

**TITLE:**

Implementing of universal design in an Norwegian community-  
Experience in the use of a mapping tool for universal design. Case studies from mapping  
school – and pre- school buildings.

Master of Public Health  
MPH 2009:2

Solveig Dale

**Background:** Buildings that implement universal design provide increased participation and activity levels for many people.

**Purpose:** This study aimed to show how a Norwegian community could use universal design for a planned rehabilitation of school and pre-school buildings. We sought to describe the steps necessary to achieve universal design.

**Methods:** Our case study formed the basis of our investigation regarding the potential of universal design in school buildings. To raise awareness in study participants, we showed them photographs illustrating universal design. We also mapped the buildings according to their fulfillment of the “Guidelines to technical regulations” provided by both the construction plan and building legislation. One year following the mapping exercise, we surveyed six central participants; executive officer, manager of the property department, local politicians, managers and department heads of 2 childcare units. The following questions were posed: Which political decisions have been taken? What does the participant know about universal design? Describe planning processes in the local authority? What economical considerations have been taken? Describe the important factors necessary to implement universal design?

**Results:** Mapping revealed insufficient design regarding mobility, adaptation ability, and indoor climate. Our study identified criteria that are essential to achieving universal design, including increased knowledge and understanding of universal design; political and administrative funding of the work; common understanding and interaction between the health sector, user organizations, and the technical sector; accountability; and economic recourses. Interviews indicated that study reports aided the municipality in laying groundwork for further rehabilitation of the buildings.

**Conclusions:** While reports and implementation criteria contribute importantly to achieving universal design, it is important to use such information and guidelines early in the planning process. Further research is required to determine a possible connection between universal design and perception of health.