



Free of Bullying

Findings from the second pilot survey



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
MENNTAVÍSINDASVIÐ



Barnaheill
Save the Children Iceland

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The second pilot survey was conducted for Save the Children (Barnaheill) in Iceland in collaboration with the Educational Research Institute, School of Education, University of Iceland.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Free of Bullying is a research based project developed as a preventive measure against bullying and for friendship in preschools. The original project named *Fri for mobberi* has been translated, localized, produced and published in collaboration with *Red Barnet-Save the Children* and *Mary Fonden* in Denmark. *Fri for mobberi* is also available for the early classes in primary schools in Denmark.

Free of Bullying was developed and adapted by Roskilde University and is based on findings of current research on bullying. The project aims at preventing bullying through creating a good school atmosphere, by having good communication practice and positive attitude towards everyone in the preschool. Participation of all children, staff and parents is a necessary for the project to succeed. A special emphasis is made on reaching children and adults who witness bullying in their settings but are unresponsive to it.

It is presumed that participants comply with fundamental values in all work and communication in the preschool settings. The Free of Bullying theory is based on four pillars of values: **tolerance, respect, care and courage**.

The project has been widely accepted where it has been applied and research findings give promising results. Free of Bullying or *Fri for mobberi* is based on current research on bullying and a defined theoretical frame of values that should be integrated into all school activities and teaching along with realistic assignments for students, staff and parents.

Participant schools in the pilot project of Free of Bullying in Iceland during the winter 2014-15 are six preschools in six districts. Along with Iceland and Denmark the project material has been tested in Greenland and Estonia and many other countries have expressed their interest in participation (Save the children (*Barnaheill*), 2015).

There are three questionnaires linked to the Free of Bullying pilot project, each of which is designed to be applied at different stages of the pilot phase. The three questionnaires are designed to evaluate and adapt the Free of Bullying project. They are aimed at the various parties involved in the project, as a tool for reflecting on

expectations and experiences of the practices used in connection with the program. A second test survey was implemented in Iceland with 25 participants. This second survey was developed as a tool for evaluating and developing the anti-bullying programme Free of Bullying. Participants had previously to this survey had the opportunity to work with the first questionnaire, which was designed to identify expectations and opinions of bullying and Free of Bullying. The second questionnaire aimed to explore the work on introducing Free of Bullying and staffs experiences of using the materials in the suitcase. The survey was conducted after school employees had worked with Free of Bullying for approximately 9 months. The following report contains detailed description and analysis of the answers given by participants to the second questionnaire. A descriptive analysis of the participants' background is followed by the findings in five main themes concluding with a short summary: 1. Experience of Free of Bullying Project, 2. The Free of Bullying material, knowledge of the material and experiences using the material. 3. Social practices; evaluation of the conversation boards, evaluation of the big teddy bear, evaluation of the massage and opportunities for improving the material 4. The collaboration with parents. 5. The experiences of Free of Bullying.

2 PARTICIPANTS

All 25 participants answered the question on occupation with 27 answers as two apparently hold two different positions. Looking at the participants' occupation reveals that 11 hold an unqualified or assistant teacher position. Eight people are qualified preschool teachers or similar, one holds other position and 7 hold a management position (see figure 1).

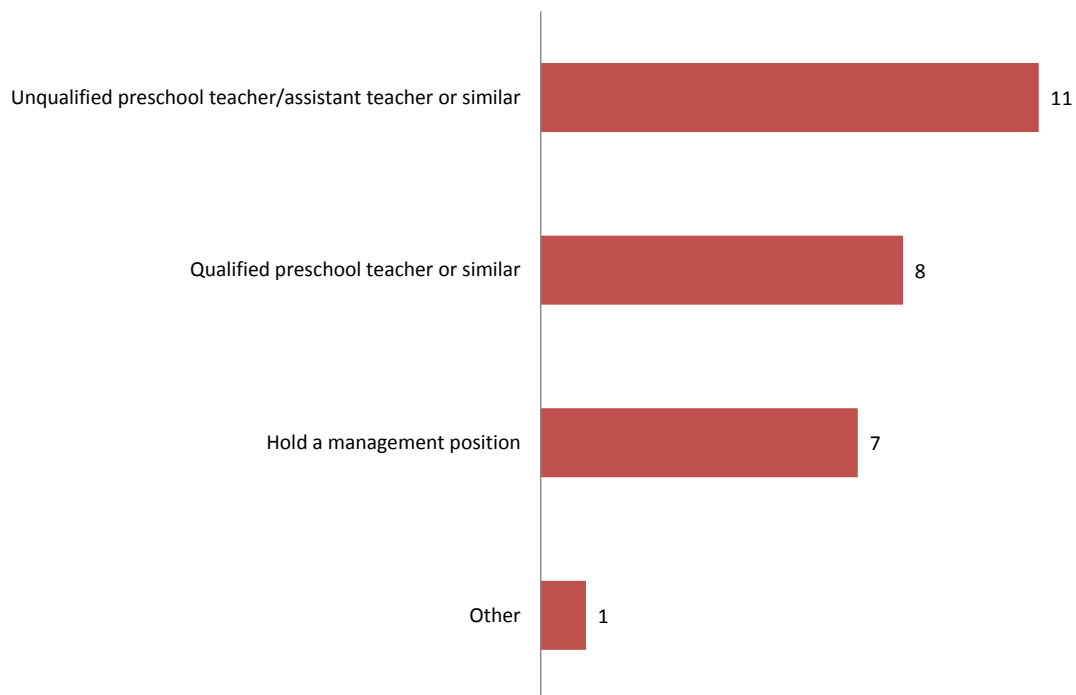


Figure 1: What is your occupation?

Twenty four out of 25 answered the question on their age. Ten of the participants are over 50 years old, 5 of the participants fall in the age group 41-50 years old and 5 are 31-40 years old, 4 participants are 20-30 years old (see figure 2).

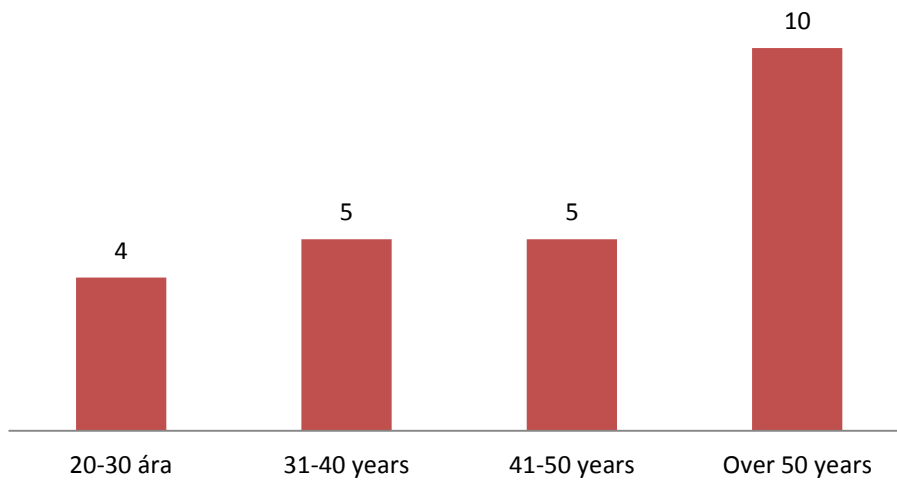


Figure 2: How old are you?

A vast majority of participants have extensive experience in the field and 13 have worked in the field for more than 10 years, three have worked 5-10 years in the field 1 for 1-5 years and 5 have worked less than 1 year (see figure 3).

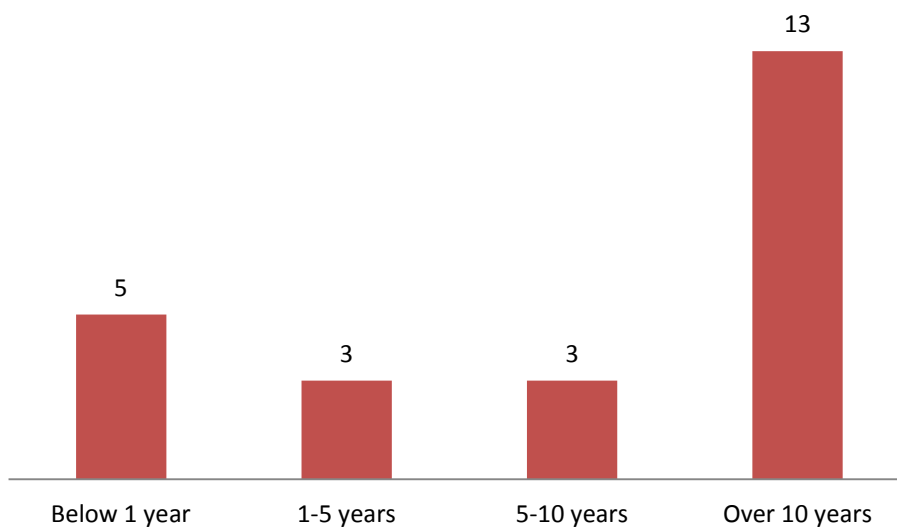


Figure 3: How long have you been working in this field?

3 EXPERIENCES OF THE FREE OF BULLYING PILOT PROJECT

Eight questions were asked in relation to experience of the Free of Bullying pilot project: 1) Do you feel that you, personally, have an active role in Free of Bullying? 2) How often do you, as a group, discuss/talk about Free of Bullying in staff meetings? 3) What have you, as a group, gained from working with Free of Bullying? 4) Have you experienced any changes within the children's group as a result of Free of Bullying? , If so, which changes? 5) Do you find that Free of Bullying has given you new useful tools to prevent bullying? 6) Do you find that Free of Bullying has changed your conduct? 7) Do you find that Free of Bullying has changed your colleagues' conduct? 8) Do you think there are certain groups or stakeholders who should also be included in Free of Bullying in order for you, as a group, to tackle bullying among children in your preschool?

Question one: Majority of participants reported that they that they personally feel they have an active role in Free of Bullying or 18 of 25 participants. Seven participants felt they had active role in the project to some extent. Nobody felt they had no active role in the project (see figure 4).

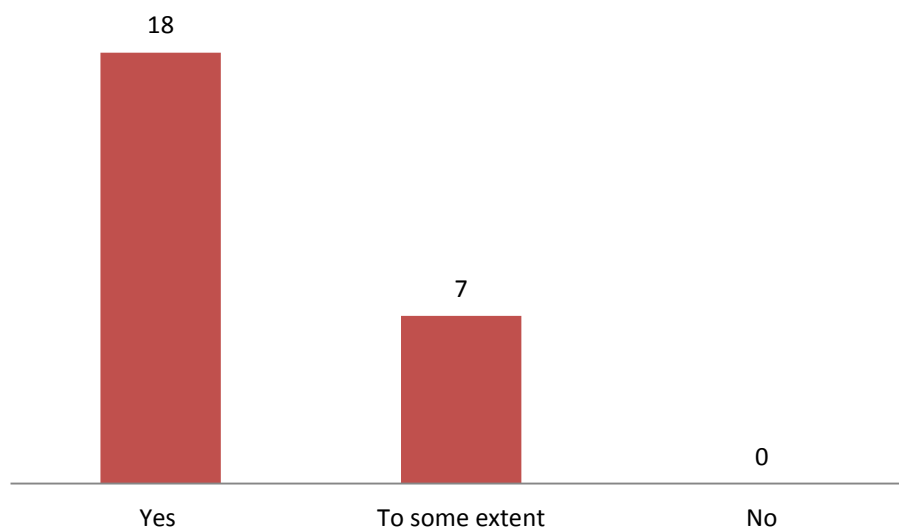


Figure 4: Do you feel that you, personally, have an active role in Free of Bullying?

Question two: When asked how often participants, as a group, discuss/talk about Free of Bullying in staff meetings majority of participants or 20, report they sometimes do. Four participants say they rarely or never discuss or talk about the project in staff meetings. Only one participant says the staff as a group almost always talks about the project in staff meetings (see figure 5).

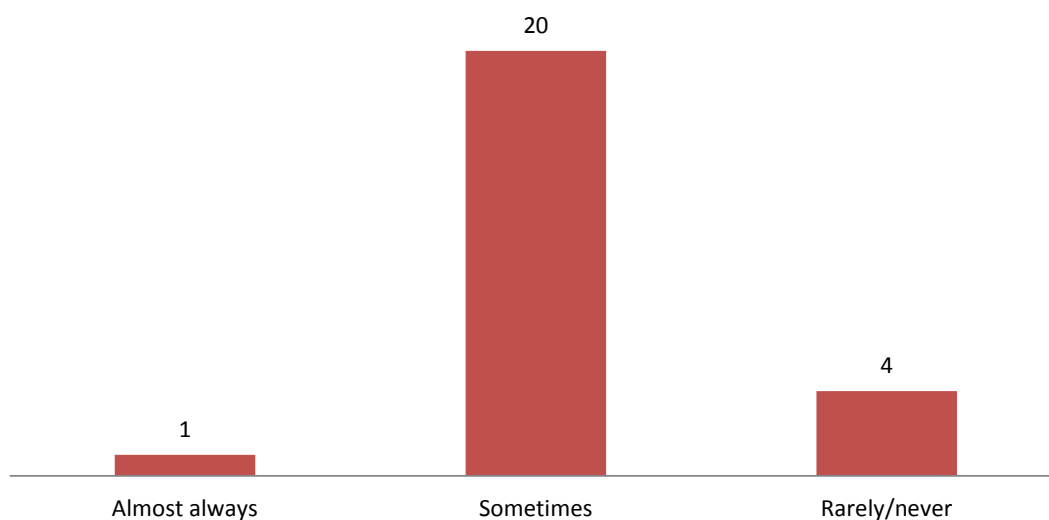


Figure 5: How often do you, as a group, discuss/talk about Free of Bullying in staff meetings?

Question three: When prompted on what participants, as a group, have gained from working with Free of Bullying majority of participants or 21 of 25 feel that they have as a group become more aware of exclusion patterns among the children and that the staff group gives more feedback on the children's relationships now than they did in the past. Twelve respondents feel they have acquired more knowledge of bullying through the program, seven feel they as a group now act differently towards the children. Five respondents claim that collaboration with parents has been strengthened; four report that the group has started to collaborate with other institutions in a rewarding way. Only one feels that none of the aforementioned has changed from before Free of Bullying was launched (see figure 6).

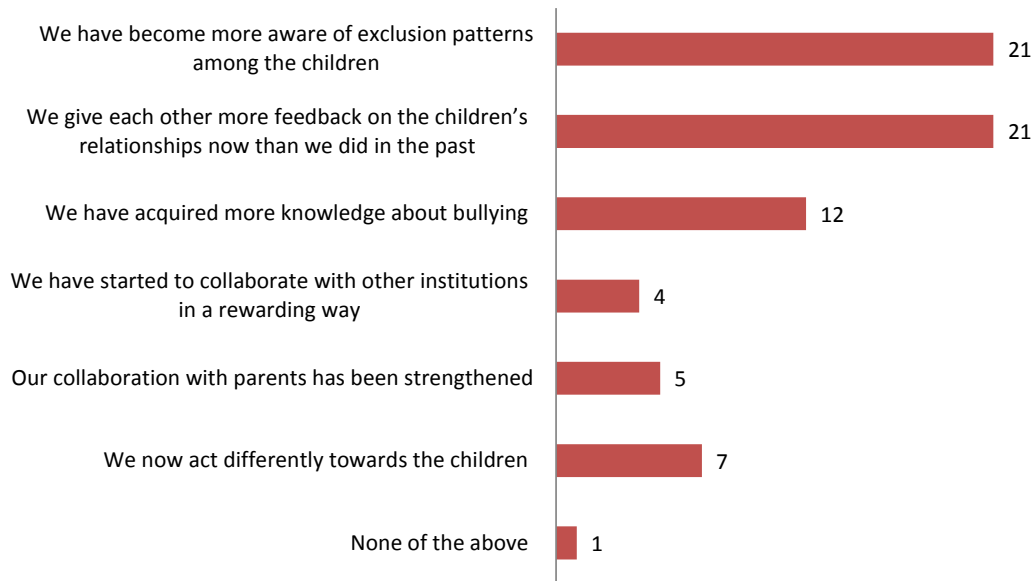


Figure 6: What have you, as a group, gained from working with Free of Bullying?

Question four: When participants were asked if they had experienced any changes within the children's group as a result from Free of Bullying, 17 of 25 participants experienced there were some changes detectable, in particular that the children treat each other more positively. There were some more positive changes detected in children's behaviour, 14 participants reported experienced more positive interaction. The children were also experienced to play better together by 13 participants, experienced to be more aware of social rules by 12 participants, be more courageous in the way they defend their friends by 11 participants. Ten of the participants felt that the children themselves are better able to deal with teasing; nine respondents felt that there were fewer conflicts among the children and eight participants felt that the children are kinder to each other. Two participants could not experience any changes in the children's group as a result of participating in the project. Four participants experienced other changes in the children's group and three of them stated briefly what they were. One mentioned that changes are more evident among four year old children than younger children. Two participants experienced that the children have become more aware of how other children their group are feeling.

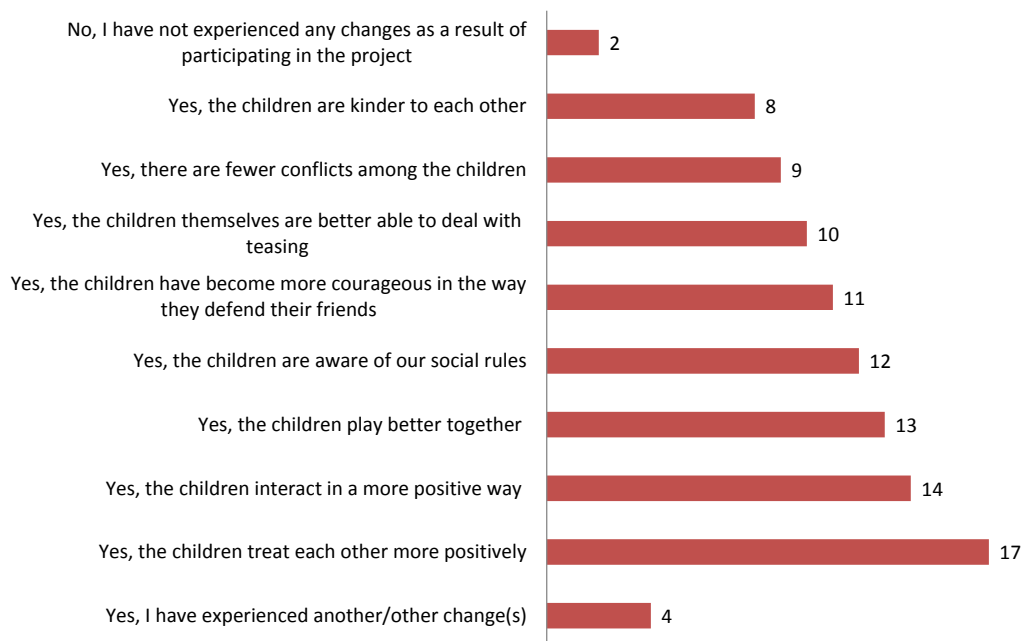


Figure 7: Have you experienced any changes within the children's group as a result of Free of Bullying? If so, which changes?

To question five: Majority of participants find that Free of Bullying has given them new useful tools to prevent bullying to *some degree*, or 17 participants of 25. Five find the program has given them useful tools to a *large extent*, two to a *small extent* and one *none at all*.

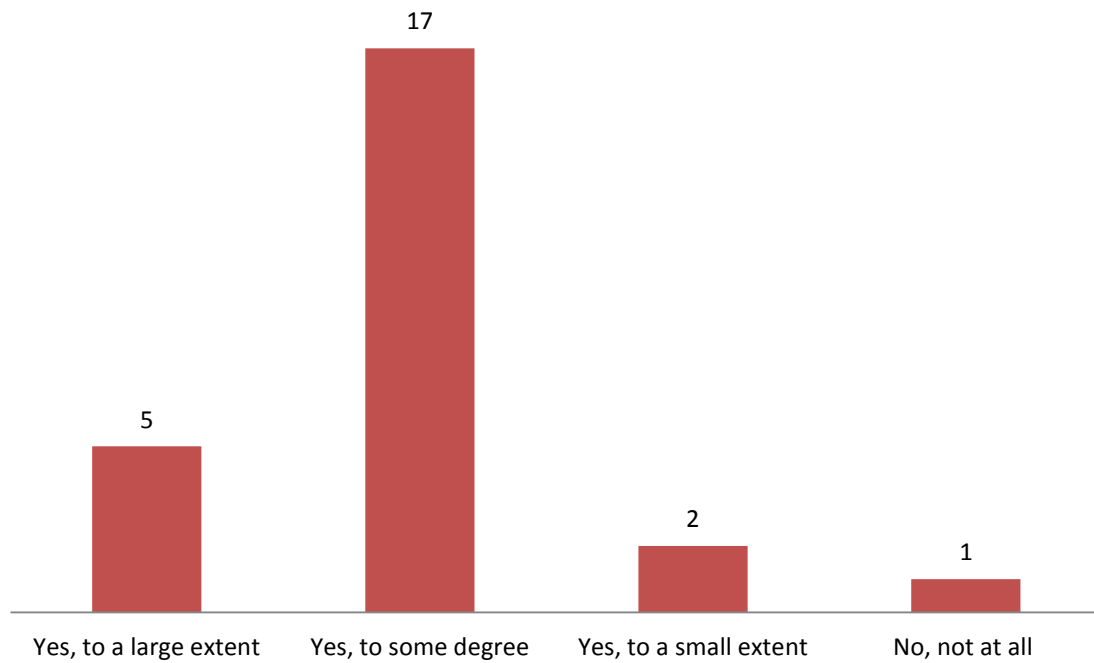


Figure 8: Do you find that Free of Bullying has given you new useful tools to prevent bullying?

Question six: Altogether there were 24 of 25 participants that answered the question on if Free of Bullying had changed their own conduct. Majority or 19 reported experiencing some positive difference three experienced a significant positive difference. Two respondents reported not experiencing any difference. No one reported experiencing a negative difference in their conduct.

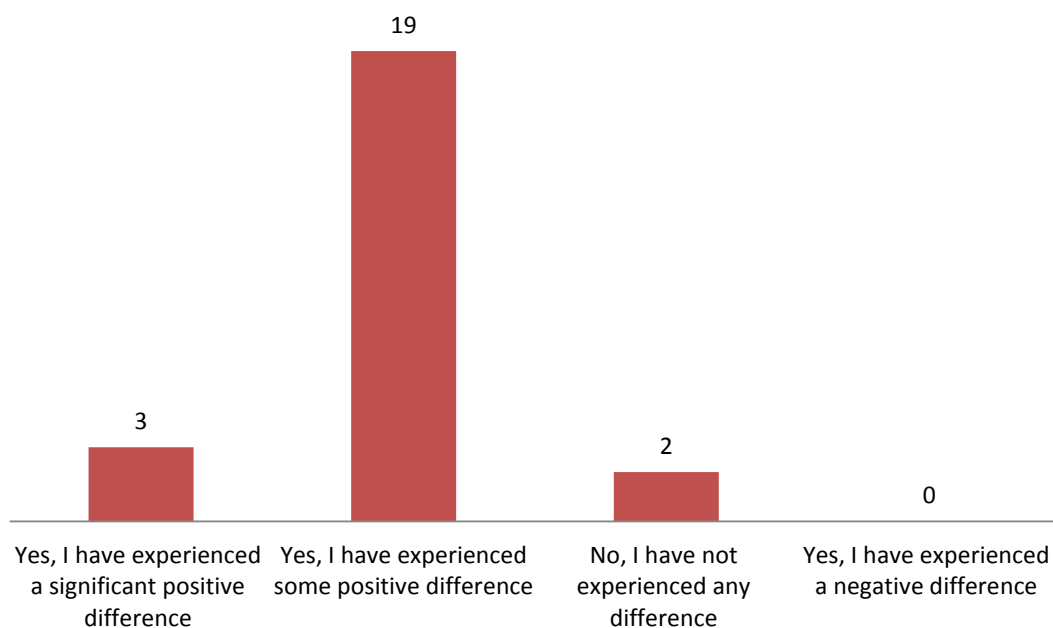


Figure 9: Do you find that Free of Bullying has changed your conduct?

Question seven: When asked if Free of Bullying had changed colleagues' conduct 19 participants reported experiencing *some positive difference*, three have experienced *significant positive difference* and four reported *not experiencing any difference* (see figure 10). Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their responses in an open string. More awareness of children's behaviour and communication among the children was expressed, more interest and more discussions among the staff about behaviour and how children are feeling. There were reports of more resources for reacting as a result of Free of Bullying project and more general interest. One participant also reported that he felt the project rested too heavy on their shoulders.

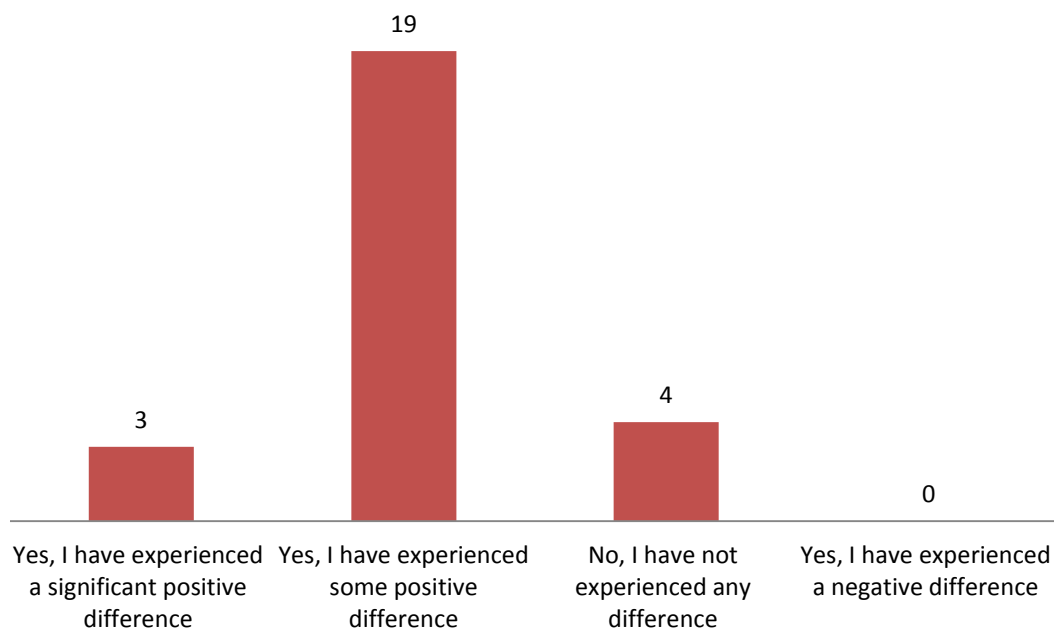


Figure 10: Do you find that Free of Bullying has changed your conduct?

Question eight: Altogether there were 23 of 25 respondents who answered the question if there are certain groups or stakeholders who should also be included in Free of Bullying in order for the group, to tackle bullying among children in their preschool. Majority agreed that particular stakeholders should be included in the project or 16 of the 23 participants who answered that question. Seven disagreed (see figure 11).

Respondents were asked to briefly state who, which and why if they answered yes to this question. There were 14 participants who explained their answer further of the 16 who answered yes. The groups mentioned for inclusion in the project, were other groups who work to prevent bullying, parents, other kindergartens, primary schools and social services through municipalities. Sport and leisure groups were also suggested.

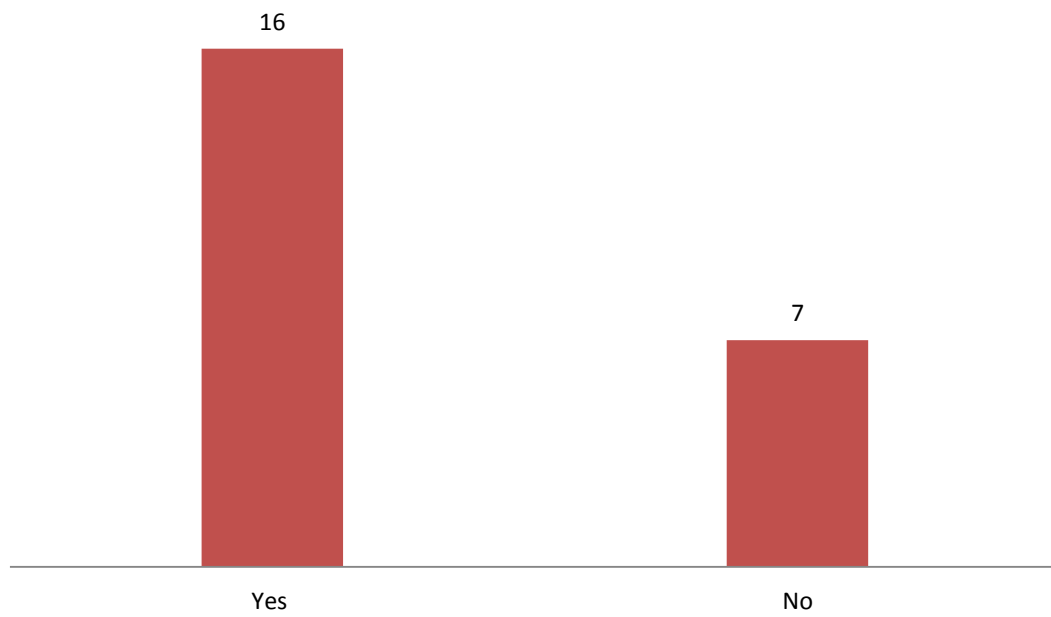


Figure 11: Do you think there are certain groups or stakeholders who should also be included in Free of Bullying in order for you, as a group, to tackle bullying among children in your preschool?

4 THE FREE OF BULLYING MATERIALS

4.1 Knowledge and use of materials

Five questions and statements were put forward in relation to knowledge and use of Free of Bullying materials. 1) How have you acquired knowledge about the materials? 2) How often do you and your colleagues use the suitcase? 3) How do you and your colleagues use the suitcase? 4) I have used the following materials and social practices. 5) I know that some of my colleagues have used the following materials and social practices.

Question one: Participants were asked a multi answer question on how they had acquired knowledge about the materials. There were altogether 22 participants of the 25 who reported that they had been informed of the purpose of the materials, 19 had completed exercises with the children and 18 had read the guidelines in the professional booklet. Seventeen had completed exercises together with other staff members, 16 had attended a seminar and 14 said they had been informed of how to use the exercises. Nine had attended a course or seminar and eight had been informed by other staff (see figure 12).

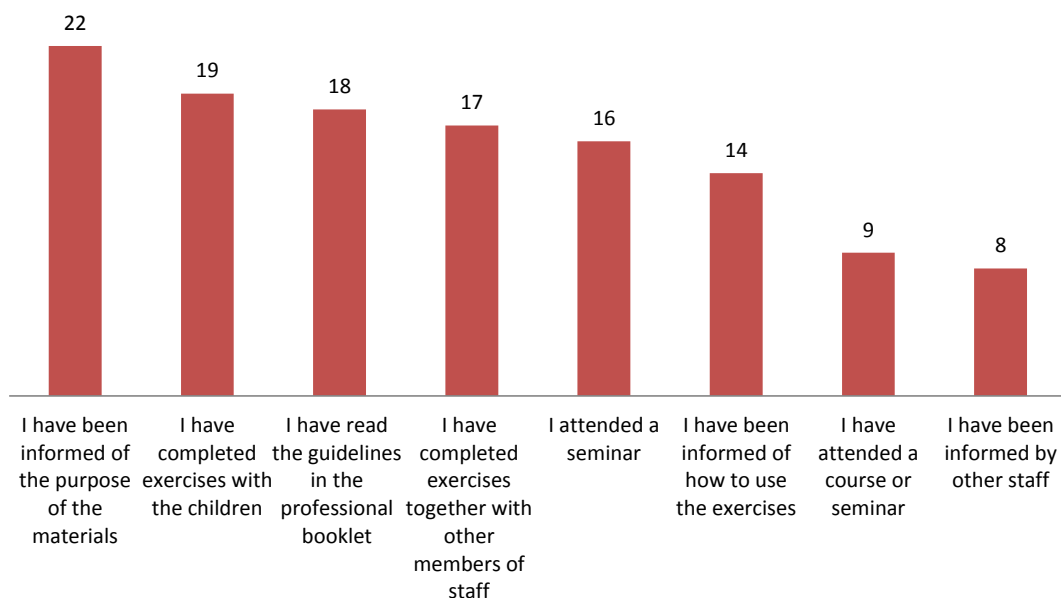


Figure 12: How have you acquired knowledge about the materials?

To question two: There were 22 participants that reported using the suitcase weekly. Two claimed they used it monthly and one reported using it less often than monthly. Nobody reported using the suitcase daily.

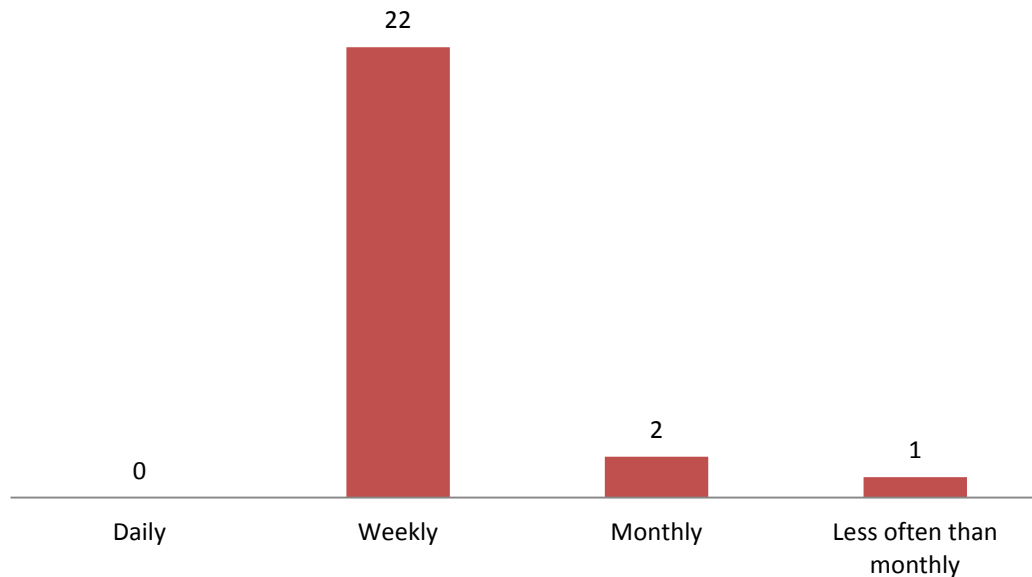


Figure 13: How often do you and your colleagues use the suitcase

To question three: Majority of respondents and colleagues use the suitcase according to timetable or 16 of 25 participants. Altogether there were 15 who claimed they use it when it fits into the daily programme. Five use it as required-when there is a specific bullying situation, for example. Four mentioned other uses: The conversation boards are mentioned and pointed out as they are hanging on the wall. At group relax time material is used and also kept near if something comes up on the playground (see figure 14).

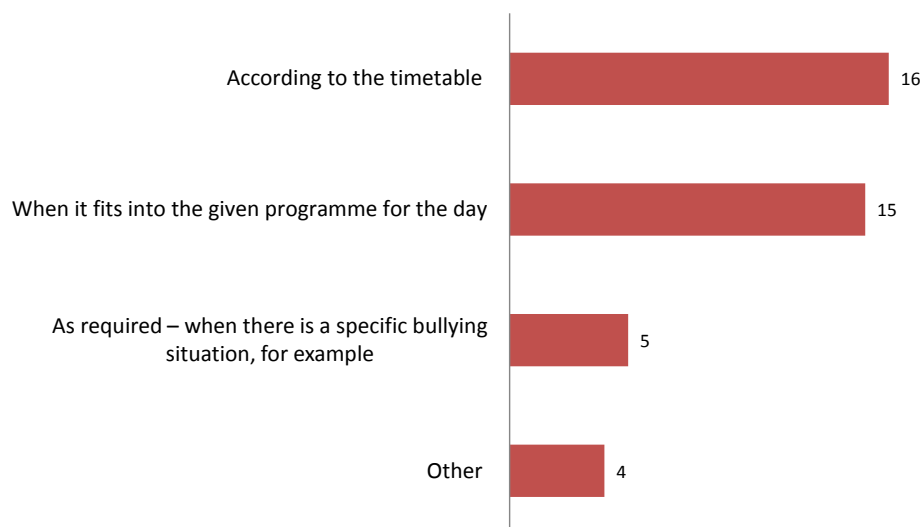


Figure 14: How do you and your colleagues use the suitcase?

To question four: Majority of participants have at some point used all the materials and no one claims to have used none of the materials. The conversation board has been used by 23 of 25 participants, 22 respondents use the children's meetings and the small teddy bears, 21 use the large teddy bear and have read all or a part of the professional booklet. 20 have used the massages and 17 use the posters (see figure 15).

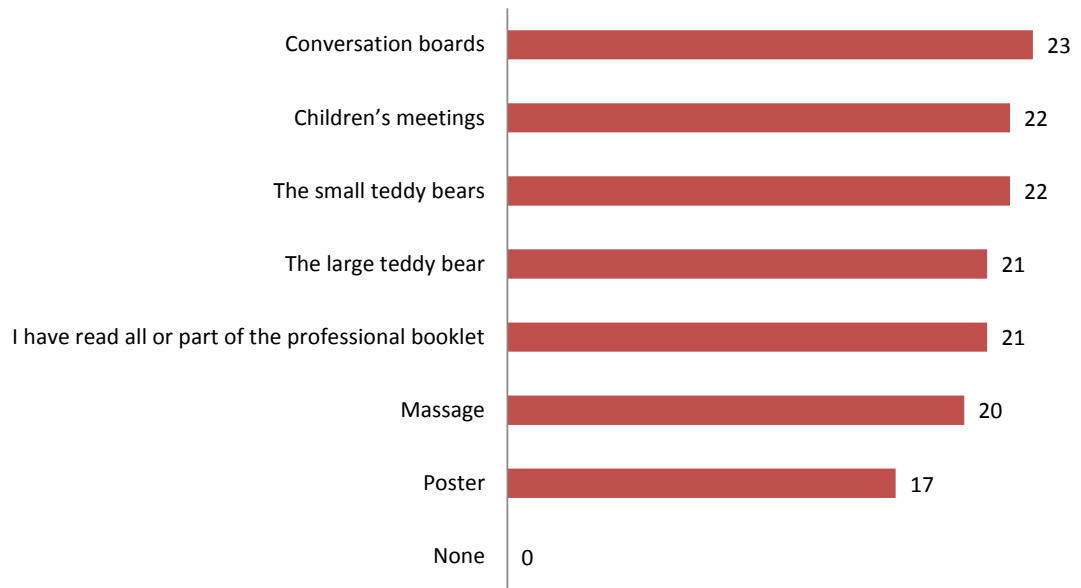


Figure 15: I have used the following materials and social practices.

Statement five: Participants were prompted with the question if some of their colleagues have used the materials and social practices and given multiple options for answers. Almost all respondents or 24 of 25 knew that some of their colleagues have used children's meetings, 23 say they know that some colleagues have used the large teddy bear, 22 the conversation boards, 20 the massage, 20 the small teddy bears, 18 have read all or part of the professional booklet and 16 the poster.

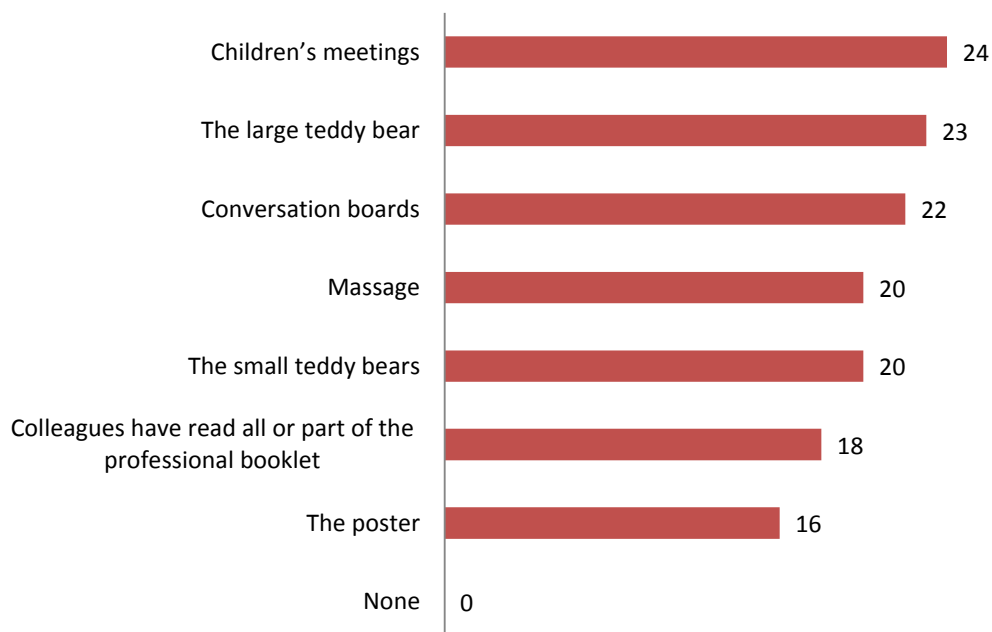


Figure 16: I know that some of my colleagues have used the following materials and social practices.

4.2 Experiences using the material

Three questions pertain to experiences using the material. 1) In your experience, which material(s) do the children enjoy? 2) In your experience, which material (s) are the children *not* interested in? 3) In your opinion, which material(s) have contributed to a positive development in the children's group?

To question one: Most participants experience that children enjoy the material. Altogether there were 23 participants who experienced the children enjoy the small teddy bears, 22 find that children enjoy the conversation boards, 20 report the massage being enjoyable to the children, and 19 name the children's meetings. One reported other material and named relaxing music.

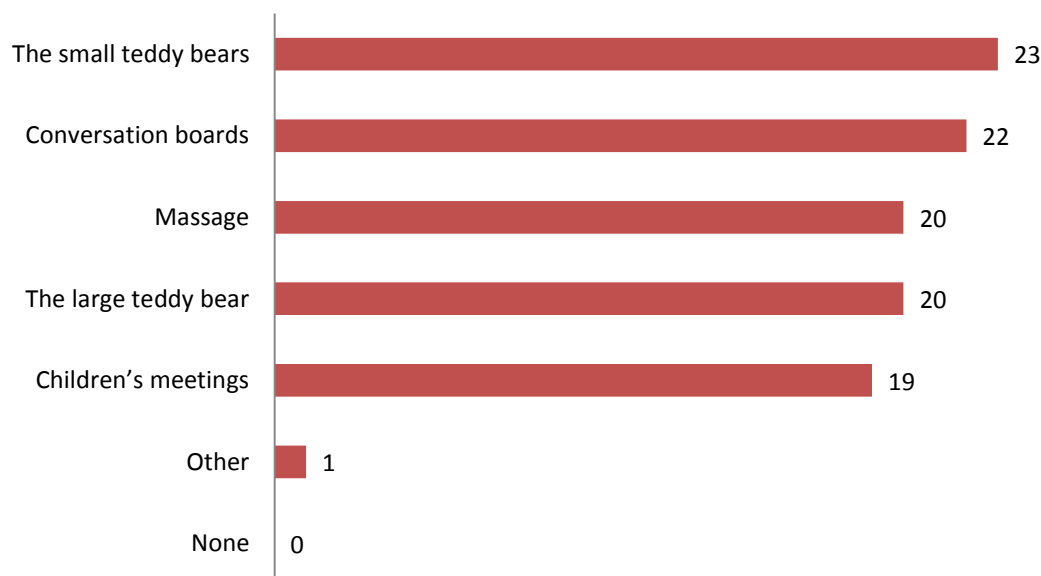


Figure 17: In your experience, which material(s) do children enjoy?

To question two: Majority of participants experience that there is none of the material that the children are *not interested* in or 22 of 25. Two say that the children are not interested in the massage and the large teddy bear. One participant experiences no interest from the children in the small teddy bear (see figure 18).

Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their responses. Some of them felt that the children in their groups seemed to be too young to be particularly interested in the material. Others believed that the focus lasts for much shorter period than for girls when working with the material.

Some had very positive experience with the material and believed that all of the materials spark interest in children in this age group.

Others mention that the small teddy bears have sometimes interfered with the children daily activities. In the beginning the small teddy bears were well accepted but for the older children the interest vane with time. One pointed out that the group meetings cannot be too long.

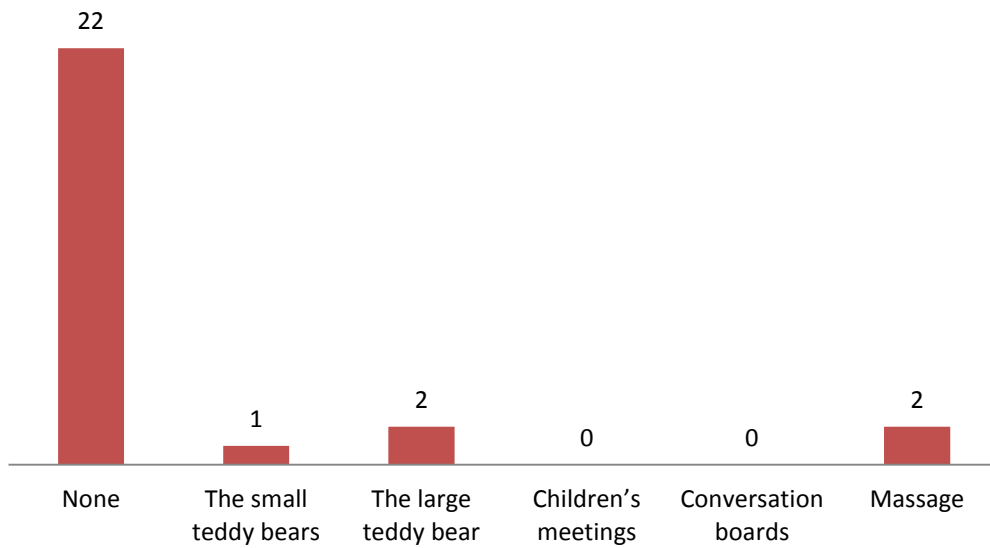


Figure 18: In your experience, which material (s) are the children not interested?

To question three: The conversation boards massage and small teddy bears were most frequently mentioned as having contributed to a positive development in the children's group. Altogether there were 22 participants who had the opinion that the conversation boards had contributed to a positive development in the children's group, 17 mentioned the massage, 16 the small teddy bear and 15 the big teddy bear. There were also 15 mentions of the children's meetings. Nine believed the poster had a positive contribution in development and only 2 felt none of the material had contributed (see figure 19).

Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their response on contribution of the material. They felt for instance that the teddy bear has a positive message. Someone mentioned that it was good for a child to be able to tell their teddy bear things that you don't want to tell to anyone else about, what the problem might possibly be and also it was pointed out that a good thing about the small teddy bears is that everyone has the same type of teddy bear. A feeling of wellbeing and good communication is pointed out as a benefit of the massage. The conversation boards give insights into how others are feeling. By having a big poster, a teddy bear they feel this is exciting and different. Others felt the children were too young for the

project to produce any reliable results. The conversation boards have contributed to the development of the group, particularly to discuss the content on the conversation boards. The children enjoy the project and a lot of conversations have developed.

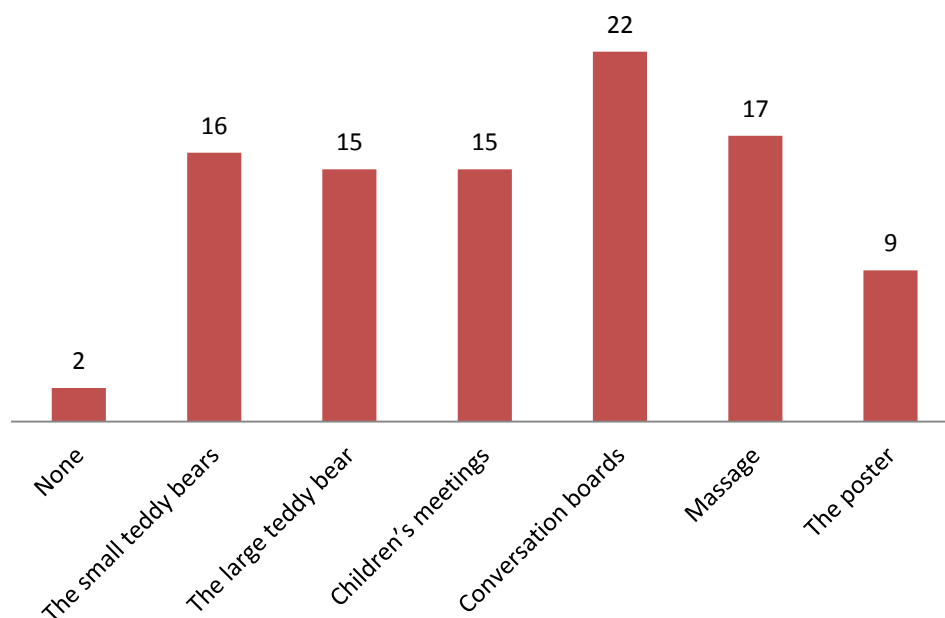


Figure 19: In your opinion, which material(s) have contributed to a positive development in the children's group.

5 SOCIAL PRACTICES

5.1 Evaluation of the 'conversation boards'

Four statements in the questionnaire were directed at evaluating the conversation boards. 1) The conversation boards work well as a tool for initiating conversation with the children. 2) The children can often relate to the situations depicted on the conversation boards. 3) The children often remember the conversations from the children's meetings in connection with conflicts that arise.

To question one: Participants were asked to evaluate if the conversation boards work well as a tool for initiating conversation with the children. Altogether there were 16 participants who *completely agree* that the conversation boards work well as a tool for initiating conversation with the children, eight participants *agree* to that and only one disagrees.

To question two: There were 13 participants who completely agree that the children can often relate to the situations depicted on the conversation boards, 10 agree and only one disagrees.

To question three: Altogether there were six participants who *completely agree* that the children often remember the conversations from the children's meetings in connection with conflicts that arise, 14 *agree* and four *disagree*.

To question four: Five participants *completely agree* that the conversation boards have equipped the children to deal with conflict situations better, 17 *agree* and two *disagree* (see figure 20).

Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their evaluation of conversation boards. Ten participants gave a brief description. Participants felt it is good to point to the conversation boards and help the children relate to the material when dispute or arguments arise. Some feel the children are too young to relate emotionally to what is happening in the pictures but more emphasis is on that the children have more frequent conversations on the topic, and experience more expression of emotion and feeling amongst the children. In particular how it feels to be left out in a children's group and increased empathy and understanding of own feelings and

how others could feel. Some feel that the children do better in recalling particular incidences using the conversation boards. Overall participants feel that using the conversation boards is positive for both staff and children and gives way for more awareness of bullying in general.

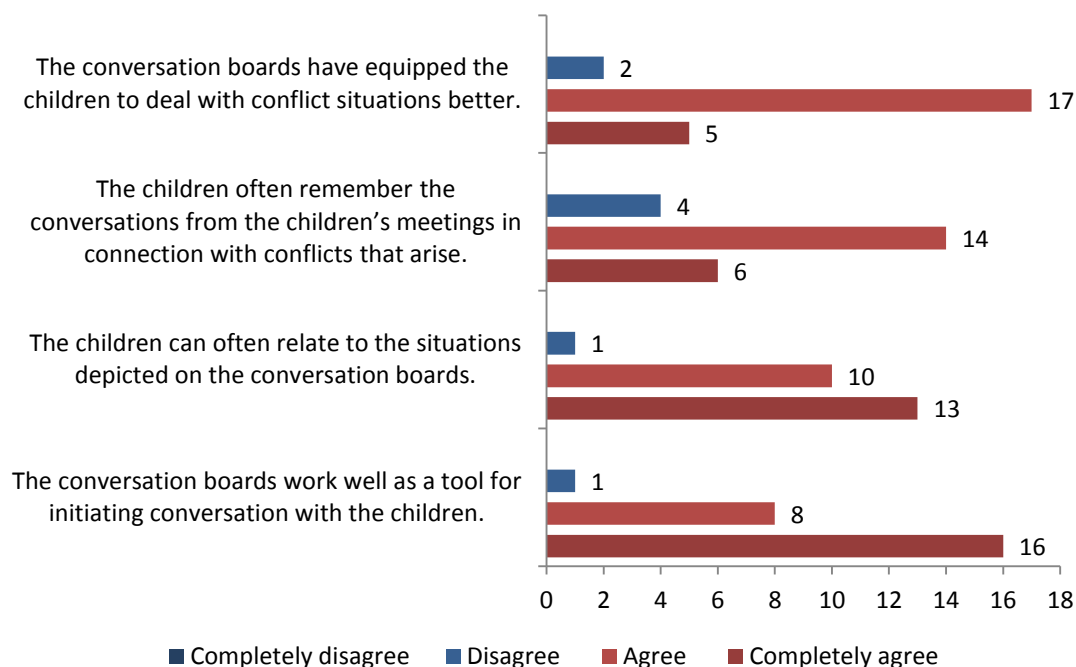


Figure 20: Evaluate the 'conversation boards' based on the following statements

5.2 Evaluation of the big teddy bear (Buddy Bear)

Four statements in the questionnaire were directed at evaluating the big teddy bear. 1) I find it easy to use Buddy Bear as a pedagogical tool. 2) The children use Buddy Bear to console themselves. 3) The children use Buddy Bear to help them console themselves or each other. 4) Buddy Bear is an important tool in connection with bullying.

To question one: Participants were asked to evaluate if they found it easy to use Buddy Bear as a pedagogical tool. Altogether there were 19 people who *agreed* to this statement and six who *disagreed*.

To question two: Four completely agreed that the children use Buddy Bear to console themselves, seven agreed, 13 disagreed and one completely disagreed.

To question three: Three participants completely agreed that the children used Buddy Bear to console themselves or each other, seven agreed, 12 disagreed and two disagreed completely.

To question four: Six participants completely agreed that Buddy Bear is an important tool in connection with bullying and 13 agreed. Four participants disagree and one completely disagreed (see figure 21).

Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their answers. Fourteen participants gave a brief description of their answers. It was voiced that Buddy Bear had an important role and the children respect that. The teddy bears need to be actively promoted by the staff if they are to benefit the project. The children do not necessarily use Buddy to comfort themselves but they are on the other hand ready to comfort each other and show each other understanding. The children love the teddy bear and always want to hug him in the beginning of class, in some instances the children go and fetch the big bear themselves.

The children have a very high regard for the big teddy bear, they look up to him, they think he is cool and the bear is easy to use. In some instances the big Buddy bear was used more in the class of older children. It was also mentioned that maybe the staff needed to be more aware to utilise the bear as a material. Some claimed not to have used it much and others mostly in friendship groups. Others have planned for the Buddy Bear to go home with the children as it had not been fully employed for the five year olds. Some feel the project had a great aim and purpose, with great effort but the target group is not appropriate for it, others feel the children are too young to understand the purpose of the bear.

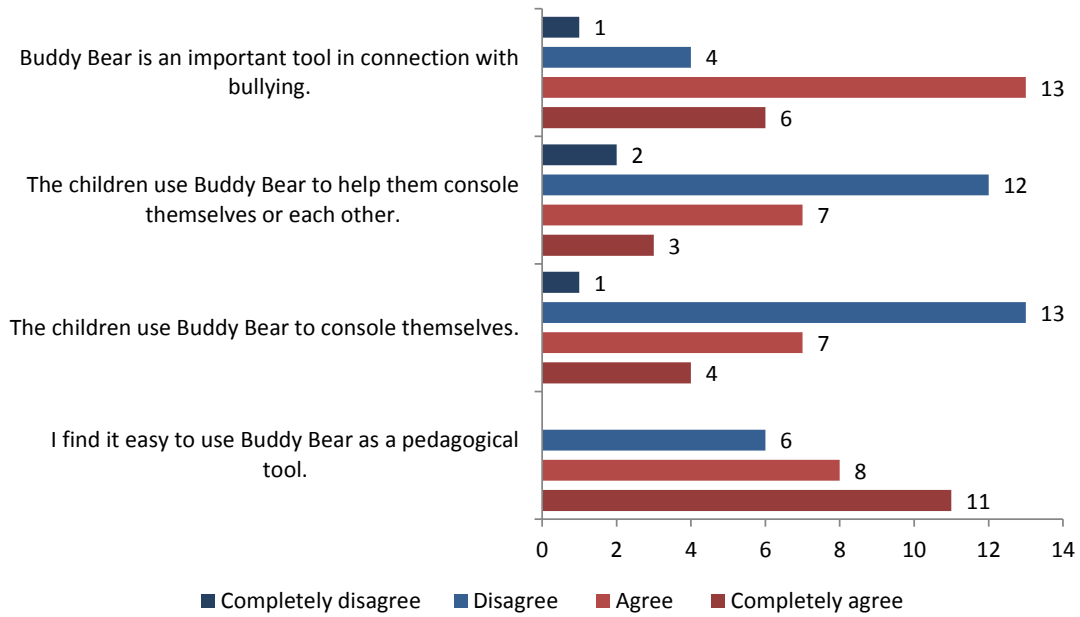


Figure 21: Evaluate the 'big teddy bear' (Buddy Bear), based on the following statements

5.3 Evaluate 'the massage' based on the following statements

Four statements in the questionnaire were directed at evaluating the massage. 1) Our version of Free of Bullying incorporates 'massage'. 2) The stories used in the massage activities are suitable for the children's group. 3) We use the massage on specific days of the week. 4) The massage has a positive impact on the children's group.

Answer to statement one: Majority of participants' state that their version of Free of Bullying incorporates 'massage' or 22 of 25. Three participants say that their version does not incorporate the massage (see image 22).

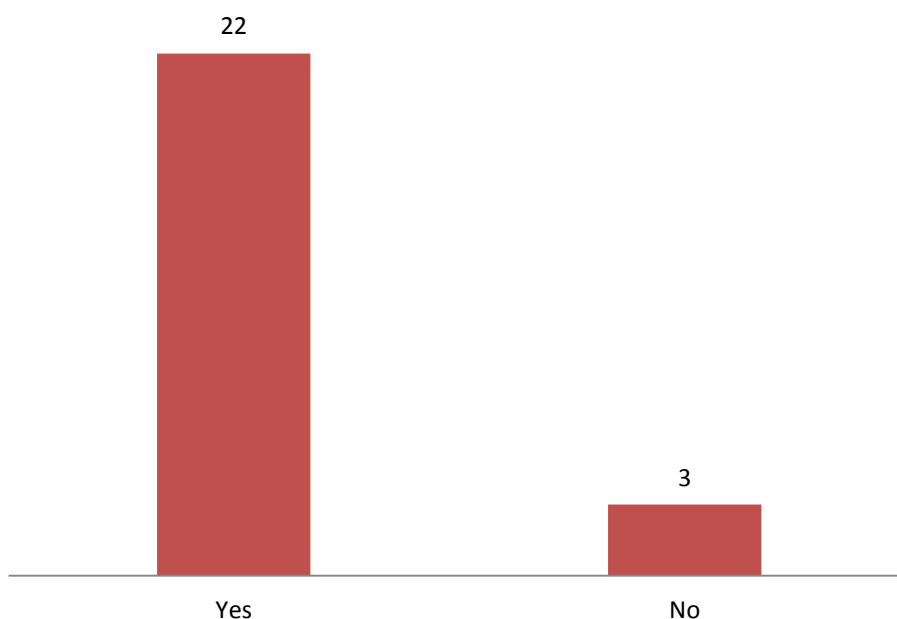


Figure 22: Our version of Free of Bullying incorporates 'massage'

To statement two: When asked to evaluate the stories used in the massage activities are suitable for the children's group, eight *completely agree*, 12 *agree*, one *disagrees* and one *completely disagrees*.

To statement three: Five participants *completely agree* that they use the massage on specific days of the week, seven *agree*, 10 disagree, one *completely disagrees*.

To statement four: There were 11 participants who *completely agreed* to the statement that massage has a positive impact on the children's group.

Participants were asked to elaborate briefly on their answers. All-over experience with the massage is good. Everyone has the experience to try to touch their friend if the friend wishes and learn a way of kindness. They show concern for each other and mind how they are doing the massage. The children feel good when they give each other massage. Someone reported using their own stories and adding yoga and massage. Also that massage is an inherent part of yoga practice and so that goes hand in hand with yoga classes. It was suggested that stories for massage should vary in length and version for different age and maturity and a point along the same lines the stories might be a little simplistic for the oldest children.

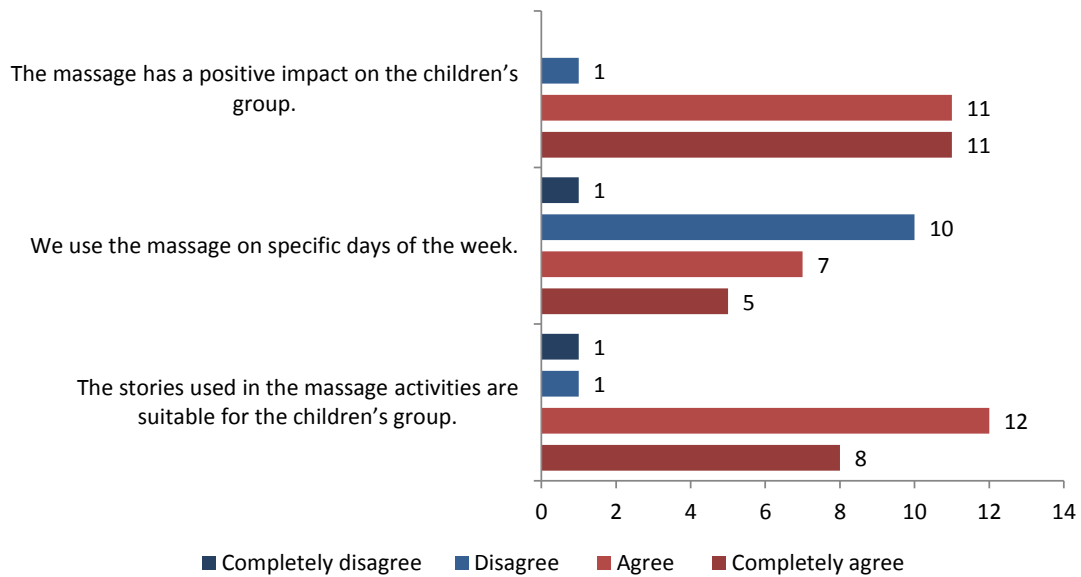


Figure 23: Evaluate 'the massage' based on the following statements

5.4 Opportunities for improving the material

Five questions were directed at possible improvement on the material. 1) Can you see opportunities for improving the materials? 2) Have you come across any difficulties when using certain material(s)? 3) Have you and your colleagues used any material(s) other than the ones in the suitcase? 4) Have you, personally, changed or developed any aspect(s) of the materials? 5) Do the materials need to be adapted further to your country's culture and pedagogical principles?

To question one: When asked if one sees opportunities for improving the materials 16 participants believe it can be improved while seven think not. If participants answered yes, they were asked to briefly describe their thoughts.

Emphasis was on more quality, quantity and variety for the conversation boards and more variety and better wording for both conversation boards and massage stories. Someone mentioned training or a seminar in use of the teddy bears or collection of ideas how to use the teddy bears. There was mention of making the conversation boards smaller and the bag bigger to make it more accessible. Some feel the target

group should be 4 years and older. Others suggest making a better use of the big teddy bear and still others say there need to be more positive conversation boards.

To question two: Majority of participants did not recognize having come across difficulties when using certain materials or 20 of 25. Four reported having had some difficulties. When asked to briefly describe the difficulties, three mentioned the teddy bear; particularly the big teddy bear and those they felt lack of practice in using it. One out of the four had difficulties with the massage stories.

To question three: Thirteen say that neither they nor their colleagues have used any materials other than the ones in the suitcase, 12 participant's state that they or their colleagues have used other materials. They were asked to briefly describe these ideas.

Some have used other stories for the massage and added music and material not connected to Free of Bullying but has integrated Free of Bullying into all school work for the winter. Most frequent mention was of books and songs that are about friendship and content that supports what is discussed in group meetings. The life values, The United Nation Convention on the rights of the child. Others have made new stories for the massage and for instance used an earth globe as the school has children from different countries and Buddy the bear comes from Australia. Art class connected to friendship. One school works with a behavioural system and have it as a rule to be kind to your friends.

To question four: Ten participants have in some way changed or developed an aspects of the materials, 13 have not done so. Most frequently some adapting has been done for the massage stories. Participants had added questions to the conversation boards, shortened or lengthened stories for massage or adapted wording slightly or simplified, while using particular posters and massage stories. At times the use of small teddy bears in a group of friends or group meetings was omitted. One school had made special use of the conversation board's questions by printing them all out on a special sheet. Other mentioned discussing the big pictures regarding who looks happy or sad in the pictures.

To question five: Do the materials need to be adapted further to your country's culture and pedagogical principles? There were 10 participants who feel that the materials need to be adapted further to the countries culture and pedagogical principles and 11 feel it does not.

The participants who answered yes were asked to describe how materials could be adapted to the countries culture. It was suggested a conversation board in connection with multicultural disposition would be a good addition. The importance to mind gender stereotyping and bias in the conversation boards was stressed (i.e. gender biased play or activities). Someone feels the material is very positive but lacks in variety and that conversation boards that display only positive items or situations should be included. It was pointed out that maybe the teddy bear could be an animal adapted to Icelandic reality, like a fox or a polar bear. Stories and conversation boards could be localized better; some of the stories are not fitting to daily practice of an Icelandic kindergarten. The conversation board for lunch does not need to be in the case. It was also suggested that the image of the child in the purple clothes should be replaced with torn or dirty clothes for instance as the colour in itself does not represent ugly clothes (see figure 24).

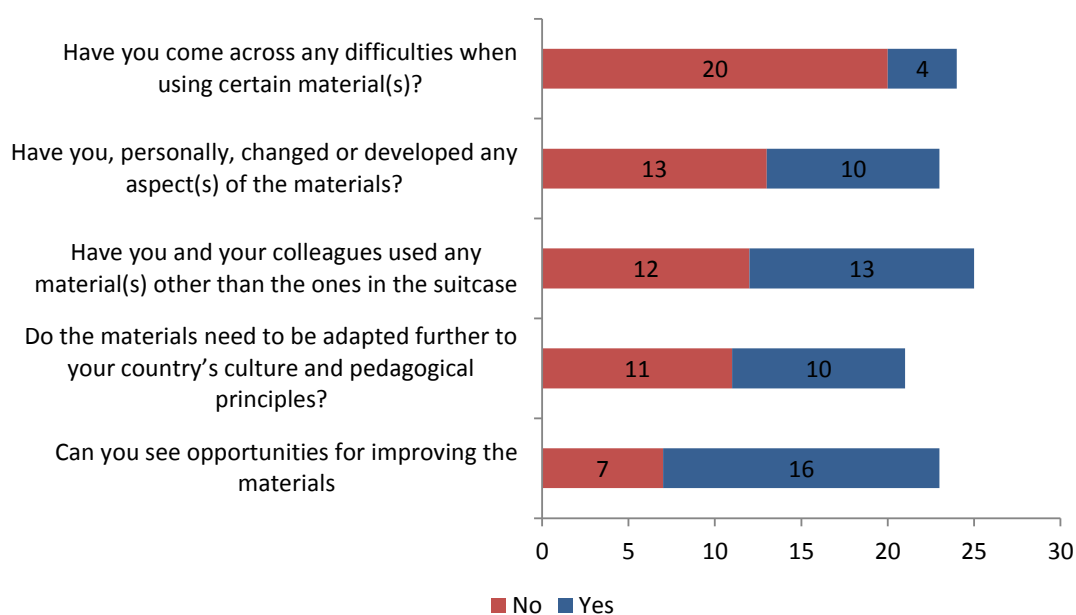


Figure 24: Opportunity for improving material.

6 THE COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS

Four questions are on parent's collaboration. 1) What steps have you and your colleagues taken to inform and involve the parents in Free of Bullying? 2) How have the parents responded to Free of Bullying? 3) Do you find that your preschool's participation in the project has changed the parents' conduct? 4) Do you have any specific idea(s) about potential new ways to involve the parents?

Question one: Most respondents have informed the parents of Free of Bullying via a newsletter or similar or 22 of 25 participants. There were 20 who claim that the project is described in the preschool, on a poster/noticeboard or similar, 17 say the project is mentioned on the preschool's website, 16 that details about the project have been revealed in joint parent- teacher meeting and 11 that they have had dialogues with parents about Free of Bullying in joint parent-teacher meetings or individual conversations with the parents. Only six say they have used the project's tools/activities as a means of involving the parents and one reports informing the parents about the project in daily conversations and on development of the project (see figure 25).

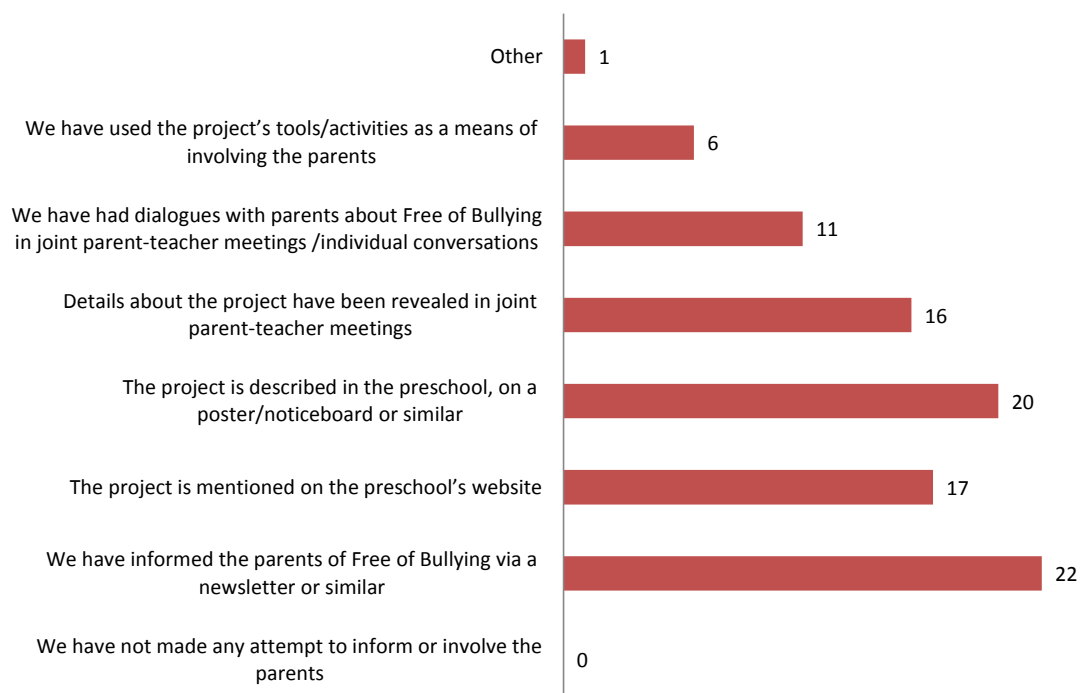


Figure 25: What steps have you and your colleagues

Question two: Most participants or 24 reported that parents had responded positively to the preschool's involvement in the project. Nine reported that parents had been interested in seeing the suitcase, seven that parents have talked about their children's reactions to Free of Bullying and six that parents have asked about, or commented on, specific activities in the project. Three named other responses from parents and felt that they could have been more interested and asked more questions (see figure 26).

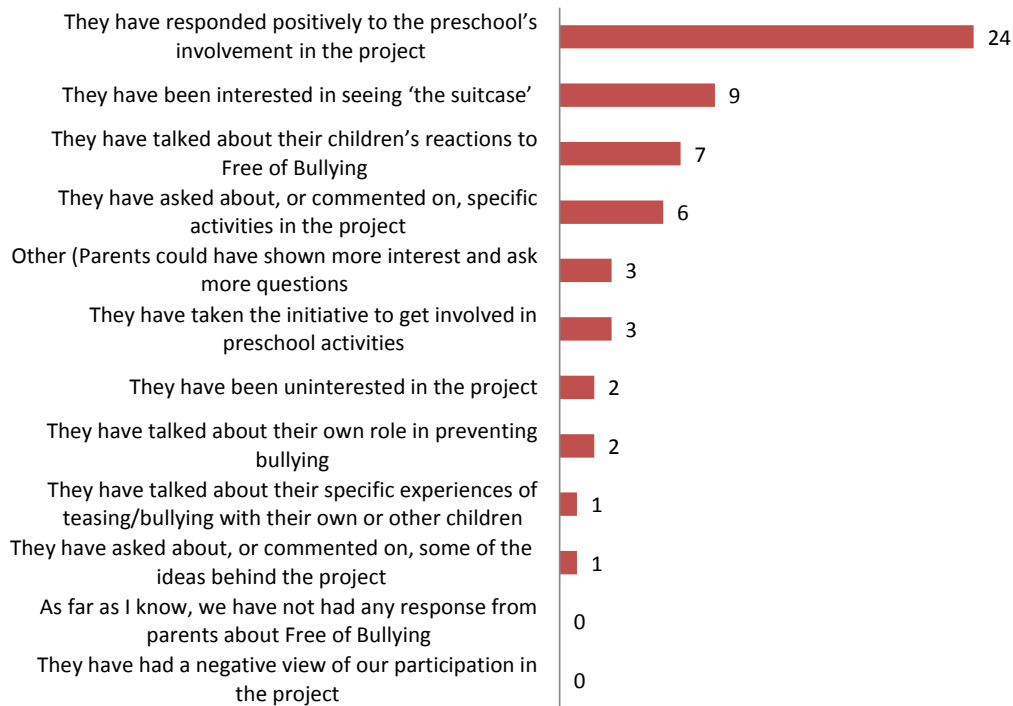


Figure 26: How have the parents responded for Free of Bullying?

Question three: Do you find that your preschool's participation in the project has changed the parents' conduct? Majority of respondents did not report experiencing any difference in parents conduct or 18 of 25. Four experienced other change than mentioned. Parents have consulted me regarding communication among the children. The parents mention that the children speak frequently about the project. There is an open discussion on birthdays and visits at the end of the schooldays. One mentioned that the changes mentioned had already taken place in parent's participation as a result of another applied project on life values that was launched before Free of Bullying pilot project (see figure 27).

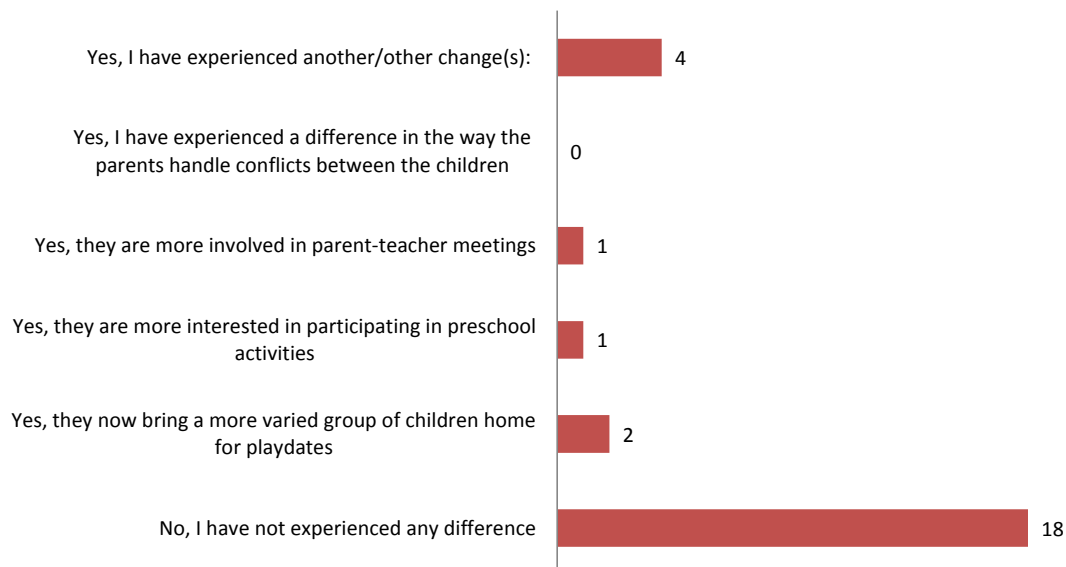


Figure 27: Do you find that your preschool's participants in the project has changed the parents' conduct?

Question four: Do you have any specific idea(s) about potential new ways to involve the parents? There were 16 who responded no and five respondent yes. When asked to briefly describe their ideas, one stated that Buddy the bear had proved a key medium in helping with problematic behaviour in the children's group that parents had complained about. Others mentioned organizing meetings in the beginning of semester for discussions and plans with the parents. To send updates on how the project work and how the children are doing by email. Encourage the parent's council to show initiative in cooperation and to convey information on the project to other parents.

7 THE EXPERIENCES OF FREE OF BULLYING

Two questions pertain to the experiences on Free of Bullying. 1) Do you at this moment in time feel equipped to handle bullying among the children if it arises? 2) Is there anything about the work with Free of Bullying that has surprised you?

To question one: Majority of participant's experience that they are somewhat equipped to handle bullying among the children if it arises or 18 of 25 participants. Six reported to most definitely be equipped to handle bullying among the children and only one didn't know. Nobody felt they would not be equipped to handle bullying among the children (see figure 28).

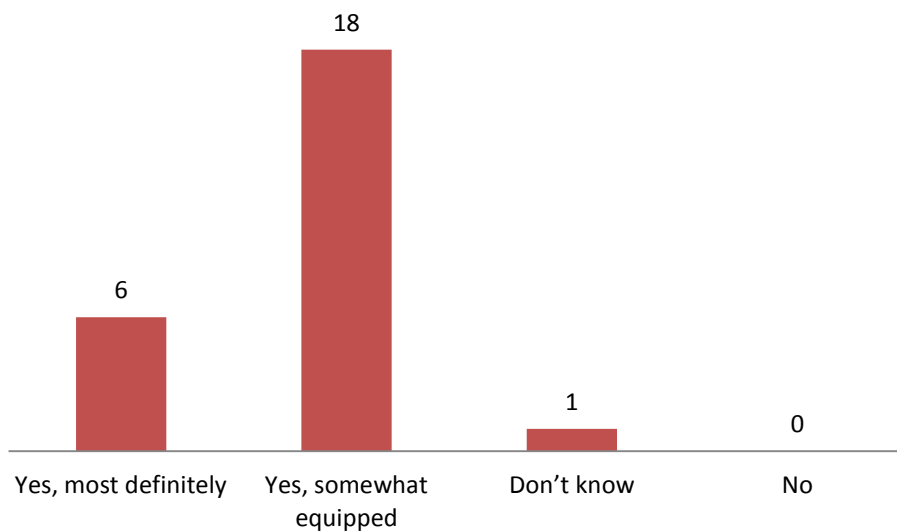


Figure 28: Do you at this moment in time feel equipped to handle bullying among the children if it arises?

To question two: Most respondents feel that work with the Free of Bullying has been surprising in a positive way or 18 of 25; five experienced no surprises about the work. Participants were further asked to write a few notes about what has surprised them. The respondents found it surprising how well children responded to the work and how aware they are of positive communication and empathetic. They are really good at bringing up ideas and understand the conversation boards but have a harder time applying that understanding to them during play time. Others were surprised

over how easily the work of Free of Bullying was integrated into everyday schoolwork.

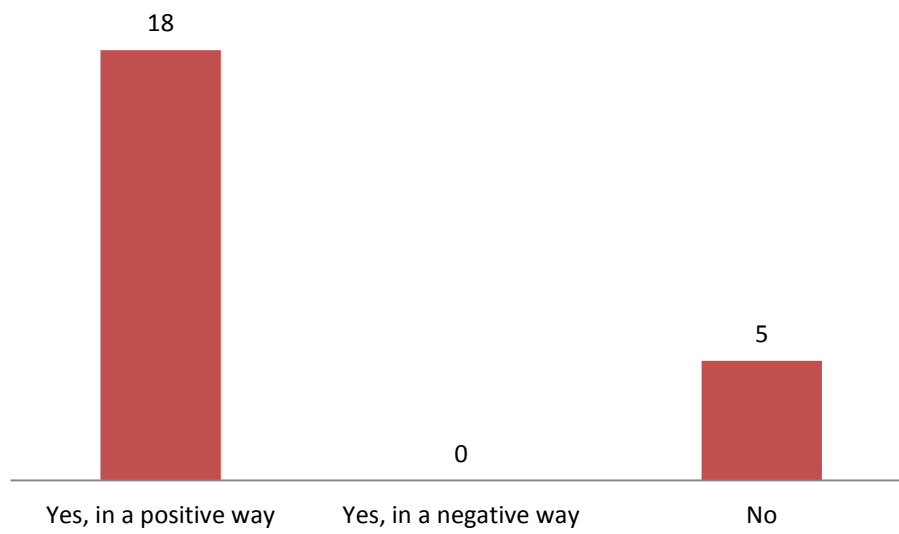


Figure 29: Is there anything about the work with Free of Bullying that has surprised you?

8 SUMMARY

Most of the participants in this study were unqualified preschool teachers or assistant teachers although put together majority of the respondents had long term experience working within the field. The study reveals that most participants have a positive outlook on the project Free of Bullying and they have active role as participants in it. Majority of participants find that Free of Bullying has given them new useful tools to prevent bullying to some degree. In general respondents also feel that they have gained more awareness of exclusion patterns among the children in working with Free of Bullying and some feel that they have acquired new knowledge of bullying. Also there was a general consensus that the staff groups give each other more feedback on the children's relationships after working with the project. The children treat each other more positively and interact in a more positive way. Teachers/staff also experience that the children are more aware of social rules. Most reported using the suitcase weekly and according to timetable or when it fitted into the given programme for the day. At some point all of the items in the suitcase has been used.

In teachers experience the children enjoy using the material and they are interested in the suitcase material. There were some concerns that the youngest children were too young to relate and show particular interest in the material. Others felt that the interest for example in the small teddy bears wane with time among the older children. At the same time the small teddy bears were most frequently mentioned as having contributed to a positive development in the children's group. Participants feel that some aspects of the material might be improved. There was emphasis on more quality, quantity and variety for the conversation boards and more variety and more fitting wording for both conversation boards and message stories. It was also pointed out to maintain a multicultural aspect in the conversation boards and also to mind gender bias in pictures portraying children at play. In general, communication with parents about the project was good and was conveyed through newsletter, website or noticeboard. Parents responded positively but there were reports of lack

in active interest on parent's behalf. Most respondents felt somewhat equipped to handle bullying in case it would arise among the children and some most definitely felt they would.

9 REFERENCES

Barnaheill. Vinátta: Fri for Mobberi. [Save the Children. Free of Bullying]. (2015, January 30.). Retrieved from <http://www.barnaheill.is/Vinatta>.