says, and I try to talk to them about what the lion would have done and what wise thoughts he would have had. He gets a color for every wise thought he has had."*

OS 2 said that it was useful because the children find the material fun and by having fun they remember the program.

*OS 2: "Yes I do, because it is that material with the magnetograph, they think it is very fun, and then they can set up a case, and then the children take part in solving the case and move the figures and tell what they would do. When they participate in these things they often remember it better."*

#### **5.4.5 How usable is the Be Together program material?**

When asked the question about to what degree the interviewees found the material for the Be together program useful, they answered:

*Pre 1: "The board, it is too hard to handle, it has a system, it has things that need to be pulled out, that is just the practical things. And then there are the figures. They are too unclear and they are too humorous in their appearance, they are too fancy. So, when they are angry and mad, it just doesn't come out clearly. The small books are okay, when one has learned how to turn them the right way around. I mean, there is a technique for this. But these are useful."*

Pre 1 went further and said:

*Pre 1: "I feel sometimes that I use up all my energy, it is not interesting for a 4 year old to talk for 20 minutes about a difficult subject around these figures... The names are just dumb...they should be more realistic."*

Pre 1 again restated her perception that the names were just too humoristic and that they got too much attention. Thus, it was hard to remember the names of all the figures.

OS 1 said that she found the program useful and reasoned the statement with the following:

*OS 1: "We had a group of 4 year olds over a period of 6 months where we went through the Rainbow Lion book. This is the book that one has to go through in order to get the shield...and it did not hit the 4 year olds that I had. To say it this way, there were a lot of minority children there, but I think that the language was a little strange. It was like a mischievous humor and one should be able to understand a little, maybe you have to be from our culture and be older than the children we had in order to*

*understand this mischievousness. It was a little funny for us, but it just sailed right past the children. So, I don't think it attaches itself very much, I have to say that."*

Pre 2 thought that the program was very useful, even though some elements lacked attention. Also the Be Together program was hard for the children to get to know if they had not had the Second Step program beforehand.

*Pre 2: "I was lucky last year that I had children from the year before whom had the Second Step program and then I had children who came from other kindergartens who had never had it before. It was then that I saw that the Be Together program works best on the children who had something before. They must have something as a basis. Had they gone through the Second Step program then they would have understood more of what we were talking about and they would have had a little more inside them before they went on to The Be Together program. I think It works best this way (...) I have faith in the Second Step program, therefore I am not able to put it away all together."*

OS 2 did also say that the Be Together program had some elements that were better than the Second Step program. She found that the staff material was more useful in particular.

*OS 2: "It is a little hard to say, because they are two good products. We have worked with the Second Step program for years and have been pleased with this but now we have started working with the Be Together program and are pleased with that also (...). We are very pleased with the adult elements in the Be Together program, and this is something that the Second Step program does not have, so therefore we are very pleased with the Be Together program."*

#### **5.4.6 Which staff theory books/booklets would you rather use?**

When asked generally how participants found the staff theory materials they answered:

*Pre 1: "These staff theory books that were in the package were very good. One gets to refresh...we have had a lot of good discussions in the staff group. In the class we are now allowed to say, "have you been a good adult to be around today?" For us, the attitude of the Be Together Program has absolutely been the most valuable."*

OS 1 answered that the Be Together program booklets were very useful and answered:

*OS 1: "Well the theory, then I have to say that the theory part of the Second Step program I read a long time ago, but I would think that the theory part of the Be Together program was alright. I liked reading it, I think that the models of the warm and cold adult were clear."*

Pre 2 agreed with Pre 1 and OS 1 and had other positive things to say about the staff book.

*Pre 2: "That would have been Be Together, because there is a lot of good research, the books are easy to read. I have tried 'banking time' with the children and I see that it works very well and 'breaking the success factor'. This is stuff we talk about all the time (...) and this bit with the authoritative adult were one should be warm and clear also, that I have very much faith in, because I see that it works."*

OS 2 also agreed with the above and said that she was very pleased with the Be Together program's staff material.

*OS 2: "Yes, the staff theory books would be something that we would have used from the Be Together program They are really good, we recommend it to everybody. That part we think is really good."*

#### **5.4.7 Is there a change of attitudes?**

When asked whether the interviewees believe that they need to change their attitudes in order to be honest to the program they answered:

*Pre 1: " No, not really, but if you are thinking about the authoritative aspect, then this is an attitude that I have. So, I feel that one should not change their attitude and ideology in the class. But the staff needs to go more into themselves and be more exposed to each other and how we behave. It is like this nowadays that if one is authoritative, then one is transparent and one will comment "Oops, now you were on the wrong axis!" When you do this it is very positive... to have this correction in the class, I liked this part a lot about The Be Together program!"*

*OS 1: "No!"*

*Pre 2: "No, I am who I am!"*

OS 2 did not agree, but at the same time was a little vague, stating:

*OS 2: "well in the theory section of the program we have learned a lot, in there, there is stuff about how we change ourselves in order to show how we should act in front of the children."*

#### **5.4.8 What are the similarities between the two programs?**

When asking the interviewees whether they see any similarities between the two programs, they answered:

*Pre 1: "Yes, well, no! The goal is that there should be good interactions. In both of the programs the goal is that people should be good to each other, don't hit each other and don't shut anyone out. Yes, well...social competence, so the similarity of the goal is the same, but I think the methods is different. I mean, the Second Step program is practical, easy to use, it works with children. The other one I experience as hard, theoretically complicated and hard to use and handle."*

Pre 1 explained further that the program needed someone with passion behind it, someone that could be the front figure at the kindergarten to run it, but she was not sure whether she had any of this or even if the program fitted her role. Pre 1 came to this conclusion based on the fact that they already had a hectic everyday routine. Although she had been using the program, from her perspective it seemed that it would not become a unified program in the

kindergarten. This was largely due to the lack of knowledge of the program that had yet to be given to the rest of the staff.

*Pre 1: "In the Be Together program only 2 things or so are usable, but in the Second Step program, everyone is informed, and even though I had not used it before I could easily get a hold of the techniques and get access to the knowledge behind it."*

OS 1 answered that the two programs were connected in a way with the following reasoning::

*OS 1: "It is the part about teaching the children empathy, which is the similarity I think. And then the magnetograph with the face expressions can be paralleled with the pictures that we have used in the Second Step program. They are the same in a way, I think. But it is obvious that the adult part of the Be Together Program is clearer than the adult part that we learned in the Second Step Program."*

OS 2 said that the two programs did have similarities in the goals but the "packing" was different and the way that the programs were taught was different.

*OS 2: "When there are two different materials, one will also work differently with them, but all these things come into them both, conflict solving... that is in both projects. So they are a lot alike, but they have different ways of teaching."*

#### **5.4.9 Which program is more usable?**

In order to get a more precise answer from the interviewees, they were asked which program they find more useful. Their answers were as follows:

*Pre 1: "That would definitely be the Second Step program, without doubt!"*

*OS 1: "Absolutely, the Second Step Program, without a doubt."*

Pre 2 thought some of the Be Together program elements were more useful than others, but as stated above, she was not really willing to put the Second Step program on the shelf just yet.

*Pre 2: "I think that the staff guide book was altogether totally unique, it is fantastic (...) the thought about breaking the 'success factors,' the cross with the authoritative adult and the 'banking time,' that is what is totally unique and which is very, very good and which deals with the adult role (...) But the children's program I was a little more skeptical towards. The language was old. The songs were psalm-like, it doesn't catch on, neither with me or the children. (...) I always go back and compare it to the Second Step program because I think that part is better. But the adult part, well, there isn't really an adult part in the Second Step program other than the guide book. But the thought about how one should be in the Be Together program is very good, and it works very well"*

So what Pre 2 really is saying is that she has split opinions. The elements from the Be Together program for the staff are very good, but she would rather use the elements for the children from the Second Step program.



Pre 2 continues during the interview to explain that her dedication to the Be Together program slowly started to disappear when she immersed herself more into the material.

*Pre 2: "(...) but I was very dedicated in the beginning (...) so I began and I was very optimistic, but then I started to fall out, and then I thought 'no'."*

OS 2 did think that the material for the adults in the Be Together program was useful, particularly because of the fact that the Second Step program did not have such material, as mentioned earlier. However, OS 2 also thought that the Second Step program had elements that were very useful, yet, she did not offer any details concerning this issue.

#### **5.4.10 Will the Be Together program replace the Second Step program?**

The interviewees were also asked whether they would think that the Be Together program will eventually replace the Second Step program as a national program. The answers they gave were as follows:

*Pre 1: "No I don't think so. No, I think The Second Step program has attached itself, but then again the Second Step program has been around for a long time now and the Be Together program has only been around for a year."*

Pre 1 is also worried about the many millions of Norwegian crowns that have been used in establishing the program and training staff at the various kindergartens. Pre 1 says:

*Pre 1: "What did we get out of it? This is what the others are complaining about, the courses have only been attended by preschool teachers and all the others have only been given staff meetings...they have gotten a handbook and been told to read it."*

Following this statement, Pre 1 repeats that it is easier to learn from other staff through the Second Step program. With respect to the Be Together Program, she feels that it is more difficult because of all the different tools and elements of learning that one should master in order to get the most out of the program.

Pre 1 also says that the Be Together program tells the staff very little about how to implement it into the kindergarten. It is up to each individual preschool teacher to see how much he/she is able to bring out to the kindergartens.

*Pre 1: "It is like this, when I come back from a course then we can talk about it with the other staff, but I am not able to present it in the right way and we also have other things that we need to take up during the staff meetings."*

OS 1 that replacing the Second Step program with the Be Together program was not the right choice for her kindergarten. She reasoned that there are no more funds available for the

kindergarten to continue with the program. OS 1 also said that the kindergarten will likely discontinue the program due to other reasons.

*OS 1: "If I think from our kindergarten's perspective, I do not think so, but I don't know if others have put in more resources than we have."*

OS 1 continues:

*OS 1: "We are not continuing this year, the kindergarten head has decided. We do not have the resources to continue this year. But when we decided this, there were a lot who said that they would, of course, use the theory that they have learned about conflict situations. Some might bring up the magnetograph again when the situation is there to use it, some might do that, but it is nothing I will do."*

Pre 2 was really unsure whether the Be Together program would replace the Second Step program altogether, reasoning:

*Pre 2: "I am not really sure, I am a little more pleased with the Second Step program than the Be Together program when it come to the elements for the children, but if it will take over... I was very happy for something new when the Be Together program came, I thought 'so fun, now there is something new.' I have worked with the Second Step program for so long so I was ready for something new (...) but when I really got into it and I began to use it, then I didn't think so anymore. I thought there were more possibilities with the Second Step program. It was something about the goal. I didn't know what the goal was, what do they really want? What do they really want to achieve with this teaching?"*

OS 2 believed that the kindergarten would work with the Be Together program in the future.

*OS 2: "Yes, we will work with it in the future, we will absolutely do that. It is a very good project and we like the adult part from the Be Together program a lot."*

OS 2 also believed that this was a hard question to answer but had faith in the future of the Be Together program:

*OS 2: "...it is hard to say. They can probably go a long way and I think this is because of the adult role (...) because this is a really big help for the staff to have an adult section, and with this they can go very far. That I absolutely believe, but it is hard to say what is going to happen, but I think they can go a very long way (...) it is like it has more legs to stand on."*

#### **5.4.11 Which program seen from the children's perspective is more useful?**

When asking the interviewees whether they think either the Second Step program or the Be Together program is more useful seen from the children's perspective, they answered:

*Pre 1: "Here, I have no doubt. The Second Step program is more useful. It is concrete, easy to understand, and it represents a positive attitude towards social competence."*



*OS 1: "Well, that is, that is...it is the Second Step Program, they get the most out of what we do. It is this ordered solution that they are dependent on."*

Pre 2 thought that the children liked the Be Together program more due to all the stimuli that the children got through the colors and the excitement that the adults had put into the program beforehand.

*Pre 2: "The children probably think the Be Together program is more fun (...) the magnetograph with the figures that they can move. (...) The children thought that the Be Together program was more intriguing because it was very hyped up from us adults. First we got a postcard from the rainbow lion saying that he would soon come to visit and then he came. And then there was the rainbow chest, there were a lot of nice colors. The rainbow chest was in the storeroom so the children had no direct accessibility to it, so when we brought it out, then they wanted to see what was in the chest, and everything around it was very exciting (...) Second Step is different, it doesn't have the colors and it goes a little deeper I think, they have to think a lot more, they have to go into themselves and think a lot about what it is to be angry, and once one is angry, how that feels."*

Thus, Pre 2 would definitely have chosen the Be Together seen from the children's perspective.

OS 2 believed that the children were, in fact, more fond of the Be Together program. She reasoned in the following statement:

*OS 2: "When one works over time then one sees that both programs catch on because they are both very good for the children. When one has worked with the Second Step program for a period and the children then come back the following year, then they remember a lot. We see this with the Be Together program also. So I think they are both equally good for the children (...) but we see a big difference from the children's section of the Be Together program and the Second Step program, they learn more from the Be Together program than the Second Step program. But all in all then, I think they are very much alike, as long as one works with the programs over time."*

#### **5.4.12 Which staff guidance material would you rather use?**

When asking the interviewees which staff guidance material they would rather use, they answered:

*Pre 1: "WELL! This one was a little harder, but I would think that I would rather use the Be Together material. Well, I have read the Second Step material. But today I know the Be Together material better. And I have good feelings about the axis. One needs to take a position on where one stands and how one behaves. We have used this axis a lot."*

OS 1 did not really know. First of all, it was a long time since she had looked at the Second Step staff material, but when thoughts had been aired for a little, her beliefs seemed clearer.

*OS 1: "I must say that it is a long time since I have read the theory section of the Second Step program. But I would think that the theory part of the Be Together program is okay. I liked reading it, I think this model with the warm and cold adults and clear and (...) well I think it was good"*

Pre 2 did not have any doubt about this question, as described above, she would have chosen the staff guidance books from the Be Together program. She felt they had much more that she could use and argued that they simply worked better, whereas the Second Step program, which really did not have any theory on the program, was less useful.

OS 2 believed from her previous statements that the Be Together program staff theory books were in fact "amazing" and would have chosen these rather than the Second Step program. In her opinion, the lack of theory in the Second Step program and the fact that the Second Step program did not provide the staff with much material, in general, meant that she was not likely to use that program.



## 6. DISCUSSION

The two programs have been put to the test and carefully weighed up against one another from theoretical to empirical, from the material to the use of the material. Each informant has provided this thesis with valuable information.

The major patterns that emerged from the interviews were that the Be Together material, on some occasions, did not live up to the material of the Second Step program due to the fact that the Be Together program was at such an early state of implementation. Also, it was clear that as compared to the Be Together program, the Second Step program was lacking in important aspects related to the Staff material. Primarily, this concerned a lack of theory behind the program; the Second Step program did not have theory behind the program that the staff could use to develop their pedagogical positions. Another major pattern of the interviews became clear during the writing of this thesis. Namely, that the Be Together children's material in most cases was thought to be confusing. It had no particular goals for each lesson, it was hard to use and to prepare, and it was seen as lacking in emotional content. It also had to be taught to smaller groups of children and in some cases did not seem to catch on with the children. This may have been due to the long stories, difficult language and music that were too much related to religion. Whereas for the Second Step program was easier to use, it had simpler lessons that simply worked better. It had pictures that the children could relate to, and it could be taken out to the playground without actually bringing along the material. The children remembered it and the lack of colors made the children more focused on the problem at hand rather than the stimuli of colors circling the program.

The relationship between the two programs can be considered to be principally based on the fact that they are aiming towards the same goals. The Be Together program has several elements that are also seen in the Second Step program, but the road to achieving each goal is ultimately what makes the programs stand apart. In addition, the different use of colors in the material stands out in the Be Together program. Should one attempt to generalize these findings, they are likely to find very much the same conditions in other kindergartens using both programs, since the data collected is reinforced throughout the interviews.

Since the Be Together program has not yet been evaluated and there is no previous assessment of the program, it is difficult to say how the program might be related to any previous work. Even the results presented in the previous chapter do not show any particular elements that suggest that the Be Together program has any direct relationship to previous

work done on other programs. However, when looking at the theoretical basis of the Second Step program and the results derived from analysis of the interviews, it is clear that the programs are consistent with the work of Granberg (1999) and much of the American research that were described earlier in the thesis. Findings from this study appear to indicate that the Second Step program works and considering the fact that it is hard to let go of the program because of the quality and value participants place on it, this is strong statement about the theory of from which the programs are derived.

## **6.1 Pre 1**

During the interviews with Pre 1, she stated that she liked using the Second Step program in practice. It was also said that the Second Step was easier to get to know, easier to handle and easier to teach. In fact, there was nothing about the program that Pre 1 did not like. As she stated in the interview, if Pre 1 were to choose between the two programs seen from a staff perspective, she would without a doubt have chosen the Second Step program. If Pre 1 were forced to choose between the two programs seen from the children's perspective, then she would also choose the Second Step program.

The things that Pre 1 liked about the Be Together program include the fact that the theory of the program was very useful; she felt it gave her the possibility to freshen up on theory that she had learned many years ago and it introduced her to new theory that she liked and found meaningful and interesting. What she liked most about the program was that it gave her an opportunity to see an image of herself that was not visible before. This image has left an effect that has not changed Pre 1, but has made her more aware of what she is like to be around, guided by the simple question "Have I been a good adult to be around today?" This same question has now become commonly used in the classes, without it being negatively charged. Rather, it has given the staff an opportunity to help one another develop their professional roles and competency.

As a result of this interview, Pre 1 found the theory behind the Be Together program to be best, but found the practical part "silly", of little use for the age it was supposed to target and too "heavy" and difficult for the children to learn. Also, the program was not seen as particularly transferable into real life situations because the children could not relate to the figures of the program.

Pre 1 described how she found the programs to be rather different, but with more or less the same goal. In other words, it is her view that the programs have different approaches toward the same goal.

Overall, however, Pre 1 thought that the Second Step program was in fact the better program, but she was unsure whether it was due to the fact that it had already been implemented in the institution or the fact that many of the staff had the program "under their skin," meaning that they were very comfortable using it on an everyday basis.

Pre 1 stated that she would not have chosen the Be Together program at this point in time, and is at the moment leaning mostly toward continuing use of the Second Step program, even though both programs seem to be reaching for the same goal.

## **6.2 OS 1**

During the interview with OS 1, it was clear that she leaned more towards the Second Step program as well. OS 1 explained in the interviews that it was much easier to use, it was easier to remember and had much more usability with regard to solving conflicts among the children. The children could more easily relate to the Second Step program and, in her opinion, clearly learned more from that program.

OS 1 said that it had been a long time since she had implemented the Second Step program, but could still remember how to use the program because it was so much easier to remember than the Be Together program.

In other words, OS 1 found that the Be Together program was hard to use, stating that it had too many elements, and that one could not just pull out a little part in a conflict and use it. Furthermore, the program was difficult to set up, as it took too much time to get all the parts ready in order to teach the program.

If OS 1 were to choose between the theory behind the Second Step program and the theory behind the Be Together program, then she would have chosen the Be Together theory. She reasoned that it was "good reading," and that there was interesting material from which she could develop as a professional.

OS 1 would have chosen the practical part of the Second Step program with pictures that she felt the children could more easily relate to, and feelings that the children could more easily

recognize. However, for her, it was clear that the theory of the Be Together program was better.

Even though this finding suggests a somewhat divided opinion of the two programs, with a preference for the theory portion of the Be Together program and the practical part of the Second Step program, OS 1 would still have chosen the Second Step program in the end. It is easier to use, she argued, it has come a longer way with regard to implementation in the institution, it has stronger connections with the children, it can be used whenever one needs it and most of the staff are familiar with it already. In contrast, the Be Together program has none of these elements.

### **6.3 Pre 2**

Pre 2 had a lot of mixed feelings about the Second Step Program and the Be Together Program. When talking about the children's material, Pre 2 thought that the Second Step program was needed for the intermediate children as a basis, such that they could understand the Be Together program when they got older. She could see that the Second Step program gave the children a solid foundation for overall social competence, which was something that made the children grow even further when they began with the Be Together program. It seems as though Pre 2 was still leaning in her preference towards the Second Step program, and on some occasions she said that this was, in fact, the case. However, in order to be true to the Be Together program and on behalf of the evaluation that was due, Pre 2 showed a lot of dedication towards this side.

All in all, Pre 2 was enjoying the Be Together program at the moment, and stated that the staff elements that were given were in fact very helpful. This was something that Pre 2 could relate to, could understand, found to be of high quality, and could develop on as an adult and as a professional preschool teacher.

Pre 2 did not find the children's material very useful. She felt that it was confusing, it had a lot of missing elements and it lacked a clear set of goals. In addition, she reported that the figures were hard to see. In practical terms, this meant that the children could not easily tell whether the characters were sad, angry or confused because the images in the material were too small. This meant that Pre 2 could only have a little group of children working with the material at a given time. At the same time, Pre 2 thought that the children found the material fun and enjoyable. It seemed to her that they liked it mostly because of the wide use of colors,

but also because the adults had managed to inspire a level of excitement in the children about the coming arrival of material and the rainbow lion.

Pre 2 stated that at this point she would not go back to the Second Step program, this was mostly because the kindergarten had said they had planned on dedicating themselves to the Be Together program in order to give an honest evaluation.

If Pre 2 were to have chosen an ideal program, it would have contained the adult theory elements of the Be Together program and the children elements of the Second Step program.

## **6.4 OS 2**

OS 2 used the Second Step program in the kindergarten. When the Be Together program arrived they stopped using the Second Step program with the oldest children in the kindergarten and instead used it only with the youngest children.

OS 2 also had not spent as much time on getting to know the material as had the preschool teachers. This was partly due to the fact that she did not teach the material and was more involved in teaching the Second Step program with the younger children.

OS 2 thought that the material for the staff was very good, and would have recommended to others. Because the Second Step program was missing this material all together it was hard to compare the two programs with respect to this feature.

If OS 2 were to choose which material was better for the children then her decision would be difficult, as she was very unclear about this. She found it difficult to say because both materials were, in her view, very good. Each set of materials had elements that the children liked and OS 2 saw that the materials did have an effect on the children. Although, she did perceive a slightly higher degree of learning from the Be Together program. The most noticeable observation, was the fact that the children remembered the materials even a year after they had been taught to them.

OS 2 also said that the programs were very similar, apart from the staff material, which the Second Step program did not contain. Both programs had similar goals but had different approaches to reaching these goals.

All in all, it was hard to see which program OS 2 would have chosen. In most of her responses to interview questions, she concluded with the belief that the Be Together program was better,



which suggests that she leaned a little more towards the Be Together program. Her statement that the program, “has more legs to stand on” underlines this fact.

It is possible that OS 2 preferred the Be Together program due to the fact that this program was what the kindergarten had dedicated themselves to. This seems apparent because of the equal weight she seemed to give both programs with respect to other aspects under consideration.

The research question was a comparison of the Be Together program and the Second Step program, through the theory to the material for the staff and the material for children. These two programs are partly comparable to each other, the goals of the programs are the same but the roads they take are different. The Be Together program is less applicable to children that are not having Norwegian as their first language where the Second Step program is adaptable to all children. The Staff material of the Be Together program is more useful for the staffs due to the fact that this is one major part that the program is focusing on (the competence enhancement of the staffs) whereas the Second Step program is lacking this all together. So they do compare but only vaguely but what sets them apart is definitely interesting when looking at the similar goals of the programs. The Be Together program is projected more at the adults than the children where the Second Step program it is vice versa. Even though the Be Together program has a large portion on the children material it is not as stated before applicable to all children.

The relationship between the findings of this study and the original questions are mainly that the Be Together program does not appear to work with every child. The program is found to be aimed more at school children and children with a solid foundation of social competence. Also the Be Together program’s language was deemed too difficult for children by the participants. This is likely due to the fact that many of the children who were exposed to the program had Norwegian as a second language and the program simply did not catch on with children who have little or poor Norwegian language skills. Based on interview findings, it seems that the Second Step program, in contrast, is easier to learn and to understand. The program is adaptable, which means that it can be taught in any language and the teacher can even create a simpler language in order for the children to understand. In other words, each teacher has the ability to make it their own, whereas the Be Together program has more limited flexibility.

The implications of the results of this study are that the people behind the Be Together program should consider whether they should change the program in accordance with the programs users. The Be Together program meets a standard that is already available on the market and which has been used for many years in the form of the Second Step program. Participants in this study are pleased with the Second Step program, they see it as working and giving positive results. Thus, in order for the Be Together program to compare to the positivity of the Second Step program is it vital that the Be Together program at least can measure itself against the Second Step program. Otherwise, it will not be successful and institutions will stop using it. Another implication is that institutions that are not yet using the Be Together program will not begin using it due to the way the material is put together. In general, it is comes down to the feedback of the evaluating institutions and the actions that the project team are aiming to take in order to make this program successful and more appealing to users than the Second Step program.

Given these results, there are several plausible explanations for the outcome. One explanation reflects the fact that the Be Together program is simply a pilot program. It is very new and is still in the testing phase in which it is undergoing evaluations by pilot kindergartens. the consensus seems to be that over half the kindergarten staff is leaning towards the Second Step program is that it is well-established and safe. It has been taught for many years which makes it more available. Most teachers and pedagogues have it “under the skin,” they know it, they can teach it without reading up on it and it has easily adaptable contents, which makes it preferable. Last but not least, it does not take away resources that can be used elsewhere in the institution in order to get to know the program.

Future research with respect to the Be Together program should continue on the path of more formal evaluations of its use and content. It is also important that the program has a chance to run over a couple of years to see if it will actually work. Thus, a longitudinal study of its implementation will likely contribute to a better understanding of the program’s potential benefit or weaknesses to kindergartens. Will the children change their social competence as they did for the Second Step program? Will the children become more empathetic? Do the children learn to problem-solve conflict situations in the same way they do in the Second Step program, or perhaps even better?

We know at this point that there is a divided perception of the Be Together program. Most participants enjoy using the staff theory books because they provide more information than

the Second Step program, which does not provide any staff material at all. Two of the informant disliked the children's material because of the language, the stimuli of colors, the lack of a clear message regarding the emotions in the figures, the appeal of the songs and other factors. We also know that what is safe is often considered, "good." Even though most informants use the Be Together program as their primary program, they still found themselves leaning towards and comparing it to the Second Step program. This leaves no doubt in mind that the Second Step program stands stronger when setting the two programs up against each other.

The significance of these results is that the Be Together program leaves a trail that is hard for other programs to follow. It seems, first of all, that there is a lot of anger towards the Be Together program from one of the kindergartens that was interviewed. This seems primarily due to the feeling among informants that they did not get enough knowledge about the program before they began using it. This could have been avoided by implementing the program in a different way. When talking about the implementation process, for example, the program could have taken up fewer resources by minimizing the amount of time used for teaching about the program and involving all staff in the kindergarten. The Be Together program could also be improved by making it more adaptable, which would mean that the individual staff could teach the program in the manner they thought would give most purpose to the children. In other words, a child with a second language could be taught the program in his or her native language instead of Norwegian, or a child with learning disabilities could be taught the program in a language that was simpler and more comprehensible.

This is important because one could feel that too much time and resources are being organized wrongly, which, first of all, takes away quality time from the children. It also takes away preparation time from the staff and they may be left with a sense of failure. These findings are also important because this could hurt other institutions that are already burdened with trying to manage "imposed" programs and plans. Here, the thesis is referring to plans that the kindergarten makes themselves, such as themes, excursions, being a "green" kindergarten and those that the ministry of education in Norway has proposed that institutions to follow such as the 7 subject areas (KD 2005, p. 27) which needs to be included in the kindergartens, along with documentation (KD 2005, p. 55) on how these are done. One should also care about the potential impact of these changes because of the economic significance that the program

brings. However, since this is not a topic of this thesis there will be no further discussion on this topic.



## **7. FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research should be directed towards conducting more interviews in the kindergartens that are working with the program. This will also be provided with an evaluation done by the University of Agder and the Center for Behavioral Research. I also hope that this material will be able to help in the evaluation of the Be Together program provided by the University of Agder.

In order to examine the effects of a control group versus a group that has been taught the Be Together program one would also likely need a longitudinal study. This study could provide one with more accurate results as to which program is most effective. In this case, the same number of kindergartens using the Second Step program should use the Be Together program. However, unlike in this study, they should not know or have any knowledge of each other's programs. This study would be difficult to carry out since the Second Step program is very integrated in the Norwegian kindergarten culture.

Due to limitations in the time frame of this thesis the results are only based on four interviews and two observations, whereas they could have been based on more quantitative longitudinal research using, for example, the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS) or The Cooper-Farran Behavioral Rating Scale (CFBRS) which is a seven point scale and is a teacher/preschool rating scale. This scale could provide a different measure of the outcome of the two programs among children. This would also include getting background information on the families of the children such as child variables, family variables and socio-cultural variables. Seeing the results after a period of at least two to three years would allow one to see what the programs could provide in terms of social capital to the children and how this may have benefitted them in school. In addition, a more complete study could have investigated other kindergartens who were not working with either of the programs so that a control group comparison could be made.



## 8. CONCLUSION

The Be Together program has succeeded with regard to the material for the adults, the staff enjoyed using it. In contrast, the Second Step program more or less lacked this material all together. Therefore, the Be Together program has a clear advantage over the Second Step program when comparing these materials.

The Be Together program is not a failure, yet it will take time to resolve the problems that the program is facing with the material for the children, which at the current time makes the Second Step program stand stronger when comparing them seen from the informant's perspective. Although most staff of the two institutions appear to be fonder of the staff material from the Be Together program, the children's material does not (according to the informants) live up to the expectations and goals it is aiming for- The primary goals are, of course, to teach the children social competence, to teach the children empathy and to get the children to problem-solve in conflict situations. Even though the Be Together program has a two part program a) the Staff material and b) the material that is being taught to the children which can in turn make the program stand stronger, the Second Step program has an advantage of being simpler which gives the staff more opportunities (according to the informants) to conduct teachings on a more adaptable level.

The Second Step program most likely stands stronger because of the years it has been in use. It also appears to be simpler and does not require a great deal of resources, which makes it preferable to the participants. It is a program backed by research telling the users that it works, it shows results and it essentially gets the job done. However, the Second Step program leaves the adult part out, which can be seen as a disadvantage.

The findings presented in this thesis reflect only the current stage of development and use of the two programs, which means that they can differ from any future results from other studies or evaluations. The Second Step program may not continue to be the preferred program for kindergarten teachers to use, but at this point in time it stands as the strongest program. The Be Together program is still new and this has to be taken into consideration. It can be changed and has the potential to develop into a strong program that can offer the kindergarten staff the opportunity to gain knowledge and potentially become a stronger program for the children then the Second Step program as well.



Placing the two programs on a scale, the Second Step program would weigh more than the Be Together program, but not by much. This is due to the fact that the Second Step program stands strong with the children's material by itself and the research that is backing the program with results, whereas the Be Together program is new, it stands strong with both the adult theory material that helps to enhance the staff's competence, which may later have implications for the quality of care and teaching provided to the children and the material for the children but it is lacking support of research that is explaining whether the program works or not.

From looking at the method chapter of the Second Step program it is obvious that the Second Step program is indeed working. It shows positive results and has extensive material supporting the research. The Be Together program, which has not been completely evaluated to date, lacks research that supports the argument that it works in teaching social competence to children. This thesis, and the qualitative interviews done in this study, can provide some information which may provide the researchers responsible for the program with some of the data needed in order to improve the program, so that it is more suitable for kindergartens.

I will now return to the question at hand: How does the Be Together program compare to the Second Step program?

First of all, the programs are only partly comparable. They are similar with regard to the goals they are reaching for and they have similar materials for the children. However, the Second Step children's material is more useful according to the informant's perspective. The Be Together program overcomes what the Second Step material lacks when looking at the material for the staff; the material for the staff is extensive; it is easy to read and gives a lot of valuable knowledge on how to act as an adult. This does not compare with the Second Step program because the program simply does not have as extensive a material as the Be Together program has.

When looking at the material for the children and what is actually taught, it is clear that the Be Together program has a way to go in order to measure up to the Second Step program. The Second Step program is less colorful, which places the focus on the lesson at hand. It has clear goals for each lesson, it is easy for the children to understand and follow, it is adaptable for the teachers, it is easier to teach, it is easier to set up, it can be used without taking out the actual material, and the informants believe that this part is better.

Taken together, these findings indicate that there is a clear division in opinion in which the informant's find the Be Together program adult material better, but prefer the children's material of the Second Step program.

This means that the Be Together program is partly comparable to the Second Step program with regard to the children's material, but may not be ready for full implementation on a widespread basis just yet. The Be Together program is a program under development and one has to leave room for improvement.

It is not yet possible to decide whether one or the other of the programs will succeed. The Be Together program is still under "development" meaning it is still being evaluated and changes may or may not happen. In any case, they are both valuable programs, where the Be Together program reaches out to the staff and the children with a combined material and where the Second Step program only reaches out to the children. This does not mean one is better than the other but one can still hope that the Be Together program will gain more followers which in turn can help improve the material for the children in such a way that it will be an overall more preferable program. One could say at this moment that the programs are at a tie but with the room for development in the Be Together program it definitely seems from the participant's point of view that it has potential to overtake the Second Step program.

The staff of the kindergartens is the ultimate decision makers concerning which program they consider best. The Be Together program might fit their children's group better, whereas the Second Step program might be more suitable to the children's group of another kindergarten. Children today may spend many hours in kindergarten as their primary source of social interaction with other children. This could make the preschool teachers and other staff a major source of guidance and education. When education and upbringing are combined it is also the responsibility of the staff to select which program fits best to their group of children. Both programs can be good tools in helping to build social competence, training empathy and teaching problem-solving skills. This is closely related to what Bringsli (2004) stated, "In the framework plan for kindergartens it is established that when children finish kindergarten they should have developed good social competence. This means that they have mastered the skills of interpersonal interactions, and have the ability to understand and adapt to the social situation that one is in" (p.15). As stated earlier, in this way the teacher can estimate which social skills each individual child is in possession of and which they lack, and in this manner

## A comparative analysis on the Second Step program and the pilot program Be Together

find out how the child best learn these social skills by choosing a program that works best for their kindergarten.

## 8.1 “A breath of social competence”

After writing this thesis I found it necessary to think of something that reflected what it was this thesis has been about (besides weeks of stress, isolation and hard work). Therefore, I looked to the book called *Pass the peas please: A book of manners*, by Dina Anastasio in order to give the reader a breath of inspiration on the meaning of social competence.

*If a friend is having trouble,  
And he falls and gives a yelp,  
Don't laugh or point or call him names.  
Say, "Are you hurt?" and "May I help?"*

*If there's something very special  
That you'd really like to borrow,  
Ask before you take it,  
And bring it back tomorrow.*

*No one likes to lose a game,  
But if you must, you must.  
So if you lose, shake hands and say,  
"We'll play again, I trust."*

*It's hard to keep a secret,  
But secret telling's wrong.  
Remember, friends who blab too much  
Aren't friends for very long.*

*If you're angry at a friend,  
Don't punch or kick or shout.  
Go for a walk and count to ten,  
Then try to talk it out.*

(Part extracted from the book *Pass the peas please a book of manners* by Dina Anastasio, 1988-2012, p. 7)

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[væresammen.no](http://væresammen.no)

## **10. ATTACHMENTS**



## 10.1 Attachment 1 The Second Step Program material

(Found on cfchildren.org, forebygging.no, prososial.no and spf-norge.no)



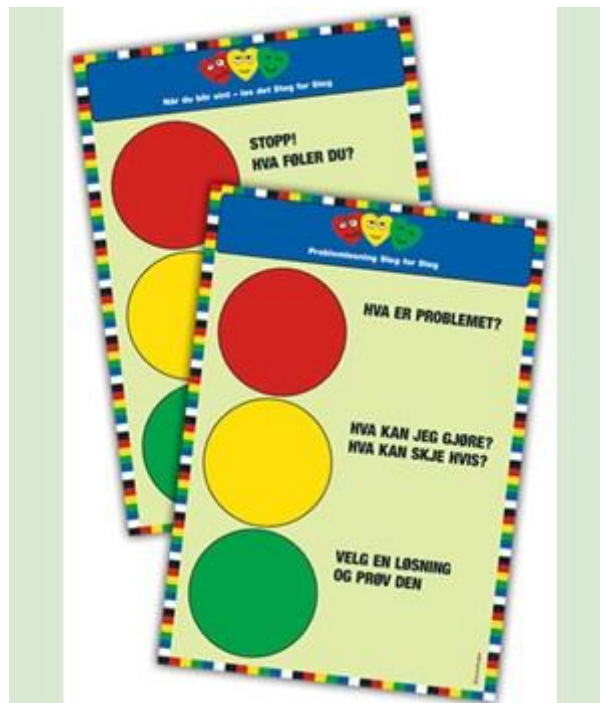
- Second Step material for kindergarten all collected together with the “chest”



- Calm snail mascot



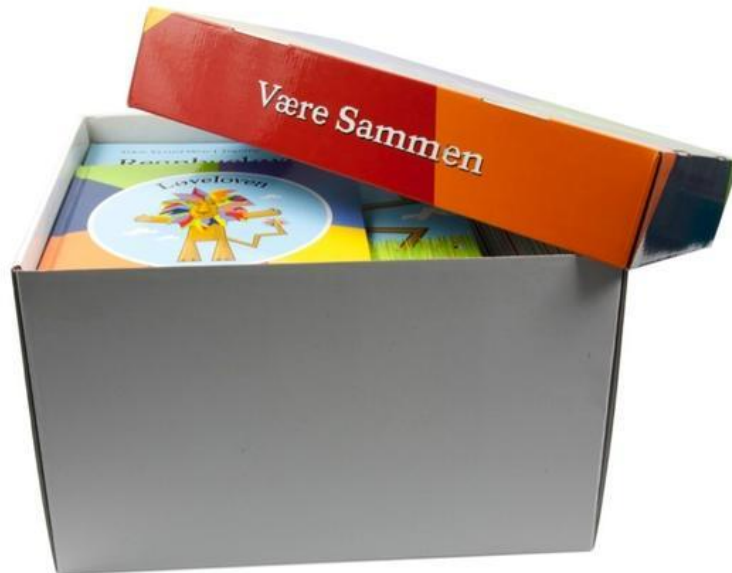
- Impulsive puppy mascot



- Posters for the Second Step program for kindergarten

## 10.2 Attachment 2, The Be Together Program material

(Found on [vaeresammen.no](http://vaeresammen.no))



- The “chest” containing the material



-The Be Together programs kindergarten shield



-The rainbow lion



-The magnetograph



- The figures for the magnetograph



- The lion law book





- The twelve lion books



-The resource book

### 10.3 Attachment 3, Information letter to the interviewees

Informert samtykke

Jeg er masterstudent i pedagogikk ved Universitetet i Agder, og har valgt å skrive en komparativ analyse mellom ”Steg for Steg” prosjektet og pilot prosjektet ”Være Sammen” i min masteroppgave, i den forbindelse ønsker jeg å intervju en førskolelærer og en fagarbeider som har jobbet med begge prosjekter. Intervjuet blir tatt opp digitalt og tar mellom 20 min og 30 min. Observasjonen som blir gjort blir loggbokført.

Informert samtykke betyr at du deltar frivillig, og kan derfor trekke deg hvis det blir nødvendig. Alle som deltar, blir sikret full anonymitet, det vil si at jeg vil bruke fiktive navn i min masteroppgave både på barnehage, førskolelærer, fagarbeider og barn. Utover dette vil all informasjon jeg får igjennom samtale og intervjuer, være sikret av taushetsplikt og behandles konfidensielt. Alle opptak vil bli slettet når de er transkribert, de kan også bli utlevert til deg når jeg er ferdig å behandle datamaterialet.

Mikkel Hansen

Sted/ Dato \_\_\_\_\_

Navn på informant \_\_\_\_\_

## 10.4 Attachment 4, Application to the data department (NSD)

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate 29  
N-5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17  
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50  
nsd@nsd.uib.no  
www.nsd.uib.no  
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Heidi Omdal  
Institutt for pedagogikk  
Universitetet i Agder  
Serviceboks 422  
4604 KRISTIANSAND S

Vår dato: 12.06.2012

Vår ref:30715 / 3 / PB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 21.05.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

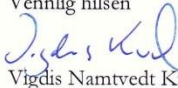
30715	<i>En sammenlikning mellom to nåværende prosjekter (Være sammen pilot prosjektet og Steg for steg) Nytten av et nytt prosjekt i barnehagen.</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Agder, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Heidi Omdal</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Mikkel Hansen</i>

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk\\_stud/skjema.html](http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html).

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

  
Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

  
Pernilla Bollman

Kontaktperson: Pernilla Bollman tlf: 55 58 24 10

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Mikkel Hansen, Kongensgate 7A, 4610 KRISTIANSAND S

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no  
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no  
TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no



## Personvernombudet for forskning



### Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

---

Prosjektnr: 30715

På grunnlag av de opplysninger som fremkommer i meldeskjema og i senere korrespondanse med studenten (12.06.12) vil det ikke bli registrert personopplysninger i elektronisk form i forbindelse med dette prosjektet. Personvernombudet for forskning finner dermed at behandlingen ikke medfører meldeplikt.

Foreldre vil motta skriftlig informasjon om observasjonsstudien i barnehagene. Observasjonsstudien vil gjennomføres ved hjelp av loggbok.

Ombudet ønsker, til tross for at prosjektet ikke omfattes av meldplikten, å minne om forskningsetikken i forbindelse med prosjektet:

<http://www.etikkom.no/no/Forskningsetikk/Etiske-retningslinjer/Samfunnsvitenskap-jus-og-humaniora/>

<http://www.etikkom.no/no/Forskningsetikk/Hva-skal-du-forske-pa/Barn/>

## 10.5 Attachment 5, Interview guide

### Interview guide

#### Steg for steg

- 1) Har du/dere arbeidet med steg for steg tidligere? Og arbeider dere fortsatt med dette?
- 2) Finner du Steg for Steg brukbart i konflikt situasjoner og relasjonsbygging?
- 3) Har du brukt mye tid og resurser på å sette deg inn i materialet til steg for steg?

#### Være sammen

- 1) Finner du Være Sammen brukbart i konflikt situasjoner og relasjonsbygging?
- 2) Har du brukt mye tid og resurser på å sette deg inn i materialet til Være sammen?
- 3) Ser du barnehagen kommer til å jobbe med være sammen prosjektet i fremtiden?

#### Sammenlikning mellom Steg for Steg og Være sammen prosjekter

- 1) Ser du noen likheter mellom de to prosjekter (Være sammen og Steg for steg)?
- 2) Hvilket av de to programmer finner du mest brukbart?
- 3) Om du skulle velge, hvilket ville du helst bruke i barnehagen, Steg for Steg eller Være Sammen programmet? Hvorfor?
- 4) Tror du at være sammen programmet vil erstatte steg for steg programmet som er et nasjonalt program?

#### Om de mener Steg for steg og være sammen er veldig ens.

- 5) Finner du steg for steg eller være sammen prosjektet mer nyttig sett ifra barnas synspunkt, og hvorfor?
- 6) Hvilken foreldredel vil du si gir bedre informasjon og hvorfor?
- 7) Om du skulle velge, hvilken personaleveiledning ville du helst bruke og hvorfor?

#### Tilleggs spørsmål

- 1) Hvor mange minoritets språklige barn har dere?
- 2) Hvor mange av dere har fått veiledning til Være Sammen programmet?