

Parents' assessment of pre-primary education**Siniharju, Marjatta.** National Board of Education, Finland

In Finland pre-primary education is provided to six-year-olds at day care centres or schools. The National Board of Education conducted a nationwide study on pre-primary education in the school year 2003-2004, with parents being asked to share their views concerning their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with pre-primary education and to make suggestions for improvement. A questionnaire was sent to the parents of 4,586 pupils, and the response rate was 81%.

Most parents were quite satisfied with their children's pre-primary education: social skills development, preparation for school, diversity in activities and teacher competence. Parents also valued their children's happiness and enjoyment of learning. They were dissatisfied with the lack of information and cooperation both generally and regarding their own children's progress. Parents wished for greater cooperation with staff, participation in planning and evaluating pre-primary education, and collaboration with other parents. Some requested more classroom teaching, while others wanted more free time and play for their children. The responses show clear differences in pre-primary education between day care centres and schools. Nationwide uniformity will require clarification of the national core curriculum for pre-primary education at the practical level and a clear regulatory framework.