The Nordic Way

Rapport

Regards croisés

Voyage d'étude 7 au 12 Juin 2022

Un voyage d'expériences et d'échanges au cœur des 1000 premiers jours

pour explorer ensemble les pépites nordiques aux niveaux :

- Des **politiques publiques** : comment adresser le sujet aux politiques pour investir en prévention précoce et s'intéresser davantage à la petite enfance ?
- Des **acteurs institutionnels** sur les territoires (Régions, Départements, Communautés de communes, Villes, CAF, ARS) : comment les sensibiliser davantage au travail en réseau et à l'équilibre public-privé ?
- De la **recherche** : comment travailler en coordination avec les centres de formation, les universités et les acteurs de terrain ?
- Des **professionnels de la petite enfance et de l'enfance** : comment entrer dans une démarche construite d'amélioration continue de la qualité et en mesurer les impacts ?

Sommaire

INTRODUCTION

Notre souhait était de nous retrouver après deux années inouïes, de croiser nos regards, de prendre de la distance et de plonger au coeur d'une communauté qui croit en l'enfant, en sa parole et en ses talents ; au pays ou les parents sont des alliés.

Nous y avons trouvé une communauté de scientifiques, de chercheurs, de praticiens, d'éducateurs, de politiques, d'influenceurs, de parents qui évaluent et améliorent en continue la qualité de leurs pratiques éducatives, dans l'intérêt de l'enfant.

Un pays riche qui investit ces 1000 premiers jours et plus.

Nous avons cheminé, échangé, rencontré, gouté, expérimenté, questionné tout au long de ces cinq journées très denses et riches d'enseignement ; hors des sentiers battus.

Pour accompagner la suite de nos aventures, voici notre Rapport écrit à 60 mains et 30 cerveaux.

Ha det* !

Aller vers...

Ensemble !

*À bientôt

Les grands axes de l'éducation en Norvège

Lieu : La Mairie d'Oslo-City Hall

Rencontre avec :

- Mme. **Tove Mogstad Slinde**, conseillère principale de la Ministre de l'Education et de la recherche

- Mme. **Anne-Stine Bergsløkken**, conseillère spéciale pour l'éducation des jeunes enfants-Mairie d'OSLO

Education et prise en charge de la petite enfance en Norvège

1. Présentation de l'organisation des crèches en Norvège

Les crèches en Norvège

La prise en charge des jeunes enfants se répartit en Norvège entre :

- L'Etat qui est responsable de la définition des politiques, des statistiques et des ressources en matière de petite enfance
- Les 365 municipalités qui :
  - Possèdent les crèches
  - En tant qu'autorités locales, financent et s'assurent que les crèches privées suivent bien la réglementation
  - S'occupent des besoins spécifiques de certains enfants, notamment ceux issus de l'immigration et réfugiés.

Les parents ont un congé de naissance de 49 semaines (10 mois) payé à 100% et 10 semaines supplémentaires payées à 80%, que la plupart des familles prennent aussi.
15 semaines sont réservées à la mère, 15 au père et 19 (ou 29) sont partagées.
Durant le congé parental, des visites à domicile post-partum sont prévues : 1 à 2 systématiques puis à la demande des parents.
Cela pose la question du dépistage précoce entre 0 et 10 mois.

La Norvège dispose de 5900 crèches.
Parmi les enfants accueillis, 98,6% fréquentent des crèches et 1,4% sont accueillis chez des assistantes maternelles.
54% des crèches sont privées (avec une augmentation du nombre de structures relevant de sociétés étrangères) et 46% publiques.

Les crèches sont financées par l'Etat à 86,5% et le reste est payé par les parents.
Depuis 2013, la tendance est à la diminution de la part des parents au profit de la part de l'Etat.

Depuis 2009, chaque enfant a droit à une place en barnehage (crèche) à partir de 1 an (à l'issue du congé parental).
Dans les faits, 83,5% des enfants sont en crèche, avec 97,1% des 3-5 ans (le pourcentage est inférieur pour les enfants de migrants) .
95,5% y passent toute la journée, soit plus de 41 heures par semaine.

Concernant les tarifs, les familles les plus modestes bénéficient de 20 heures d'accueil gratuites.
Depuis 2004, il y a une prise en charge de 30% pour le 2ème enfant et 50% pour le 3ème enfant (avec une réflexion sur la gratuité pour le 3ème enfant).

Les crèches emploient 80 000 personnes.
Le ratio d'encadrement est de 1/7 enfants de 1 à 3 ans et 1/14 enfants de 3 à 5 ans pour les diplômés, 1/3 et 1/6 pour les non-diplômés.
On compte presque 10% d'hommes dans le métier, le sujet de la masculinisation de la profession est largement approprié.

La politique de la petite enfance en Norvège

Le gouvernement nommé en 2021 a des ambitions fortes sur l'éducation de la petite enfance et les crèches avec un plan à horizon 2030.

Ce plan vise tout particulièrement à améliorer la qualification des professionnels de la petite enfance. A ce jour, seuls 25% des professionnels sont des éducateurs diplômés et l'objectif est de dépasser 50%.

Il s'agit aussi de disposer de managers dans toutes les structures, quelle que soit leur taille, et de mieux encadrer les établissements privés.

Un plan a été élaboré pour augmenter le niveau de qualité (guidance, règles, indicateurs) autour de 3 objectifs :

- Approche coopérative qui implique les parents et les professionnels de la petite enfance pour co-construire les normes ;
- Pédagogie holistique : soins, jeu, apprentissage, bien-être, créativité, langage et apprentissage socio-émotionnel centrés autour de l'enfant et de ses besoins spécifiques ;
- « EDUCARE » : éducation, attention et soin.

Le gouvernement a la volonté d'augmenter l'inclusion des enfants porteurs de handicap.

Il entend aussi développer la participation des parents et des enfants auxquels on demande leur avis, il y a toujours un dialogue avec les enfants dans le cadre des différentes interactions pour évaluer leur niveau de bien-être.

A noter que le taux de natalité chute en dépit de ces mesures (1,7 enfant par femme).

2. L’exemple de la ville d’Oslo

Le conseil municipal d’Oslo comprend 59 membres élus pour 4 ans.
Sunniva Holmas est l’adjointe au maire à l'éducation, mais il y a 15 districts avec des élus qui ne sont pas obligés de mettre en œuvre les orientations décidées par l’adjointe thématique.

Il y a 733 crèches à Oslo, dont 312 municipales et 421 crèches privées.
C'est une ville où il y a de grandes disparités entre les districts, ce qui explique que dans certains territoires il y ait des renforts avec des compétences spécifiques par exemple multiculturelles, ou sur les vulnérabilités.

En matière de petite enfance, une plateforme a été définie pour Oslo avec pour objectif que tous les enfants puissent avoir les mêmes opportunités pour jouer, apprendre, recevoir de l'attention et des soins prodigués par des adultes sécurisants et aimants.
NB : La notion « d'amour » dans la posture professionnelle est assumée, considérée comme un pilier du bon développement de l'enfant.

Il y a 3 leviers d'actions prioritaires à Oslo :

- Réduire les inégalités pour que chaque individu ait les mêmes chances de mener une vie épanouie.
- Permettre à tous les enfants de grandir auprès d'adultes sécurisants, capables de jouer avec eux et de leur transmettre ce dont ils ont besoin pour grandir et devenir adulte.
- Permettre à chaque personne de trouver des services adaptés à ses besoins. Pour cela, la municipalité doit co-construire ses actions entre les résidents, les employés, les bénévoles, les associations et les entreprises.

De façon plus opérationnelle, il s’agit ainsi :

- de permettre à tous les enfants de toutes les communautés de bénéficier d'un accueil en crèche, en informant les parents et en finançant l'accueil en crèche,
- d'attirer plus d'enfants dans les crèches,
- de protéger les aires de jeu des plus petits,
- d’éviter toute incivilité ou exclusion dans les crèches,
- de faire bénéficier à tout enfant d'un environnement quotidien favorable,
- que tous les enfants soient capables d'avoir une influence sur leur quotidien et leurs interactions,
- d’avoir assez de professionnels sécurisants et attentionnés dans les structures,
- de renforcer le travail pour un environnement propice au bon développement du langage,
- de veiller à une amélioration continue de la qualité de l'accueil.

Parmi les mesures permettant de répondre à ces objectifs, la Ville a développé un projet pour recruter des hommes issus de la diversité ou de quartiers en difficulté pour travailler dans les crèches et dans les écoles, dans des districts où la violence est très présente.
Une vidéo issue du projet « Where are my brothers ? » a été réalisée, insistant sur le fait que le regard des enfants est non-jugeant et non-discriminant vis-à-vis des jeunes hommes issus de quartiers difficiles.

La Ville a également lancé un programme de recherche qui s'appuie sur les parents de quartiers en difficulté, pour comprendre pourquoi ils ne vont pas vers la crèche et ainsi mettre en place des solutions pour limiter les inégalités ; ce programme inclut des échanges entre chercheurs, professionnels, enfants et parents.

L'amélioration continue de la qualité dans les crèches est une préoccupation majeure pour la Ville d'Oslo.
Pour cela, les normes et outils pédagogiques sont en perpétuelle évolution, basés sur la recherche et élaborés en lien avec les pédagogues du terrain pour s'adapter au mieux aux besoins des enfants.

Un attention particulière est portée à la continuité éducative entre les crèches (jardin d'enfants) et l'école, qui repose sur un important travail d'échange et de collaboration entre les structures.

Cette collaboration vise notamment à :

- Assurer une continuité éducative entre crèche et école pour éviter les ruptures
- Porter une attention particulière entre la dernière année de crèche et la première année d'école, grâce à des outils pédagogiques communs et des professionnels qui travaillent ensemble
- Permettre une prise en charge précoce pour les enfants à besoins particuliers
- S'assurer de la transmission des informations au sujet de l'enfant entre le jardin d'enfants et l'école, en impliquant l'enfant et ses parents

Les parents notent à 4,8 sur 5 le bien-être des enfants dans les crèches d'Oslo.
Il y a aussi une évaluation par les enfants de 4 ans ; il y a eu une expérimentation avec les 2 ans, mais les professionnels n'étaient pas partants pour demander l'avis des enfants, même si le but n'est pas de juger les professionnels mais de permettre le dialogue entre professionnels et enfants.

Un programme de **"protection du cerveau des enfants"** a été mis en place par la ville d'Oslo.
La Ville veut notamment agir en matière de prévention, de détection et de prise en charge pour les enfants victimes de négligence, de maltraitance ou d'abus sexuels.
En 2016 et 2017, une étude a été menée sur un groupe cible d'enfants (0-6 ans) pour savoir s'ils avaient eu une expérience de violence, si elle a été détectée et prise en charge, révélant que les enfants les plus jeunes étaient les plus à risque.
En 2018, le programme de protection du cerveau a été étendu pour comprendre toute la période de 0 à 18 ans.

Chaque professionnel en lien avec des enfants devrait avoir des connaissances sur :

- les recherches récentes sur le cerveau et les neurosciences
- les traumatismes
- le manque de soins
- l'attachement sécure
- l'importance de la coopération avec les enfants et leurs familles
- un socle commun de valeur : avec une vision aimante et positive de l'enfant pour leur permettre de se développer dans les meilleures conditions

Cela donne des informations sur ce qui va permettre à ces enfants d'être en sécurité affective, de vivre des expériences sécurisantes (le cercle de sécurité affective avec les professionnels, les parents).
Le programme inclut des professionnels formés et des parents accompagnés. Les enfants et les jeunes sont parties prenantes de ce travail.
Pour mener à bien ce programme, les échanges et les liens entre les professionnels de terrain et les chercheurs sont primordiaux, afin d'améliorer les pratiques en continu et de favoriser les interactions positives entre les enfants.
Le service de santé des enfants de la ville se rend dans les crèches, écoles et structures de loisirs pour diffuser ces connaissances et de nouveaux dispositifs sont élaborés pour détecter et accompagner les enfants et les familles les plus vulnérables.

Le programme Oslo hjelpa (=help) est par ailleurs destiné aux familles qui ont du mal à aller vers les services qui sont à leur disposition.
Alors que les différents services interviennent chacun sur une partie de la problématique familiale, le programme est global et a pour objectif d'apporter de l'aide aux parents là où ils (en) sont, notamment dans les crèches, de répondre plus vite et mieux aux situations complexes.
Le travail pédagogique est alors renforcé dans les crèches de manière à ce que les professionnels puissent répondre aux besoins spécifiques des familles dans chaque district.

Ce programme est orienté sur les besoins des parents, auxquels sont posées trois questions :

- qu'est-ce qui est important pour vous ?
- qu'est-ce qui fonctionne avec/pour vous ?
- comment y arriver et l'obtenir ?

Explorer la qualité et réduire les inégalités

Lieu : Visite d'un **Barnehage Alna bydelshus** (town hall)

Adresse : Besøksadressen er Trygve Lies Plass 6, 1051 Oslo

Présentation d'un dispositif en place dans la ville d'Oslo pour rejoindre les familles isolées

« Communauté de mamans », témoignage de l'assistante de la directrice des mamans du pays et leader du projet des garçons fiersen Norvège

Historique

Depuis 1996, les mamans du voisinage travaillent pour accompagner les autres mamans vers les structures d'accueil. Elles sont bénévoles, se réunissent en communauté (groupe de mamans fières). En 2020 sont créés les groupes de « papas fiers » (78 à ce jour).

Elles sont intégrées au fonctionnement de la ville d'Oslo qui les aide pour construire des projets de communauté ; chaque projet dure 3 ans.

Ce dispositif permet de faire des liens entre la politique publique et le terrain. A ce jour, 89 groupes de communauté de mamans, répartis dans chaque grande ville, sont les branches locales d'une association nationale. 48 langues/dialectes différents sont parlés au sein des communautés. Les groupes de mères connaissent le maillage territorial. Ces mères sont les piliers sociaux des familles et responsables des liens sociaux.

Objectif :

Ils sont multiples : dans une démarche de prévention précoce, fournir la connaissance nécessaire aux familles les plus précaires pour avancer dans une vie plus harmonieuse en partant de la conversation pour construire des ponts entre le besoin et la réponse, construire un réseau local.

Il s'agit d'établir un lien de confiance avec ces familles afin d'une part de leur donner confiance dans les institutions (aide aux démarches), et d'autre part, de promouvoir les bienfaits de l'accueil en collectivité pour leurs enfants (partage sur les valeurs transmises dans les crèches, apprentissage de la langue). L'intégration se fait alors via l'association des mères, reconnue par l'État.

Missions :

« Les maman fières » aident les familles à communiquer entre elles, les accompagnent à participer à des activités locales pour aller ensuite vers des activités plus formelles. Des modules leur sont alors proposés autour du développement de l'enfant, la vie quotidienne, la jeunesse, l'adolescence, les services d'aide, la nutrition et l'activité physique, la santé mentale et sociale, l'aide par soi-même… D'autres modules sont adaptables en fonction des besoins. Les mères utilisent la langue dans laquelle elles sont le plus à l'aise mais s'ouvrent également à la culture et la langue norvégiennes. Elles gagnent en confiance avec elles-mêmes mais aussi avec les autres.

Principe :

- Conversation : les mamans partagent en confiance entre elles
- Construction de ponts entre les besoins et les réponses
- Création de réseaux, entraide solide et multi dimensionnelle au niveau local

C'est la force du groupe qui amène l'intégration des enfants et des familles dans la société.

Présentation des Kindergartens du district d'Alna et de ses spécificités

Contexte chiffré

50 000 habitants, **12 123** enfants de 0 à 19 ans, **3 491** enfants âgés de 0/5 ans

78 % des 0/5 ans sont accueillis dans les Kindergartens & **97 %** des 4/5 ans

Faible participation des **0/3 ans** (situation liée au congé parental).

Plus de **100** nationalités au sein de la structure, **50 %** de la population est immigrante.

30 % de familles norvégiennes de souche.

Constats

- **2000** enfants vivent dans des ménages très pauvres
- Mixité de la population au sein du district, multiculturalisme
- Parents ayant reçu « peu ou pas d'éducation scolaire »
- Souvent un seul parent travaille
- Beaucoup de dépendance aux aides sociales octroyées par la Norvège

Défis du kindergarten

Comment garder la culture d'origine tout en s'intégrant dans la société norvégienne ? 90 à 100% des enfants sont issus de l'immigration (barrière de la langue), pauvreté, parents peu ou pas éduqués par rapport à la moyenne nationale. Comment développer la compétence langagière ? Comprendre comment on peut aider les familles : comment les préparer à l'école ? Comment permettre une égalité des chances entre les différents milieux sociaux-économiques ?

Les indicateurs de qualité

Ils mesurent le nombre d'interactions entre les enfants, entre les enfants et les adultes, la qualité des interactions, les compétences langagières et sociales.

Modalités

Via la coopération des parents :

- Mise en place de projets autour du langage : système de mentoring, travail avec un pédagogue, analyse de pratiques à travers des vidéos, via des manuels, apprentissage en continu par petits groupes, etc.
- Travail autour de la santé, l'activité physique, la nutrition, etc.

Via la contribution des kindergartens :

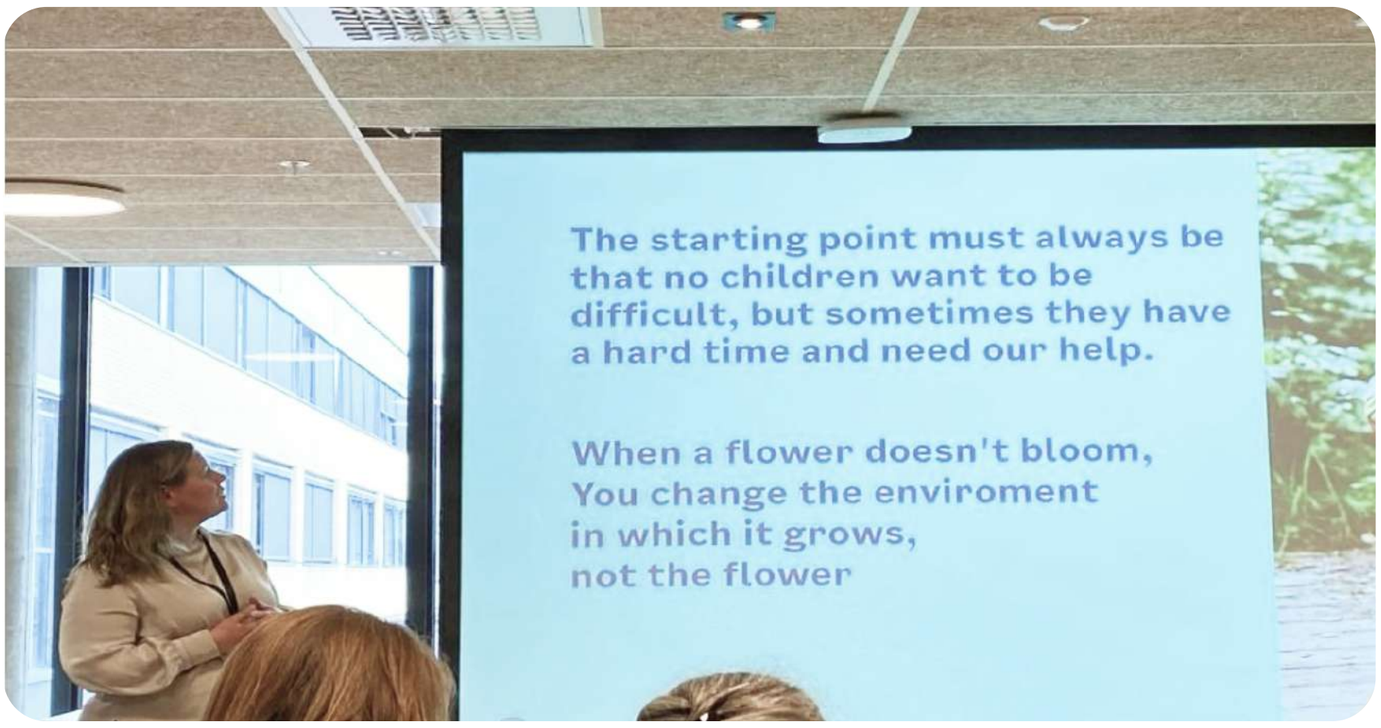
- Place du jeu très importante, en permanence dans les activités : apprentissage par le jeu.
- Proximité des adultes, observation de l'enfant et de ses interactions avec les autres, en coopération avec les parents (Comment cela se passe-t-il à la maison ?). Évaluation à la maison et dans le collectif.
- Être présent avec les enfants.
- Impliquer les parents en amont pour instaurer une relation de confiance, les guider et agir le plus tôt possible. Possibilité pour les parents d'être en relation avec un leader (conseiller) pédagogique, de participer à des tutorats de groupes avec d'autres parents.

A partir des observations, les équipes analysent les observations / évaluations dans leur environnement et déterminent comment elles peuvent aider et accompagner l'enfant et sa famille.

- Pour favoriser et inciter la venue des enfants dans les kindergartens : 20h gratuites par semaine pour les 3/5 ans (sous réserve des conditions de revenus, calculés en fonction d'un quotient familial).
- Collaboration avec les différentes parties prenantes : les parents en premier lieu (réunions, échanges), les écoles (savoir de quoi elles ont besoins avant l'entrée de l'enfant à l'école), les centres pour les enfants avec des besoins spécifiques… et en dernier recours, les services sociaux de protection de l'enfance.
- Les tutorats peuvent se faire en utilisant les différentes langues, sont basés sur l'échange entre parents, sans idée de professionnalisation.
- Un document national guide et cadre le fonctionnement des crèches (publiques et privées) et fixe les taux d'encadrement.
- La formation est de 3 ans pour des professionnels "diplômés" (appelés « enseignants / teachers / pédagogues » équivalent des EJE en France) et de 1 an pour d'autres professionnels (équivalent CAP et AEPE en France).
- Les ratios d'encadrement sont élevés (particulièrement dans ce quartier d'Alna où 75 % des professionnels ont une formation de 3 ans et 25% une formation d'1 an).

Le mot de conclusion

Aucun enfant ne veut être difficile mais tout enfant a besoin d'être soutenu quand il connaît des situations difficiles.



Visite d’un Kindergarten à OSLO avec le manager

Lieu : Visite de **Barnehages** d’Oslo

Gransletta barnehage

Haugenstien barnehage

Ce **Kindergarten** de **108** enfants âgés de **1 à 6 ans** est implanté au cœur d’un quartier politique de la ville.

Il n’existe pas de liste d’attente pour l’accueil des enfants. Ils peuvent accueillir des enfants à partir de 10 mois mais généralement l’accueil se fait à partir de 1 an car avant, l’enfant reste avec ses parents (congé maternité et paternité). Les enfants sont accueillis **jusqu’à l’entrée à l’école, à savoir 6 ans.**

Il y a 7 kindergartens dans le district d’Alna où est situé celui que nous visitons. 7 managers y travaillent ensemble pour relever les défis notamment du quotidien en s’entraidant.

Les professionels

Dans ce kindergarten, il y a deux groupes :

- 1 groupe d’enfants de 1 à 3 ans (3 adultes pour 9 enfants)
- 1 groupe d’enfants de 3 à 6 ans (3 adultes pour 18 enfants)

3 pédagogues à **temps plein** sont présents dans la structure et chacun a un domaine de compétences pour :

- Le langage
- Le développement de la prévention précoce (incluant les informations préoccupantes)
- La motricité libre, l’impact de l’environnement sur les apprentissages

Comme les pédagogues font partie de l’équipe, ils prennent en charge aussi les enfants comme les autres membres de l’équipe ; ils bénéficient de 4h par semaine pour réfléchir aux projets de la structure et travaillent auprès des enfants pendant 33h.

Pédagogues et teachers ont le même niveau d’étude.

Dans l’équipe, il n’y a pas de tâches spécifiques, ils s’occupent de l’enfant dans sa globalité. Un teacher accompagne le même groupe d’enfants pendant un an. Ils peuvent changer à l’issue de cette année ou pas.

Le fonctionnement de la structure

Les heures d'ouverture sont de 7h à 17h et généralement l'accueil de l'enfant (demandé aux parents) est au minimum de 10h à 15h pour que la journée soit la plus nourrissante et constructive possible.

Les enfants dorment dehors jusqu'à -10 degrés dans les poussettes, équipées de sacs de couchage adaptés à ces températures. Il n'y a pas de lits.

Une liste des temps habituels de sieste de l'enfant est faite par le parent.

Les poussettes dans lesquelles dorment les enfants lors de la sieste en extérieur.

Les parents fournissent également les habits d'extérieur et ils acceptent que les enfants se salissent, puisque les enfants **expérimentent par le jeu**.

Les parents amènent de la nourriture qui peut être complétée par la crèche.

Le contexte d'exercice des professionnels petite enfance

Les professionnels travaillent 37,5 heures par semaine. Ils ont un temps de travail ensemble toutes les semaines.

Ils bénéficient de 5 semaines de congé par an et une 6ème pour les plus de 60 ans.

Des temps sont prévus avec les parents :

- 2 réunions par an
- 2 temps individuels sous forme de conversation après observation de l'enfant

Il n'y a pas de personnel médical dans les crèches.

La posture des professionnels auprès des enfants

Les kindergartens favorisent l'**expérimentation** par le jeu tout le temps car le jeu permet et facilite l'apprentissage. Les adultes sont présents avec les enfants durant tous les jeux. **La prise de risque «accompagnée » est favorisée** et les relations entre enfants se construisent également sur les disputes, les chamailleries… l'éducateur a une posture interventionniste uniquement lorsque les enfants se trouvent en difficultés (émotions à accompagner, situation qui dégénère…)

Les équipes font une évaluation régulière sur le bien être de l'enfant et ses apprentissages, évaluation qui est faite en coopération avec les parents car il est important d'évaluer l'enfant dans ces deux milieux.

Le kindergarten en images :

Rencontre avec ESPIRA
Entreprise privée de KinderGarten/ Barnehage

Groupe installé en Norvège, Suède et Allemagne

Lieu : **Centre Espira**

Adresse : Besøksadressen er Trygve Lies Plass 6, 1051 Oslo

Rencontre avec :

- Mme. **Mari Fagerheim**
  responsable du développement

- Mme. **Marit Lambrechts**,
  Présidente du Centre Espira

Parle :

Le **centre Espira** s'appuie sur les recherches les plus récentes et réalise régulièrement des recherches actions sur différents sujets (motricité libre, développement du langage, etc.)

Ils visent une amélioration sur 3 points : **bien être**, **implication**, **activité physique**.

Selon leur vision, investir dans la recherche c'est investir dans la qualité.

Pour cette raison, les compétences des professionnels sont développées à l'aide de fiches d'activités en ligne, des cours en ligne, etc.

Les réunions d'équipe sont également nombreuses pour participer à cette réflexion constante.

L'environnement au service de la prise de risque

Pour les jeunes enfants, la prise de risque participe à leur développement.

Dans ce cadre, l'aménagement de l'espace est un point essentiel.

Le mobilier, particulièrement les tables, est identifié comme un frein important à la liberté de mouvement, qui est nécessaire pour explorer, expérimenter et apprendre.

Les enfants ont besoin de "open spaces, play possibility, activités physiques, jeux variés, bouger, rouler, escalader… tomber et se relever ! " (Marit Lambrecht).

Ils ont besoin de "batailles, cela travaille le self contrôle, la considération de l'autre et le contrôle émotionnel (les compétences sociales)".

Dans cette optique de prendre des risques, le jeu en extérieur est véritablement identifié en Norvège comme une ressource pour les professionnels. Les éducateurs sont plus méfiants lorsqu'il s'agit de prendre des risques en intérieur : jouer avec des éléments naturels permet donc de répondre à ces défis. Se cacher dans les buissons, faire des cabanes, etc. permet de développer de nombreuses compétences chez les jeunes enfants. La prise de risque permet notamment d'améliorer la concentration, le développement psychomoteur et le bien-être.

C'est du matériel peu coûteux, très en lien avec l'environnement naturel et qui apporte encore plus de créativité, de manipulation.

Les enfants à partir de 2 ans pratiquent le ski et mangent dehors jusqu'à -10 degrés, une fois de plus.

Maths et technologies, pour observer les enfants sous leur angle scientifique

C'est ce qu'on appelle l'**enfant chercheur** ou ingénieur !

Au quotidien, dans son jeu, le jeune enfant découvre en manipulant. Il teste les matières, les mouvements et l'espace. Il cherche et comprend son schéma corporel, la différence des tailles (petit, moyen et grand).

Le matériel et l'environnement dans lequel évolue l'enfant participent donc à ses expérimentations.

Le centre Espira porte une attention particulière à ces expérimentations mathématiques et scientifiques, notamment :

- les tours de cubes (nombre de briques, hauteur, longueur)
- le transvasement pour évaluer les volumes
- le transport des peluches (tri du plus petit au plus grand)
- l'habillage (ordre nécessaire à l'activité)
- les parcours, avec des caisses, tunnels…
- l'observation, par exemple des glaçons qui fondent
- la photographie, l'utilisation de microscopes
- la cuisine et les réactions des aliments entre eux, leur transformation
- le papier et l'eau

  Cette activité est née d'une problématique terrain, identifiée par les professionnels : les enfants bouchaient les lavabos avec du papier essui-tout pour les mains. Des activités dédiées ont donc été mises en place pour qu'ils puissent expérimenter et comprendre pourquoi le papier mouillé bouche les canalisations, l'incidence sur la nature, etc.).
- le remplissage d'un volume

Développer le language

C'est une des grandes priorités pour le Centre Espira.

Ils ont créé pour cela une **valise du langage** avec 2 personnages **"Spire & Bamse"** (la mascotte est offerte à chaque enfant à son arrivée pour faire une continuité à la maison).

Cette « language suitcase » (valise du langage) est remplie de deux peluches et de balles. Les professionnels de la petite enfance alimentent ensuite cette valise.

Ces valises sont à disposition des enfants et ainsi ils peuvent rajouter des choses dedans et habiller les peluches en fonction des saisons.

Tous les kindergartens du réseau Espira ont reçu une valise en octobre 2021.

L'objectif de la "valise linguistique" est d'inciter les professionnels à organiser des groupes réguliers et systématiques pour soutenir le développement du langage des jeunes enfants. Un carnet proposant 8 activités types est également joint à la valise, pour guider si besoin les professionnels dans leur utilisation de la valise.

Dans l'objectif de soutenir le langage, les professionnels portent une attention particulière à développer l'intérêt et la motivation des jeunes enfants. Ils tentent de connecter le sensoriel et le langage.

Les **activités** sont notamment orientées autour de :

- Lecture de livres
- Introduction de nouveaux mots
- Comptines et poèmes
- Jeux sensoriels et développement du langage

Toutes les activités réalisées dans le cadre de cette valise du langage sont construites selon **trois principes** :

- Les enfants développent le langage lorsqu'ils participent à des conversations.
- L'attention conjointe est nécessaire au développement du langage.
- L'humour et la joie sont toujours utiles !

Les retours d'expérience sont très encourageants :

Les professionnels soulignent qu'il est utile d'avoir la valise à portée de main : les enfants ont commencé à demander des groupes de langues. Ils veulent voir ce qui est caché dans la valise et veulent jouer avec "Spire et Bamse".

Les professionnels apprécient également que la valise soit un outil pédagogique flexible : ils peuvent y mettre plusieurs objets, liés aux saisons par exemple et aux thèmes sur lesquels ils travaillent.

Enfin, ils ont constaté que les "enfants silencieux" ont commencé à communiquer davantage pendant la période où ils ont organisé des groupes d'échange, et notamment pour les enfants qui parlent une autre langue que le norvégien à la maison.

Outdoor Education

L'éducation en extérieur permet de déconnecter du stress de la vie quotidienne, nous relier comme humains à la nature, développer la capacité à se connecter à la nature, etc.

La nature est également un lieu d'apprentissage qui permet de jouer et apprendre : on parle de "play and learning". La nature offre des éléments qui permettent de réels apprentissages, tels que l'équilibre, la balance, le poids, etc.

En Norvège, apprendre à être dans la nature et à aimer la nature est perçu comme particulièrement important pour le développement durable. Etre en extérieur dès la petite enfance permet de voir, regarder, sentir, comprendre les connexions, comment on agit sur la forêt, avoir une opinion sur la nature, etc. Cela influence notre envie de la défendre et de la protéger.

Observations sur le terrain

Un tronc d'arbre jonche le sol. Les enfants s'exercent spontanément à marcher en équilibre dessus. Un enfant trouve une petite planche, la place en travers et improvise un exercice d'équilibre en plaçant ses 2 pieds de chaque côté de la planche, un autre l'observe et s'y essaie à son tour.

Une échelle-pont en métal attire 5 ou 6 enfants qui y grimpent, puis se suivent au niveau horizontal à 4 pattes, accroupis ou en glissant, rampant, enjambant, ou essayant de passer à travers les barreaux. Toutes les locomotions sont exercées. Les enfants ne se bousculent pas, ils attendent patiemment...

L'échelle-pont se retrouve vide, un enfant y grimpe et essaie de s'y mettre debout. Il veut alors sauter au sol de cette hauteur de 1 mètre et tombe mal, mais sur des écorces de bois. Il recommence et cette fois, son saut est plus sûr, plus précis. Il le réussit, nous applaudissons.

La place de l'enfant et de la nature en ville

La Norvège porte une attention particulière au développement des espaces de nature dans les kindergartens et plus largement dans tous les lieux pour les enfants.

Nous en avons retenu que l'important est d'être engagé dans la relation avec l'enfant, lui offrir un regard positif et soutenant, lui offrir de l'espace pour bouger, jouer, explorer.

Cela contribue à développer ses compétences sociales, son estime de soi.

Le langage doit être une priorité et faire l'objet d'une activité à part entière, organisée, pensée... en particulier pour les enfants allophones ; que recherches-actions et crèches c'est indispensables pour mesurer les actions éducatives et utiliser tous les angles pour en observer les résultats.

Cette liberté de mouvement dans la nature (qui participe grandement à la prise de risque) est fondamentale. Leur faire confiance, leur expliquer et démontrer scientifiquement le pourquoi du comment renforce leurs connaissances et donne des enfants qui respectent leur environnement et leur compétences sociales entre enfants, et entre enfants et adultes. La visite qui en a suivi dans le kindergarten en forêt nous a laissé sans voix car tout y était : des enfants libres, autonomes, créatifs et heureux...

Récit

“Immersion dans un jardin d'enfant en pleine nature”

Le bus grimpe. Nous passons devant le tremplin olympique emblématique d’Oslo. Le bus stoppe sur un parking et nous empruntons un petit chemin pour pénétrer dans les bois. Le parking n’est pas visible depuis le jardin d’enfants. Premier étonnement, aucune barrière, aucune délimitation. À notre questionnement sur la sécurité, il est répondu que non, les enfants ne s’enfuient pas. Seuls des enfants sous stress vont fuir et se mettre en danger. Les enfants savent qu’ils ne doivent pas s’éloigner et toujours avoir un adulte en vue. Nous oublions trop facilement que les enfants cherchent la sécurité donc la présence des adultes. De plus, ces derniers veillent. Autre stupéfaction pour nous autres français : s’ils voient un enfant s’éloigner, ils ne l’appellent pas, ne crient pas depuis le lointain. Ils se déplacent, vont le rejoindre, parlent avec lui sur un ton tranquille et l’enfant les suit pour revenir dans l’espace proche sous le regard des adultes.

Nous sommes dans un Barnehage dans la forêt. En Norvège tous les enfants vont à l’extérieur tous les jours au minimum 2 heures l’hiver et 4 heures l’été. Deux fois par semaine ils vont dans une zone de nature : bord de mer ou forêt. Mais certains jardins d’enfants vont plus loin et les enfants sont toute la journée ou presque dans la nature. C’est un choix des parents.

Ces jardins d’enfants sont de plus en plus en vogue et les résultats en termes de santé et de développement sont là, tant sur le plan physique que psychique. Ces structures dans les bois sont accessibles aux enfants à partir de l’âge de 2 ans et ils y restent jusqu’à l’entrée à l’école à 6 ans. Dans toute la Norvège, le jeu et la joie sont au centre de l’accueil de la petite enfance.

La théorie est que le jeu est le vrai travail du tout petit et que c’est par le jeu et dans le plaisir que l’enfant apprend le mieux. En pratique… eh bien, les norvégiens sont plutôt bien placés dans les tests PISA. De 2 à 6 ans, ils préparent les compétences transversales qui leur permettront à l’école d’acquérir les savoirs fondamentaux facilement. Ils développent confiance, équilibre…

Oh, ils font des maths, de la physique, de la biologie et acquièrent toutes sortes d'informations grâce à leurs expériences. Ils jouent à tenir en équilibre sur une planche posée sur un tronc tombé au sol ? Ils explorent les notions de poids, d'équilibre, de gravité. Les enseignants sont formés à accompagner ces découvertes. La maîtrise du langage est une des priorités dans les objectifs pédagogiques. On apprend à parler… en parlant. L'attention conjointe et la communication sont vecteurs de transmission de la langue. Ici, les adultes suivent les enfants. De temps en temps, les adultes emmènent les enfants plus loin dans la forêt dans une zone où ils savent trouver des ressources pédagogiques, comme un petit ruisseau ou un coin pierreux, des branchages pour faire des cabanes et des arbres sur lesquels on peut grimper. En hiver, les enfants vont skier tous les matins. Quand il n'y a plus de neige, ils jouent dans les bois.

Des locaux semblent chaleureux et spacieux mais nous n'y entrons pas. Les enfants y vont peu. Espira a racheté cet espace à une famille qui y avait créé une crèche parentale. Ils ont reconstruit des locaux pratiques, accueillants et adaptés au lieu. Il y a là la cuisine, l'espace repas, un espace jeux… et aucune cloison. L'espace est ouvert et les enfants peuvent aller librement d'un espace à un autre. Ils ont accès à la cuisine… Et d'ailleurs, ils participent à la confection des repas.

L'espace couchage accueille parfois un ou deux enfants sur les matelas, mais la plupart dorment dehors dans des hamacs, sous la maison Sami, un préfère sa poussette. Ils choisissent là où ils désirent s'assoupir, sous la supervision des adultes bien sûr. Les enfants sont en liberté dans l'espace. Ils peuvent entrer et sortir du bâtiment à leur guise.

Dehors, le sol est recouvert de copeaux de bois, ce qui évite de patauger dans la boue. Il pleut beaucoup ici. Les enfants suçotent des copeaux sous le regard des adultes qui les laissent faire. Nous français, avons beau savoir que c'est la meilleure façon de se faire un bon microbiote, nous ne pouvons nous empêcher de frémir et de nous dire qu'en France on lui aurait déjà dit de ne pas mettre ces bouts de bois dans sa bouche.

Des tables et des bancs sur une terrasse abritée par des toiles imperméables tendues accueillent les repas, mais ils peuvent aussi parfois manger à d'autres endroits, sous la maison Sami par exemple, qui ressemble à un tipi. Les enfants s'asseyent sur des bancs en rond autour du feu central où l'adulte fait cuire le repas. Cette maison sami permet de s'abriter en cas de pluie importante. Le feu permet de se réchauffer lorsque les températures descendent en hiver.

Un autre espace non abrité, avec des palettes formant des canapés installés en rond permet de se réunir pour parler ou pour manger.

Tout autour de nous, nous voyons de gros pneus balançoires, et d'autres pour sauter dessus, des cordes, un tronc d'arbre tombé, des planches, des branches mortes, des palettes, des rondins, des pelles, des râteaux et une échelle horizontale en métal prise d'assaut par les enfants pendant notre visite. Tout cela sert à faire des cabanes, construire, grimper, se balancer, sauter, trouver son équilibre. Nous réalisons combien les enfants peuvent profiter de cet environnement propice à l'intégration sensorielle, au développement de leurs aptitudes physiques et à l'apprentissage de la mesure du risque. Deux petits garçons nous apportent des gâteaux de boue qu'ils ont confectionnés. Nous jouons à les manger. Ce langage est universel.

Plusieurs coins d'eau sont à disposition des enfants : flaques, petite mare, deux petits robinets avec éviers à leur hauteur. Les enfants sont équipés de pied en cap. Bottes de pluie, combinaison étanche, ils ne craignent ni de se salir ni de se mouiller. Et les adultes ne sont pas à seriner : « Fais attention, tu vas te tacher, tu vas déchirer ton pantalon. » Les enfants sont équipés selon les circonstances. En hiver, la nuit tombe dès 14h, des lampes frontales leur permettent de poursuivre leurs explorations extérieures.

Alors que les enfants courent et jouent un peu partout autour de nous, le calme ambiant nous étonne. Un enfant pousse un grand cri dans le bois qui ne perturbe personne. A l'intérieur, il nous aurait vrillé les oreilles. Nous mesurons que le niveau sonore est très agréable. Dans une pièce fermée, les sons rebondissent sur les murs et saturent vite les capacités des enfants (et des adultes). Les enfants sur le spectre autistique ou hypersensibles en souffrent particulièrement. Ici, leur sensibilité extrême s'apprivoise progressivement. Les stimulations dans la nature, plus confortables pour eux, favorisent l'intégration sensorielle. Les enfants hyperactifs avec ou sans déficit de l'attention bénéficient pleinement de ce temps passé à l'extérieur et dans la nature.

Les sons n'étant pas amplifiés dans la nature, les enfants sont plus calmes et se disputent bien moins. De plus, les enfants sont libres d'aller et venir car il y a beaucoup d'espace. Plusieurs fois, nous voyons lors d'un conflit un des deux enfants s'éloigner de quelques mètres, pour revenir ensuite. Ils ne se sentent pas enfermés par la situation problème. Ils en sortent pour chercher une nouvelle idée plutôt que de se disputer.

Deux enfants veulent monter au même arbre… nous les voyons négocier. Pendant notre observation, nous entendons très peu de cris, pas de lamentations, ni de pleurnicheries…. Les enseignants nous le disent, il y a moins de disputes et de bagarres ici que dans une structure classique. Il n'est pas rare de voir un enfant qui ne s'entend pas avec un autre en intérieur, jouer avec lui sans souci dès qu'ils sont dehors.

Oups, une petite fille se met à pleurer en haut de l'échelle horizontale, un petit garçon s'enfuit… L'adulte arrive, prend la petite fille dans les bras et part s'asseoir un peu plus loin avec elle. Il l'écoute. Bientôt le petit garçon arrive et nous assistons à un travail de réconciliation. Nous n'avons pas accès au contenu, nous sommes à une certaine distance et ne parlons pas le norvégien, mais nous constatons que peu à peu les enfants se regardent, se parlent sous l'incitation de l'adulte. Les enseignants sont très présents et prêts à fournir aux enfants les ressources ou outils dont ils ont besoin. Un petit garçon saute depuis le haut de l'échelle horizontale. Il rate son coup… il s'est fait un peu mal… il part, fait un petit tour et remonte. Un adulte arrive et l'assure. Il re-saute ravi et cette fois réussit à retomber sur ses pieds, fier de ce qu'il vient de faire. Tout notre groupe l'applaudit… Au regard interrogatif que l'enseignant surpris nous jette, nous comprenons que nos félicitations sont de trop. Effectivement, la joie d'avoir réussi est bien plus motivante que toutes les félicitations externes.

Ce petit garçon venait de se dépasser, il mesurait qu'il venait de réussir… Pourquoi lui asséner une évaluation par nos bravos au risque de construire une dépendance au regard d'autrui ? Je comprends que nous réagissons excessivement. Quand il est tombé, déjà, la plupart d'entre nous étions tous désolés et prêts à bondir pour l'aider à se relever et à le consoler.

Ici, rien de cela. Une attention extrême mais ils laissent les enfants expérimenter et construire leur locus interne. Pour autant, ils veillent et ne laissent pas les enfants se blesser. Lorsque le hamac n'est pas encore bien accroché, l'adulte signale à une petite fille déjà en train de grimper dessus que ce n'est pas encore le moment. Elle redescend immédiatement sans chouiner.

En résumé :

- **En extérieur et dans la nature :**
  - Des enfants plus calmes, plus confiants, plus concentrés et qui se développent harmonieusement sur tous les plans, préparant les apprentissages académiques.
  - Des explorations, des prises de risques favorisant l'internalisation, la responsabilisation, la mesure du risque en estimant ses propres capacités au regard du défi.
  - Des enfants heureux et épanouis et des professionnels heureux et épanouis.

Préconisations :

- Former les professionnels à l'importance du temps passé en extérieur et dans la nature pour le développement
- Un minimum de deux heures quotidiennes en extérieur pour les enfants
- Favoriser les environnements naturels et permettre aux tout-petits de prendre des risques, les accompagner dans ces prises de risque
- Laisser davantage de temps libre pour développer l'imaginaire, la créativité, la confiance
- Laisser davantage l'enfant choisir son activité et en changer
- Stimuler, favoriser et accompagner les relations entre enfants
- Toujours un adulte disponible pour un câlin (pour se ressourcer en sentiment de sécurité)

Réception à la Résidence de l'Ambassade de France en Norvège

Rencontre avec :

Son Excellence, **Monsieur Pierre-Mathieu Duhamel, Ambassadeur de France en Norvège**

Un dialogue entre la recherce et le terrain

Lieu : **Oslo Metropolitan University**

Building P 48, rom S742.

RDV avec Cathrine outside Pilestredet 48

Accueil par :

- Mme. **Cathrine Døscher**, conseillère principale du Département d'Education de la petite enfance

Contexte :

L'université d'Oslo compte 22 000 étudiants, 103 groupes de recherche et un département important consacré à l'éducation de la petite enfance avec 87 programmes de la licence (48), en passant par le master (33) jusqu' au doctorat (3) avec comme fil rouge : faire du lien avec le terrain, réaliser des stages de qualité et accompagner l'amélioration continue des pratiques, soutenues par la recherche. Pour cela, plus de 200 lieux de formation en situation professionnelle (stages) sont proposés.

Le département petite enfance accueille plus de 7 000 étudiants et assure la formation des professionnels des crèches jusqu'au lycée. Pour assurer l'internationalisation du département, les cours sont en norvégiens et en anglais, et les étudiants peuvent faire un stage à l'étranger.

Il existe un lien fort entre l'université et les kindergartens. Le projet en cours pour 2024 est de faire un focus sur l'amélioration de la qualité dans l'éducation et l'importance pour le terrain et la recherche de se nourrir mutuellement. Pour cela, des kindergartens sont en lien direct avec l'Université et ont un statut de lieux de recherche appliquée.

Les kindergartens, des jardins d'enfants pour promouvoir les apprentissages et prendre soin des enfants à travers le jeu

Le kindergarten est un établissement pédagogique qui répond aux besoins d'attention et de soin, de jeu et d'apprentissage de l'enfant, et est la première étape de son éducation.

Les kindergartens en quelques chiffres :

- Sont ouverts aux enfants de 10 mois jusqu'à 6 ans. Avant 10 mois, les enfants sont élevés par leurs parents. Les politiques publiques assurent pendant les premiers 10 mois de l'enfant la prise en charge à 100% du congé parental, puis à hauteur de 80% de 10 à 12 mois.
- Accueillent 87% des enfants de 1 à 3 ans et 97% des 3 à 5 ans.

Les kindergartens, une évolution continue :

- **1990** : 35% des enfants accueillis en kindergarten.
- **2003** : réforme des kindergartens avec un encadrement des prix.
- **2005** : publication du « Kindergarten act » qui offre un cadre de travail aux kindergartens et affirme la place du jeu dans le quotidien. Les institutions travaillent leur propre projet pédagogique à partir de ce cadre.
- **2008** : les kindergartens sont placés sous la responsabilité du ministère de l'éducation et non plus du ministère de la famille.
- **2009** : droit légal pour l'accès à tous aux kindergartens.

  Les kindergartens relèvent soit du champ public, soit du champ privé mais ont le même cadre légal de travail.

Ce cadre commun, le **Framework plan for kindergartens**, date de 2017 (en remplacement de celui de 2006) et définit notamment :

- les valeurs fondamentales
- les rôles et responsabilités
- les objectifs et contenus
- la participation des enfants
- la coopération entre la maison et le jardin d'enfant
- les transitions
- les jardins d'enfants à travers leur mission pédagogique
- les méthodes de travail
- les domaines d'apprentissage

Enfin, légalement, c'est le National Kindergarten Act datant de 2005 qui réglemente tous les jardins d'enfants en Norvège. Il encadre notamment les coûts, le taux d'encadrement, l'accueil des enfants à besoins particuliers, etc.

Les kindergartens universitaires : améliorer la compétence pour une coopération en lien avec la recherche et la mise en place de la pratique

Rencontre avec :

- Mme. **Elisabeth Almaz,** professeure associée qui coordonne le Département petite enfance

Chargée d'assurer les liens entre l'université et les kindergartens.

Le département petite enfance, des missions de :

- Recherche et pratiques sur le terrain
- Formation
- Continuité éducative
- Politique des 1000 premiers jours
- Politique publique
- Amélioration des pratiques et de la qualité
- Relevé d'impacts

La Norvège compte 10 kindergartens universitaires qui ont comme objectifs de :

- Faire des allers-retours théorie/terrain
- Être en lien avec l'université
- Développer une communauté réflexive
- Assurer une veille pédagogique et professionnelle des activités
- Assurer une formation de qualité

Les kindergartens universitaires visent à améliorer la qualité d'accueil et de formation des stagiaires afin de maintenir les enseignements en lien avec le terrain. Ils sont également des lieux ressources pour mener des recherches.

Plusieurs professionnels de l'éducation en kindergartens sont recommandés pour être professeurs. Ils constituent une communauté de praticiens entre les formateurs des différents kindergartens, travaillent en lien avec l'université et contribuent à la veille. Ce sont des professionnels actifs qui se préoccupent de travailler ensemble sur différents projets. L'objectif est d'améliorer la qualité de l'accueil de la petite enfance en facilitant les retours du terrain sur leurs besoins, constats, études et expérimentations et de s'enrichir de la recherche.

Les professionnels des kindergartens universitaires sont enthousiastes pour travailler avec l'université pour :

- Développer leur formation
- Participer à la formation dans une réflexion partagée
- Trouver une dimension collective dans les approches

Historique des universités kindergartens :

Un projet de recherche a été mis en place entre 2016 et 2019 soutenu par le Conseil Norvégien avec comme objectifs :

- Explorer de nouvelles manières de travailler en lien avec la pratique
- Utiliser la vidéo pour le travail d'observation et d'analyse de la pratique

Ces supports ont été mis à l'échelle de tous les étudiants au-delà de ceux en kindergarten. Cette manière de travailler est inspirée de l'université hospitalière d'Oslo et d'une ville du nord de la Norvège.

Priorité à la stratégie nationale : le partenariat coopératif entre l'université et les kindergartens

Trois projets en cours jusqu'à 2024 :

- Développement de bonnes relations avec les jeunes enfants
- Démocratie, diversité religieuse et culturelle
- Promotion d'activités physiques dans les kindergartens et aux alentours

Etablissement d'un réseau de pratiques dans les kindergartens :

- Chaque kindergarten établit un partenariat avec 5 autres kindergartens dans une volonté d'approche collective.
- La faculté soutient le développement de ce réseau avec 2 à 4 réunions par an.
- L'objectif est de mutualiser les expériences : quelles sont les bonnes pratiques en kindergarten ? Quelles sont les pratiques à ajuster ?
- L'ambition de ces groupes de travail est de trouver ensemble des pistes de réflexion et d'avancer.

La démarche :

- Définir des objectifs
- Partager des expériences et dégager des bonnes pratiques
- Arrêter les axes de travail en vue de la prochaine séance
- Identifier de nouvelles pratiques
- Travailler sur les modalités de coopération

Les responsables des kindergartens :

- Travaillent toujours avec l'université
- Participent aux réunions de l'université
- Sont parfois dans les classes avec les formateurs
- Facilitent la planification
- Favorisent une synergie positive

Le dénominateur commun entre la faculté et les kindergartens, c'est la qualité. Mais il faut du temps pour intégrer un nouveau kindergarten au sein de l'université. Il faut tisser des liens de confiance et intégrer le système de recherche.

La qualité dans les kindergartens norvégiens et les projets de recherche

Ce voyage d'étude en Norvège fut l'occasion de découvrir les similitudes et différences de nos systèmes d'accueil des jeunes enfants.

La visite à l'université d'Oslo a permis la rencontre avec des responsables de projets de recherche sur la qualité des lieux d'accueil et de l'impact sur les interactions entre enfants et adultes.

En annexe de ce rapport sont partagées plusieurs études (en anglais) utilisant des échelles de mesures de la qualité de l'accueil (ITER), des échelles de mesures des interactions entre professionnels et enfants (CIP), des études sur l'accueil des plus jeunes et sur la représentation de la qualité de l'accueil par les professionnels.

- *Everyday interactions between staff and children aged 1-5 in Norwegian ECEC*
- *Interaction Quality in Norwegian ECEC for Toddlers Measured with the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) Scales*
- *Norwegian ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction*
- *Children Under the Age of Three in Norwegian Childcare: Searching for Qualities*

Toutes ces études nous montrent que les réponses ne sont pas toujours satisfaisantes et que la qualité de l'accueil doit toujours faire l'objet de recherches pour être améliorée.

Ces allers-retours entre la recherche et le terrain sont d'une grande richesse et nous espérons qu'un jour, les métiers de la petite enfance seront questionnés pour être perfectionnés.

Le multilinguisme dans la petite enfance

Au sein de l'université, des groupes associant chercheurs et étudiants en kindergartens planchent sur des thématiques précises en lien avec la pratique.

C'est notamment le cas sur la question du langage.

Le point de départ de cette recherche est le suivant : 19% des enfants accueillis sur le territoire national parlent une langue minoritaire tandis qu'ils sont 42% à Oslo.

Questions de recherche :

Dans quelle mesure les langues autres que le norvégien sont-elles utilisées activement au sein des kindergartens norvégiens ?

L'inclusion de la langue parlée à la maison se fait par le Translangage (combinaison de plusieurs langues en même temps pour communiquer). Cela permet d'encourager les enfants multilingues à utiliser leur langue maternelle tout en promouvant et développant activement les compétences linguistiques sames et norvégiennes.

La langue maternelle va soutenir l'apprentissage d'une 2ème langue. L'enfant est multilingue, il a plusieurs compétences.

Raconter des histoires, jouer avec ses pairs, utiliser le langage de manière active permet d'ouvrir l'apprentissage sur d'autres langues.

Condition identifiée : pour apprendre la langue, les enfants doivent être sécures.

Les EAJE jouent un rôle important pour conserver les langues maternelles des enfants.

Mise en place :

Des étudiants de 4ème années travaillant à mi-temps dans les kindergartens s'investissent dans cette recherche, sur leur temps personnel. Cela explique en partie le temps accordé à cette recherche, relativement long car reposant sur des étudiants engagés par ailleurs.

47 étudiants représentaient 41 kindergartens.

Enquête :

L'étudiant fait le récit de la situation dans son kindergarten. 36 récits ont été comptabilisés, répondant par exemple aux questions suivantes :

- Quelles langues sont connues par le personnel et les enfants ?
- Quelles langues sont utilisées par le personnel et les enfants ?

Les récits incluent également des observations impliquant des situations où plusieurs langues sont utilisées.

Exemple : une réunion de parents où la moitié des parents ne parle pas norvégien, un chant en langue norvégienne, en anglais…

Sélection des résultats :

Les répertoires linguistiques comptabilisent 47 langues !

Dans la plupart des cas, il y a plus de langues parlées par les enfants que par les professionnels.

Environ la moitié des langues déclarées connues par le personnel ou les enfants sont utilisées dans le kindergarten :

- le personnel en utilise 56%
- les enfants en utilisent 47%

Une grande variation est soulignée d'un groupe à l'autre : dans certains, seule la langue norvégienne est parlée quand d'autres utilisent toutes les langues connues.

En voici les principaux apprentissages :

- Pas de ratio entre les langues connues et les langues parlées dans le kindergarten
- En moyenne, 2 langues partagées (à l'exclusion du norvégien)
- L'anglais, une langue partagée
- Peu probable qu'il y ait d'autres langues partagées

Dans les groupes, il y a toujours quelqu'un qui ne connaît pas la langue de l'autre. Il y aussi toujours quelqu'un qui connait une langue qui n'est pas utilisée dans le kindergarten.

Pour y remédier, des systèmes de jumelage existent, entre professionnels et enfants parlant une même langue, même si le professionnel n'est pas responsable du groupe de cet enfant. Cela permet à l'enfant d'avoir un repère au sein de la structure d'accueil.

Activités :

Stratégie du personnel pour activer des langues autres que le norvégien :

- Conversations métalinguistiques
- Utilisation de matériel (livre, audio, musique, ressources internet)

Il est moins courant de planifier des activités faisant la promotion des langues parlées à la maison auprès d'un plus grand groupe d'enfants. Cela est plus fréquent dans les situations spontanées impliquant moins d'enfants.

- Conversations individuelles entre le personnel et les enfants
- Parler avec les parents

Souvent les parents ne disent pas quelles autres langues ils parlent : ils veulent montrer qu'ils parlent norvégien.

Beaucoup d'enfants sont multilinguistes. Certains groupes utilisent les langues connues dans le groupe, d'autres non. Ce chevauchement est néanmoins limité entre les répertoires du personnel et des enfants au sein de chaque groupe lorsque l'on exclut l'anglais et le norvégien.

Les 1000 premiers jours, un terrain propice à la formation et à l'évaluation

Les kindergartens à l'échelle de la ville de Bergen

La ville de Bergen compte 256 kindergartens, de 80 entités différentes. Comme sur le reste du territoire national, tous les kindergartens présentent les mêmes lois et requièrent la même qualité (Framework plan). À Bergen, 91% des enfants entre 1 et 2 ans sont accueillis en kindergarten.

Lieu : Centre de ressource et de recherche national sur la petite enfance

KINDknow, Campus Kronstad

Le **Centre de ressource et de recherche national sur la petite Enfance**, ***KINDknow***, est un centre de connaissances autour des kindergartens pour la recherche systémique sur la diversité et le développement durable.

KINDknow partage du savoir sur la petite enfance. Des enquêtes comparatives internationales combinées à des approches de recherche qualitatives, proches de la pratique, donnent une vue d'ensemble de la diversité de l'éducation de la petite enfance et des aperçus inspirants sur les pratiques locales.
Le centre de ressource s'appuie sur des partenaires solides, dont les villes en sont une composante très importante.

L'université de Bergen regroupe 5 campus, comptant 16 000 étudiants et 1 800 employés. La faculté d'Education, d'Arts et des Sports comptabilise 6 000 étudiants.

KINDknow axe sa mission autour de **quatre points clés** :

- une compréhension plus approfondie des conditions de formation culturelle, de jeu et d'exploration dans les institutions pédagogiques ;
- la poursuite d'une nouvelle approche méthodologique "méthodologie d'atelier", adaptée au développement professionnel et à la formation des enseignants ;
- de nouvelles pratiques, qui prennent en compte de manière proactive les défis sociétaux et favorisent le développement des enfants, et qui permettent de nouvelles stratégies d'apprentissage collaboratives et porteuses de sens, combinant le global et le local et impliquant les familles ;
- l'étude des synergies entre le mouvement, le jeu et l'exploration (Move, Play & Explore), et de nouvelles conceptions méthodologiques qui permettent à la fois de vérifier les hypothèses et d'en générer de nouvelles.

Les **conditions de réussites** et les **valeurs** sur lesquelles ils fondent leurs interventions sont les suivantes :

- La participation humaine est fondamentale
- Vie familiale : tisser des liens pour développer une communauté locale
- La qualité de la vie quotidienne est nécessaire
- Les professionnels font partie de l'exploration
- La participation de l'enfant est essentielle pour agir lui-même sur l'environnement
- Espace collaboratif adulte/enfant

Pour répondre à leurs objectifs, KINDknow a mis en place différents projets.

En réponse au premier objectif, ils ont développé :

- une vidéo sur les 1000 premiers jours pour partager un langage commun ;
- une vidéo PlumSkum, pour utiliser le langage esthétique avec les enfants ;
- la publication de « CHILDREN'S EXPLORATION AND CULTURAL FORMATION » ;
- un projet One Ocean 2021-2023 : « Un océan exploré », outil pédagogique soutenu par la ville de Bergen pour sensibiliser les enfants 4-5 ans sur le climat
  - L'objectif du projet est de sensibiliser sur le rôle primordial que joue l'océan dans une perspective de développement durable.

D'autres ressources sont développées au fil des événements, comme une vidéo sur le COVID et le lavage des mains, co-construite avec les enfants, dans un esprit ludique.

En réponse à leur deuxième objectif, le centre de recherche est intervenu sur plusieurs axes de travail :

- la co-création de workshops interdisciplinaires
- la coopération avec l'hôpital : dialogue entre la santé et l'éducation, avec une attention particulière pour les enfants issus de l'immigration
- « Les nouveaux enfants » : un réseau pour travailler ensemble, entre parents et professionnels.

Dans ce cadre, ils ont mis en place une méthodologie d'ateliers et de développement professionnel : **EX-PED-LAB**.

Ils ont ainsi identifié les mots-clés lorsqu'on travaille avec les Kindergartens :

partage – action – explorer – espoir et rêve – réflexion – création de données et analyses – planifier, tester et évaluer – créativité et imaginer.

Les travaux réalisés dans le cadre de cette méthodologie leur ont permis de nombreux apprentissages. Un des principaux qui ressort est de co-rédiger le projet avec les professionnels de la petite enfance. Cela leur a en effet permis d'approfondir la compréhension du projet et des pratiques, car les Kindergartens étaient partie prenante.

Ces ateliers collaboratifs incluent également des architectes, des entreprises, les municipalités, etc. Ensemble, ils co-créent des espaces extérieurs encourangeant le jeu, le mouvement et l'exploration.

Il s'agit ainsi de promouvoir la **co-création** et la **co-recherche**.

Un autre projet existe au sein de ce centre de ressource et de recherche : ***Ensemble pour nos plus petits.*** Ce projet s'inscrit dans le Programme national de santé publique qui a débuté en 2021 ; projet de santé publique interdisciplinaire visant à promouvoir la santé mentale des jeunes enfants.

Ensemble pour nos plus petits a pour objectif de soutenir le travail de la municipalité en matière de promotion et de maîtrise de la santé chez le jeune enfant, dès les 1000 premiers jours.

Le ***MoveEarly Project*** est une recherche pour développer et promouvoir la pédagogie qui place le jeu et le mouvement au cœur du développement de l'enfant.

Cette recherche a également été mise en place avec les professionnels, pour promouvoir un environnement stimulant en petite enfance. Le projet de recherche se tiendra de 2024 à 2026, comportant une évaluation randomisée.

Les connaissances sur l'impact du mouvement et du jeu sur l'enfant se développant, ces éléments devraient être une des premières priorités en matière d'accompagnement de l'enfant.

En façonnant ainsi l'environnement d'accueil de la petite enfance, les bases d'une société meilleure seront posées.

Centre national pour l'alimentation, la santé et l'activité physique

Depuis 2013, il existe le Ministère de la Santé et de l'Éducation. Il a pour objectif notamment de soutenir les programmes pour promouvoir la nutrition et l'activité physique.
Les kindergartens doivent appliquer et traduire sur le terrain les lignes directrices du Plan national.
L'objectif final est qu'un maximum d'enfants puissent expérimenter une nutrition de qualité et éprouver du plaisir dans leur activité physique quotidienne en kindergarten.
L'impact est réel, puisque de plus en plus d'enfants sont en meilleure santé, en étant de plus en plus actifs chaque jour.

Le centre national pour l'alimentation, la santé et l'activité physique développe :

- Des supports digitaux pour inspirer les professionnels
- Des webinars pour partager des projets de recherche (et se mettre à jour en permanence)
- Des outils pédagogiques

Etude d'un programme particulier : Matjungelen – food jungle

Initié par le Ministère de la Santé, il s'agit d'un programme périscolaire pour les plus de 6 ans. Une baseline : Laisser les plus jeunes enfants **explorer** et **jouer** avec des aliments sains et durables.

L'objectif est d'explorer comment faire la cuisine, avoir un équilibre alimentaire, etc.

Contenu de **Food Jungle Kindergarten** :

- Cinq thèmes principaux (les bons repas, les ressources de la nature, la culture alimentaire, le courage alimentaire, la cuisine).
- Vidéos pour chaque thème
- Activités pédagogiques
- Questions pour réflexion
- Recettes
- Matériel de soutien

C'est la ville qui finance le développement des outils.

Visite d'un « Barnehage » à Bergen

Lieu : Leahparken Barnehage

Site web : https://www.bergen.kommune.no/omkommunen/avdelinger/leaparken-barnehage/var-profil/velkommen-til-leaparken-barnehage

Préambule

Notre visite s'est effectuée avec l'accompagnement d'une des 3 éducatrices de jeunes enfants de la structure ainsi que de la représentante de la Municipalité de Bergen. Nous avons dans un premier temps échangé de manière générale autour de l'historique de la structure et des conditions de travail sur le terrain des professionnels au sein de la structure puis dans un deuxième temps, à faire la visite de leurs locaux des tout-petits aux plus grands enfants lors d'un moment-clé, celui du goûter. Les enfants semblaient être surpris de notre présence.

Il s'agissait d'une demeure qui appartenait auparavant à un riche citoyen de la ville et qui a dû la revendre à la Ville de Berge il y a plusieurs décennies, faute de ressources financières suffisantes. Ce lieu a depuis lors toujours été consacré à l'éducation, tout d'abord avec une école primaire puis avec ce Barnehage depuis 2018.

Ainsi, il s'agit d'un lieu d'habitation authentique d'époque, avec un magnifique jardin extérieur et un aménagement intérieur avec beaucoup de cachet, qui a été aménagé pour accueillir des enfants, tout en conservant ses caractéristiques d'habitation, avec ses différentes pièces à vivre.

Échanges autour des réalités de terrain

Ont été abordés :

- **Les conditions de travail** : l'éducatrice a souligné le manque de personnel avec un turnover important, qui impacte ainsi l'accompagnement des enfants dans la qualité éducative. Le taux d'encadrement lui semblait trop élevé. De plus, en comparant avec le système grec qu'elle connaissait bien, elle déplorait l'ouverture quasi continue de la structure ; ce qui nécessitait de la part des professionnelles présentes davantage d'efforts, en plus de combler les vacances de postes.

- **Les responsabilités des équipes** : Au sein de cette structure, les équipes ont la responsabilité d'accompagner les enfants dans leur développement, de faire les différentes tâches ménagères du quotidien ainsi que le rangement en fin de journée. En plus de cela, les équipes sont chargées de préparer le repas de midi des enfants et de compléter le goûter apporté par les enfants avec un fruit ou un produit laitier. Des prestataires extérieurs pourraient s'occuper de cette logistique mais ce coût serait à déduire de la masse salariale auprès des enfants.

- **La formation continue** : Les équipes bénéficient de 2 journées pédagogiques par an. Il existe des réunions d'équipe et des réunions spécifiques entre éducateurs pour faire de l'analyse de pratique.

- **Les relations avec les familles** : Il existe une sorte de système de « carte scolaire » avec une attribution du Barnehage en fonction du lieu de résidence (parfois du lieu de travail) des parents. Il existe un accès universel pour toutes les familles qui souhaitent y inscrire leurs enfants. Toutes les familles sont accueillies au sein de la structure. Le coût d'une place de crèche est calculé en fonction des ressources des parents (Quotient Familial), avec un coût moyen de 300 NOK (soit environ 29,20€) par place. De rares subventions sont octroyées pour les familles les plus vulnérables.

En conclusion : nous avons été surpris de la liberté d'expression de cette éducatrice, en présence de la représentante de la Municipalité de Bergen. Malgré les défis ressentis et vécus sur le terrain, il semblerait qu'il y existe un espace de dialogue ouvert entre les autorités locales et les structures de barnehage. Également, dans le périmètre de leurs responsabilités, les pros semblent être très pris par le « faire » plutôt que l'« être » avec les enfants. Quid de la qualité éducative basée sur les interactions de qualité avec les enfants ?

Visites des locaux en intérieur et extérieur

Nous avons visité les locaux qui se situaient dans la maison principale où étaient accueillis les plus grands enfants (3-5 ans) et dans une maison annexe où étaient accueillis les plus petits enfants (1-2 ans).

Dans la maison principale : les pièces du rez-de-chaussée avaient été aménagées « comme à la maison », notamment depuis la période du confinement, avec, entre autres, un espace-salon aménagé avec un ordinateur, un canapé et des jeux etc. Nous avons été surpris par la présence d'écrans (ordinateurs, grands écrans type cinéma) dans plusieurs pièces du rez-de-chaussée. Il leur avait été difficile d'expliquer cette présence des écrans dans plusieurs pièces. Un film avait été montré aux enfants à Noël.

En extérieur (en transition entre la maison principale et la maison annexe) : c'était l'heure du goûter et tous les enfants étaient assis, en rang, à même le sol pour prendre leur goûter.

Dans la maison annexe : c'était l'heure du goûter aussi pour les plus-petits qui venaient de faire leurs siestes en extérieur (dans le « hangar à poussettes »). Il a été noté que les sièges des enfants, qui prenaient leurs goûters à table, étaient beaucoup trop hauts pour eux. Leurs pieds ne touchaient pas le sol et cela posait la question de son impact possible sur la posture et la structure squelettique du jeune enfant en développement. En fin de parcours, pour les enfants qui avaient terminé le goûter (ou qui attendaient la place pour le goûter ?), il y avait un petit atelier de musique avec un grand appareil stéréo, posé à même le sol, avec un son relativement fort à hauteur des enfants.

Autour de la thématique initiale « Le jeu extérieur dans les kindergartens norvégiens : les bienfaits et les défis »

A notre arrivée, ce sont essentiellement les enfants les plus grands que nous voyions profiter du grand jardin de la maison. D'après l'éducatrice qui nous a accompagnés, les enfants peuvent facilement s'ennuyer malgré le grand espace de jeu extérieur dont bénéficie cette structure. Ainsi, lorsque l'emploi du temps le permet, les professionnelles peuvent emmener les enfants en dehors de la structure pour compléter, et apprécier différents espaces extérieurs.

Il semblerait que le jeu extérieur pour les tout-petits soit un véritable défi, dans la mesure où cela prend du temps pour les habiller, les déshabiller, etc. Avec l'enjeu du turnover et de la surcharge de travail des professionnels, le jeu extérieur ne semble que peu accessible pour les tout-petits. Toujours en ce qui concerne les tout-petits, il nous est apparu qu'un espace extérieur n'était pas vraiment prévu ou partagé avec les plus grands. Par conséquent les professionnelles les sortaient très peu de la structure, ce qui nous a toutes beaucoup « surprises».

CONCLUSION

Nous avons la **conviction** que

l'évaluation

la continuité éducative

la qualité de la relation

la prise de risques

la prévention précoce

le dialogue fluide entre la recherche et le terrain

l'interdisciplinarité

l'intelligence collective

l'alliance parents-professionnels

la veille pédagogique

la motricité libre

la coopération

la solidarité

le respect

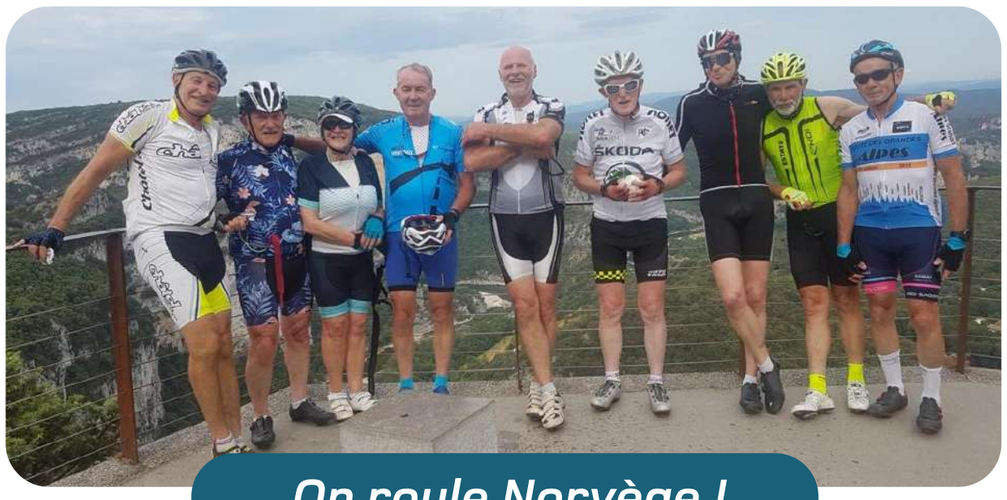
la mixité

la sincérité

nous permettent d'adapter nos pratiques au monde d'aujourd'hui.

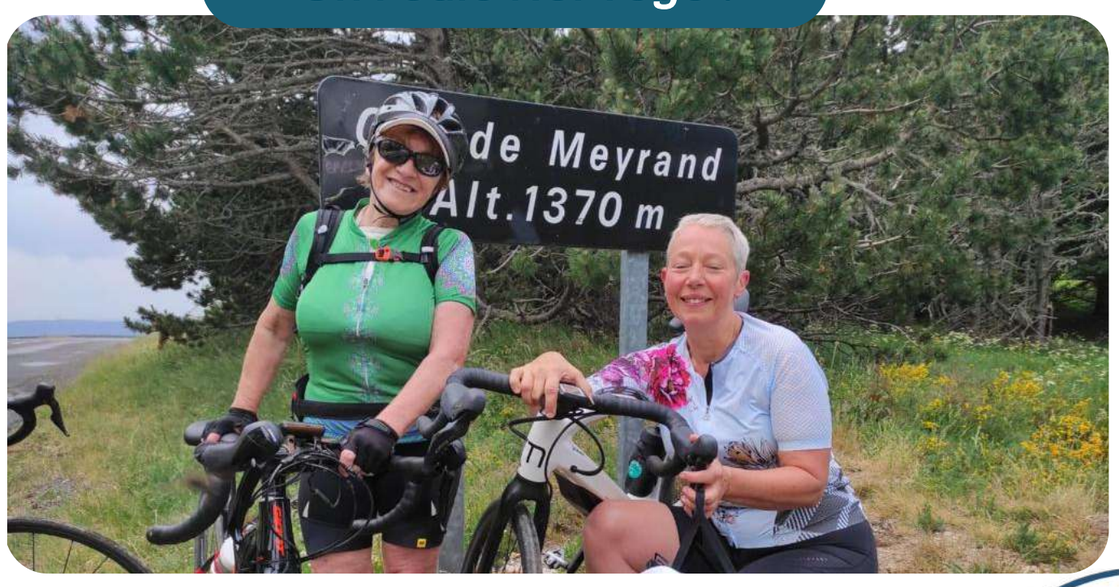
C'est **ensemble** que nous y parviendrons.

Et depuis notre retour de Norvège ?



On roule Norvège !

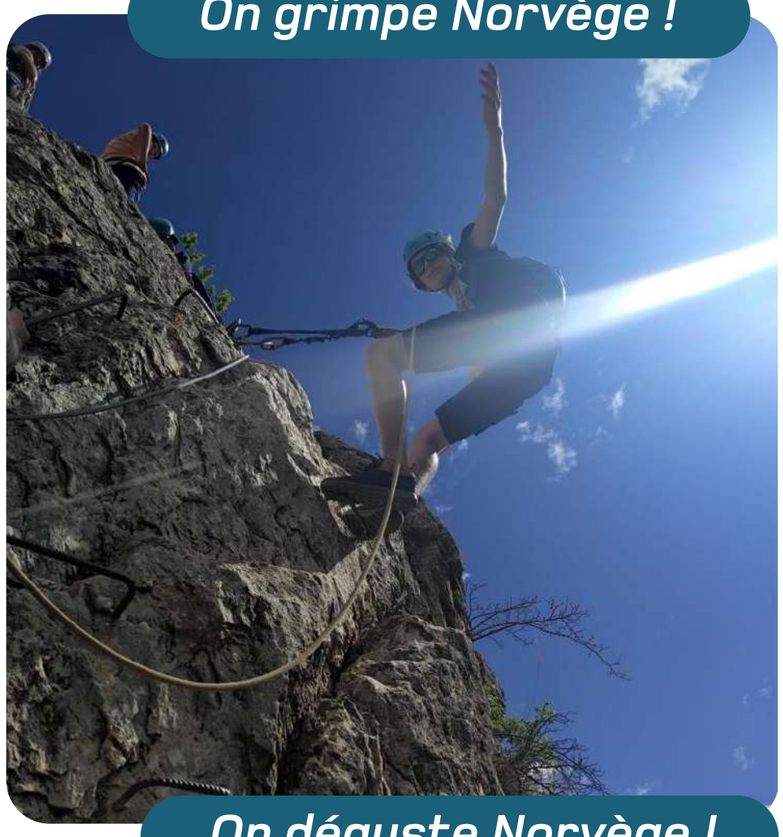
On boit Norvège !



On se réunit Norvège !

On grimpe Norvège !

On voyage Norvège !



On joue Norvège !

On travaille Norvège !

On déguste Norvège !

On dort Norvège !

Bref, on croise les regards, on fait bouger les lignes et on prépare les actions à adapter à nos territoires

ENSEMBLE POUR LA PETITE ENFANCE !

Retrouvez toutes les étapes du voyage :

- https://lesprosdelapetiteenfance.fr/medias/podcasts/regards-croises-sur-la-petite-enfance-voyage-detude-en-norvege

09 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 1

Au programme de cette première journée : la visite de « barnehage », des établissements accueillant des enfants de 10...

Ecouter le podcast

10 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 2

Le voyage continue et de nouvelles découvertes sont de la partie. Dans ce nouvel épisode, on discute formation des professionnels...

Ecouter le podcast

10 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 3

En Norvège, la nature est considérée comme un lieu de vie et d'apprentissage. Les enfants passent plusieurs heures...

Ecouter le podcast

13 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 4

Le voyage se poursuit à Bergen, ville du Sud-Ouest de la Norvège, avec un arrêt au Centre de ressource et de recherche...

Ecouter le podcast

13 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 5

Lors de la visite d'un "kindergarten" à Bergen, il a été question d'amour, de présence sécurisante et attentive des...

Ecouter le podcast

16 JUIN 2022

Regards croisés sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège : épisode 6

Le voyage d'étude "Regards croisés" sur la Petite Enfance en Norvège touche à sa fin. Nathalie Casso-Vicarini, fondatrice...

Ecouter le podcast

Annexes

Early Years
An International Research Journal

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceye20

Everyday interactions between staff and children aged 1-5 in Norwegian ECEC

Anne Grethe Baustad & Elisabeth Bjørnestad

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Everyday interactions between staff and children aged 1-5 in Norwegian ECEC

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ABSTRACT

High-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is related to childrens' socioemotional and cognitive development, and the most important aspect regarding quality in ECEC is staff's interpersonal or interactive skills. Despite this, research on staff's interactive skills is currently sparse in Norway. This study uses the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales to evaluate staff's interactions with children aged 1–5, asking whether staff interact differently with children aged 3–5, compared to those aged under 3. 19 staff members participated in the study. Videos of individual staff members interacting with groups of children were recorded, coded and analysed in accordance with CIP scales. The main findings show that staff score adequate-to-good for basic interactions (sensitivity responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting) and inadequate for educational interactions (verbal communication, developmental stimulation, fostering positive peer inetractions) during free play and routine situations. Similar patterns are found for staff regardless of children's age. Limitations and implications are discussed, proposing further research on interaction quality in Norwegian ECEC contexts.

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KEYWORDS
Interaction quality; interaction skills; basic interactions; educational interactions; CIP scales

Introduction

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is part of the universal educational system in Norway, where all children aged 1–5 have a legal right to be enrolled in ECEC. This system has a long tradition providing for children aged 3–5, but since 2003 the enrolment of children aged 1–2 has increased. Today, 92,2% of all children aged 1–5 attend an ECEC institution. Children spend up to 41 h a week in ECEC (SSB (Statistics Norway) 2020). Research on the quality provided in Norwegian ECEC has until recently been limited. Due to the high enrolment and the amount of time spent in the institutions, it is important to question the quality provided, relating to international research which shows that children benefit both cognitively and socially from high-quality ECEC (Belsky et al. 2007; Vandell et al. 2010; Vermeer et al. 2008). Though 'quality in ECEC' is a complex and multifaceted construct and includes different perspectives, it often refers to 'the aspects of the environment and children's experiences that nurture child development' (Layzer and Goodson 2006, 558). It is also often operationalised in structural quality (e.g.

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economy, staff-child ratio, staff's education, materials/toys) and process quality/proximal quality (staff–child interactions) (Slot 2018). It is largely accepted in the field that the most important aspect regarding quality and children's experiences in ECEC is staff's interpersonal and interactive skills, i.e. how staff create warm environments with rich learning experiences (cf. Broekhuizen et al. 2016; La Paro, Williamson, and Hatfield 2014; Phillips and Lowenstein 2011; Sheridan 2001; Sylva et al. 2006; Vandell et al. 2010). According to Vermeer et al. (2008) staff-child interactions should therefore be the focus when considering quality.

International research reveals that many children experience moderate-to-low quality ECEC. In a recent meta study of ECEC quality in 23 countries Vermeer et al. (2008) found that ECEC quality is at a moderate level for all countries included. They also show high variation in ECEC quality, higher interaction quality in North America than in Europe, and higher quality for the oldest children (age 3–5), though still at moderate level (Vermeer et al. 2016). However, studies across the world (e.g., Australia, Chile, China, Netherlands, USA) that exclusively examine staff-child interactions using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) find mid-to-high quality for emotional supportive interactions and lower quality for instructional supportive interactions. They find the same pattern for all children regardless of age (e.g. toddlers and pre-schoolers) (Hu et al. 2016; La Paro, Williamson, and Hatfield 2014; Leyva et al. 2015; Slot et al. 2017; Tayler et al. 2013). One recent study from the Netherlands which examined the quality of staff's interactions using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales found moderate-to-high quality for basic interactions (comparable with emotional supportive interactions) and moderate-to-low quality for educational interactions (comparable with instructional interactions), and lower quality for infants than for toddlers (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). Besides studies using CLASS, quality of provision for younger children seems to be lower than for older children (see also studies from Lahti et al. 2015; Fenech, Sweller, and Harrison 2010).

Studies focusing on process quality (staff's interactions with children) are scarce in Norway (see also Evertesen et al. 2015). However, the currently completed longitudinal project, Better Provisions for Norway`s children in ECEC (BePro), for the first time examined process quality systematically in ECEC. BePro explicitly evaluated quality of staff's interactions with toddlers in Norwegian ECEC using the CIP scales. 168 staff members (110 ECEC teachers and 58 assistants) from 111 child groups in 93 ECEC institutions participated in the study. In line with international studies the results show interaction quality between 'moderate' and 'adequate-to-good' for basic interactions and between 'moderate' and 'inadequate' for educational interactions, with quality at 'inadequate' level for all staff regarding *developmental stimulation* and *fostering positive peer interactions* (Bjørnestad et al. 2019). Two other Norwegian video-studies, conducted by Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl (2018) and Drugli and Berg-Nielsen (2019), investigated interactions between staff and toddlers using CLASS. The first study, based on 13 toddlers and 13 staff in 11 different ECEC (Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl 2018), found good relational climate in half of the institutions, but low quality language support and facilitated exploration across the different institutions. In addition to the CLASS manual, they also analysed the interaction using the CARE Index. The analysis reveals a worryingly low quality in staff's sensitivity, with a majority of staff in the 'at risk' range (Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl 2018). In the second study, interactions between staff and children in 106 toddler groups in 92 ECEC institutions were observed and analysed. The results show mid-to-high quality

for staffs' emotional supportive interactions and low-to-mid quality for instructional supportive interactions (Drugli and Berg-Nielsen 2019). The Norwegian studies share a focus on children under 3. Contrary to international studies, we lack knowledge about quality of interaction between staff and older children in Norwegian ECEC, e.g. whether staff interact differently with children aged 3–5 compared to the under 3s. Against this background, the current study aims to investigate staff's interactions with children in Norwegian ECEC, posing these questions:

Do staff interact differently with children aged 3–5 years, compared to those aged under 3? If so, what is the nature of the difference?

We apply the CIP scales and, to our knowledge, this is the first time these scales have been used for examining staff's quality of interaction with 3–5 year-olds in Norway and the first time they have been used for examining whether staff interact differently with children aged 3–5 and those under 3.

Staff's interaction skills and quality of interaction in ECEC

Positive relationships and secure attachments between staff and children lay the groundwork for children's social-emotional development and wellbeing. In order to promote secure attachments it is important that staff show positive and supportive behaviour, for example through being sensitive and responsive and respecting children´s autonomy (Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton 1974; Erickson, Sroufe, and Egeland 1985). Quality of attachment at 12 and 18 months is found to be a strong predictor of children´s behavior at age 4 ½ to 5, and children who have experienced secure attachment at a young age become more ego-resilient, independent, compliant, empathic, and socially competent compared to children who have experienced less secure attachment (Erickson, Sroufe, and Egeland 1985). Sensitive, responsive caregivers enable emotion regulation in infants and toddlers, affecting children's brain development and wiring up the brain for learning (Campos, Frankel, and Camras 2004; Gloeckler 2006). Research has revealed strong positive associations between care provider's responsiveness and children's language development, and children benefit from care providers who promote extended conversations (ex. using a variety of questions, encouraging turn-taking) and who provide more advanced expressive language models (ex. expanding and extending children´s utterances/language) (Girolametto and Weitzman 2002). Supportive relationships between children and care providers are also associated with the development of children's prosocial predispositions, and ECEC programs designed to enhance prosocial values, behaviours and attitudes can be effective, especially where staff are consistent in their instructions (Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinrad 2006).

When examining quality of interaction, interactions between staff and children are often analysed by using rating scales. Interaction quality criteria in these tools are often described as staff's individual characteristics, interpersonal or interaction skills (Sabol and Pianta 2012). *The Caregiver Interaction Profile scales* (CIP; Helmerhorst et al. 2014) is a recently developed tool which focuses on how staff respond to children's signals and respect children's autonomy (basic interactions), as well as on how staff stimulate children's development (educational interactions). Unlike some of the other scales in use, e.g. the *Caregiver Interaction Scales* (CIS; Arnett 1989) and the *Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment* (ORCE; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 1996), the CIP

scales have been created explicitly for ECEC groups. The CIP scales are related to the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS) domains of emotional support, classroom organisation (basic interactions) and instructional support (educational interactions) (CLASS-pre-k manual; Pianta, La Paro, and Hamre 2008). However there are also differences between the two scales, as the CIP scales focus on individual staff's interactions with groups of children instead of reflecting all staff's interactions at group level, and the coding/scoring procedure for the CIP scales is based on video-recorded situations (Jilink, Fukkink, and Huijbregts 2018; Helmerhorst et al. 2014 for the CIP; and Pianta, La Paro, and Hamre 2008 for the CLASS).

In the current study, we understand interaction quality in line with underlying ideas in the CIP scales (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). The CIP scales were developed to measure interaction quality in Dutch child care groups and are inspired by theory and research about attachment, prosocial development and developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Helmerhorst et al. 2014, 2017). The CIP scales describe different interaction skills assumed to have positive impact on children's wellbeing and development. The skills are conceptualized into two main areas; basic interactions and educational interactions, with the three first scales describing basic interaction skills and the three latter ones describing more educational skills. *Sensitive responsiveness* refers to the extent to which a staff member recognizes children's individual, emotional and physical needs and responds appropriately and promptly to their cues and signals. *Respect for autonomy* refers to the extent to which staff are nonintrusive and recognize and respects the validity of children's intentions and perspectives. *Structuring and limit setting* refers to the capability of a staff member to clearly communicate expectations towards children and structure situations accordingly, and to set clear and consistent limits for children's behaviour. *Verbal communication* refers to frequency and quality of verbal interactions between staff and children. *Developmental stimulation* concerns the degree to which a staff member deliberately attempts to foster children's development (e.g. motor skills, cognitive development, and creativity). *Fostering positive peer interaction* refers to staff members´ guidance of interactions between children.

There are several reasons for using the CIP scales in this study, which is a follow up of the BePro-project examining how staff members understand and practice interaction quality within a Norwegian ECEC context. At the time the BePro-project was planned, few other observation tools were available for evaluating individual staff's interaction skills with groups of children. Contrasting with other rating scales focusing on attachment and interactions (e.g. CIS, ORCE, CLASS), the CIP scales evaluate individual staff members' ability to divide their attention and react consistently between groups of children (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). In order to secure all children's learning and development in a child group, as required by the Norwegian framework plan (FWP) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017), it is crucial that the staff members are able to share attention and interactions between individual children in a group. In close collabroation with the developer of the CIP scales, the coding manual for the CIP scales was translated from Dutch to Norwegian and minor adaptions were made to ensure that the scales were suited to the Norwegian context. Using globally standardized tools for evaluating quality might limit the results, e.g. due to the danger of de-contextualisition. Quality should therefore always be considered in its own cultural context (Helmerhorst et al. 2015). However, the theoretical assumptions behind the CIP scales are comparable

to the those behind the Norwegian FWP (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017). In this study we decided to use the CIP scales for children between 1–5, the typical age range within Norwegian ECEC, despite the fact that the scales were developed for children between 0–4, the typical age range within Dutch childcare (Helmerhorst et al. 2015). One concern when using the scales, as with other international scales, such as CLASS, is the lack of age specific descriptions and requirements in the coding manual. Researchers using the scales need high competence in the field of ECEC, related to child development and children's learning, including attachment theories. It is also crucial when evaluating staff's interaction skills for the age span 1–5 that the team of researchers have the same understanding of what is age appropriate, and are highly consistent with each other in the scoring procedures.

The Norwegian ECEC context

In Norway, 84,4% of children aged between 1–2 and 97,1% of children aged between 3–5 are enrolled in ECEC (SSB (Statistics Norway) 2020). In ECEC institutions, children have typically been organised into different age groups (e.g. 1–2 year olds, 3–5 year olds, 1–5 year olds) with, on average, 11 children in groups of 1–2 year olds and 19 children in groups of 3–5 year olds (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2016). Staff consist of ECEC teachers with a bachelor degree in ECEC,[1] childcare- and youth workers with upper secondary education/vocational training[2] and assistants with no formal education in work with children in ECEC. The most common staff-child ratio is 1–3 for children under the age of 3 and 1–5 for children above the age of 3 (SSB (Statistics Norway) 2018).

The Nordic ECEC model, including Norwegian ECEC, is described as a social pedagogic tradition that focuses on children`s play and personal wellbeing, with an emphasis on children`s agency (Wagner and Einarsdottir 2006). Both the previous FWP (Ministry of Education and Research 2011) and the current FWP (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017) point out that ECEC institutions are educational institutions that aim to promote childrens wellbeing, learning and broad development and are places where the 'children's curiosity, creativity and thirst for knowledge shall be acknowledged, stimulated and form the basis for their learning processes' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017, 22). The current FWP includes new requirements for the staff, stated in terms of what they *shall do* to facilitate childrens wellbeing and development.

Materials and methods

Participants

Being part of the BePro-project, participants for the current study were recruited from ECEC institutions in a specific region already participating in the BePro-project. The participants represent two medium-sized public ECEC institutions with an educational philosophy typical of the Norwegian (and Nordic) ECEC model. The study includes 10 staff members working with children under the age of 3 (in 4 child groups with children aged 1–2) and nine staff members working with children aged 3–5 (in 3 child groups with

children aged 3–5). The staffs' working experience in ECEC institutions varied from four to 28 years; on average they had 13 years of experience. Out of 10 staff members working with children under 3, seven held a bachelor's degree in ECEC, one was qualified as a childcare- and youth worker and two had no formal education directed towards ECEC. Out of nine staff members working with children aged 3–5, four held a bachelor's degree in ECEC, three were qualified as childcare- and youth workers and two had no formal education directed towards ECEC. Group sizes were in line with the national averages mentioned above.

The CIP scales

When applying the CIP scales, staff members are video-recorded for 8–10 min during different daily situations and individual staff member's interactions are rated on a single seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *very low*, 2 = *low*, 3 = *moderate/low*, 4 = *moderate*, 5 = *moderate/high*, 6 = *high* and 7 = *very high*). For each of the six scales, a general definition of specific interactive skills is described in the CIP manual, followed by three brief descriptions characterising skills at high (6, 7), moderate (3, 4, 5) and low (1, 2) level respectively. Detailed descriptions for each of the seven scale points are also provided in the manual. CIP scores of 4,5 and beyond are considered as 'adequate-to-good', CIP scores between 3,5 and 4,5 are considered as 'moderate' and CIP scores of 3,5 and below are considered as 'inadequate' (Fukkink et al. 2019).

Procedure

Video-recording took place in August 2016, when the same trained researcher visited all child groups, between 08:00 am and 3:00 pm to video-record interactions between individual staff members and children throughout the day. As suggested by Helmerhorst et al. (2015), individual staff were recorded for 8 to 10 min in diaper/toilet situations, free play situations, mealtimes, and transition periods. No special instructions were given before the video-recording except to 'act as usual' during the day. The number of children in the groups were not fixed by the researchers before the video-recording. Eight staff members were video-recorded in five situations; eight staff members in four situations; and the remaining three staff in three situations. One situation, the diaper/toilet situation, is missing for all three staff members working in one of the 3–5 years old child groups due to practical and/or ethical reasons. All the other video-recorded situations were rated with the CIP scales (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). However, in the current study we only examine staff members´ interactions skills in the situations where all 19 staff members were video-recorded; free play situations, mealtimes and transition periods. According to the developers of the CIP scales, three video-recorded situations are considered enough for creating individual interaction profiles (Helmerhorst et al. 2014). According to Hallam et al. (2016) routine situations (such as mealtimes and transition periods) and free play situations which happen every day, create opportunities for meaningful interactions between staff and children that can facilitate children's learning and development. Individual interaction profiles based on free play situations, mealtimes and transition periods can therefore offer a unique perspective on the daily experiences of children and the quality provided for the children.

Data analysis

Each of the video recorded situations was coded on a seven-point Likert-type scale for sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interactions. During the coding process we focused on one individual staff member interacting with groups of children, but the number of children in the groups differed from situation to situation, depending on the situation. The number of children during the video-recorded situations was between 2 and 6. Free play situations typically allowed children to come and go as they wanted, transition periods usually started with smaller groups of children, but here children also left the group and new children came into the group. The mealtimes were the situations with most stable child groups but here too the group sizes differed due to organisational issues. However, the focus was mainly on *individual staff* and how they interacted with children present in the situations. We examined whether individual staff members' showed consistency in the way they acted or whether they changed, depending on the children, time and situation. For example, regarding sensitive responsiveness we examined whether, during free play situations, transition periods and mealtimes, the staff member:

> Shows warm and genuine interest in the children and provides emotional support when needed. In general, the staff responds promptly and appropriately to the children's signals, thereby functioning as a "secure base" for the children. If unable to respond, she/he acknowledges having noticed the signal and provides a more complete response as soon as possible (high level 6,7).

Or whether she/he:

> Provides emotional support to the children, but her/his support is inconsistent. The emotional support she/he provides may vary across children and/or across time. She/he sometimes misses signals and her reactions are not always adequate (moderate level 3,4,5).

Or whether she/he:

> Hardly provides emotional support to the children. She/he misses many signals or her/his reactions are too slow or inadequate. She/he may show indifferent or detached behavior.

(Helmerhorst et al. 2014, 778).

Scores for sensitive responsiveness in each situation (free play situation, transition period and mealtime) were then converted to mean scores for each staff member.

Both authors were trained in rating the scales by the developer of the CIP scales in the Netherlands. The researchers completed the training when they reached a within-1-point agreement of 80% with the expert score for five videos. All the videoes in the current study were coded by one of the researchers. Although, to ensure high relability in the coding process interrater reliability was computed for 10% of the videos. The interrater reliability with absolute agreement was 83% and within 1-point agreement 98%.

Ethical considerations

The study follows ethical standards and privacy policies and is reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service and the Norwegian Data Protection Authority,

and data have been anonymised. In addition to the staff, parents in each child group actively gave their written consent to videoing. Only children of parents who gave their consent were recorded. The participants' wellbeing and confidentiality were foregrounded during the recording procedures, and we stopped recording when children or staff signalled (by body or verbal language) that they were uncomfortable with the situation.

Results

Results from the analysis of the video-recorded situations are presented by using descriptive statistics. Table 1 presents the results as quality scores for the six CIP scales for all staff members.

As shown in Table 1, the staff received higher scores for basic interactions than they did for educational interactions. For basic interactions *(sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, and structuring and limit setting)* all the mean CIP scores are within the 'adequate-to-good' level. As we can see from the results in Table 1, all the mean CIP scores for educational interactions (*verbal communication, developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interactions*) are 'inadequate'. Descriptive statistics also show variation in CIP scores within the scales, with the highest variation for *structuring and limit setting;* from a score considered as 'inadequate' to the highest possible score. Variation in scores was examined against staff members´ child group affiliation; staff working with children under the age of 3 (N = 10) versus staff working with children aged 3–5 (N = 9). Table 2 and 3 present the results as quality scores for the six CIP scales, for staff members who work with children under the age of 3 and with children aged 3–5, respectively.

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, similar patterns were found for staff members working with 1–2 year-old children and 3–5 year-old children. Regardless of the children's age, all mean CIP scores are within the 'adequate-to-good' level for basic interactions and within the 'inadequate' level for educational interactions. However, the CIP scores show that only staff working with 1–2 year-old children received a high mean CIP score (above 6) for basic interaction skills, more specifically for *structuring and limit settings*. The CIP scores also show that staff working with 1–2 year-old children received a higher mean CIP score on all scales except for *verbal communication*, where the staff working with 3–5 year-old children scored higher (close to moderate).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of quality scores for the six CIP scales, all staff members. SD is only included for scores that are normally distributed.

CIP scales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Sensitive responsiveness	19	4.00	6.33	5.30	0.78
Respect for autonomy	19	4.00	6.67	5.88	-
Structuring and limit setting	19	3.00	7.00	5.86	0.96
Verbal communication	19	2.33	4.00	3.16	0.51
Developmental stimulation	19	1.33	3.00	2.14	-
Fostering positive peer int.	19	1.00	3.33	1.46	-
CIP Total	19	2.61	5.05	3.97	-

Note: N = 11 ECEC teachers, 4 childcare- and youth workers and 4 assistants. Individual CIP scores on free play situations, transition periods and mealtimes.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of quality scores for the six CIP scales, staff members working with children under the age of 3. SD is only included for scores that were normally distributed.

CIP scales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Sensitive responsiveness	10	4.3	6.3	5.40	0.75
Respect for autonomy	10	4.7	6.7	5.90	0.82
Structuring and limit setting	10	5.0	7.0	6.17	0.71
Verbal communication	10	2.3	4.0	3.03	0.53
Developmental stimulation	10	1.7	2.7	2.27	-
Fostering positive peer int.	10	1.0	3.3	1.68	-
CIP Total	10	3.17	5.0	4.07	-

Note: N = ECEC teachers, childcare- and youth workers and assistants. Individual scores on free play situations, transition periods and mealtimes.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of quality scores for the six CIP scales, staff members working with children aged 3–5. SD is only included for scores that were normally distributed.

CIP scales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Sensitive responsiveness	9	4.0	6.3	5.18	0.83
Respect for autonomy	9	4.0	6.3	5.85	-
Structuring and limit setting	9	3.0	6.7	5.52	-
Verbal communication	9	2.3	4.0	3.30	0.48
Developmental stimulation	9	1.3	3.0	2.00	-
Fostering positive peer int.	9	1.0	1.7	1.22	-
CIP Total	9	2.6	4.67	3.84	-

Note: N = ECEC teachers, childcare- and youth workers and assistants. Individual scores on free play situations, transition periods and mealtimes.

Discussion

The current study focuses on staffs' interactions in Norwegian ECEC during free play situations, transition periods and mealtimes evaluated according to CIP criteria. A special focus is directed towards staffs' interactions with children aged 3–5 compared to staffs' interactions with children under the age of 3.

The main finding is that all staff, regardless of children's age, received higher CIP scores for basic interactions than they did for educational interactions. The staff received similar mean scores whether they worked with 1–2 year-old children or 3–5 year-old children. Findings from the current study support findings from international studies showing that children experience the same level of interaction quality regardless of their age (toddlers versus pre-schoolers) (Hu et al. 2016; La Paro, Williamson, and Hatfield 2014; Leyva et al. 2015; Slot et al. 2017; Tayler et al. 2013). Staff in the current study seem to value positive relationships and secure attachments with the children over actively stimulating children ´s learning processes. Secure attachments are considered important for children's well-being and as a foundation for children's further learning and development and are therefore important for staff to focus on (Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton 1974; Campos, Frankel, and Camras 2004; Erickson, Sroufe, and Egeland 1985; Helmerhorst et al. 2014). Secure attachments are associated with staff who meet children with sensitive responsiveness, who respect children's autonomy and who structure and set limits to provide the best possible conditions for the children (Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton 1974). Findings from the current study show that the staff who work with children under the age of 3 receive higher mean quality scores on all CIP scales, except for verbal communication, than staff working with older children. This may be attributed to organisational issues (e.g.

staff-child ratio). When dividing attention between fewer children it is easier to structure and limit situations. This is in line with findings from other studies which show higher quality when staff have fewer children to care for (see Vermeer et al. 2016). This can not, however, explain staffs' scores for verbal communication. The staff appeared to actively engage in stimulating children's language or broader development, for example through promoting extended conversations or by expanding and extending children's utterances or ideas, only to a limited degree, regardless of the children's age (see Girolametto and Weitzman 2002). While attempting to do so, they often showed inconcistency in the way they did it, or they varied depending on children, time and the actual situation (free play, transitions or mealtimes). Very low CIP scores for *fostering positive peer interactions* also indicate that staff members were activily engaged in fostering positive child-child interactions, e.g. children's prosocial values, attitudes and behaviours only to a limited degree (Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinrad 2006). Scores for *fostering positive peer interactions* are surprisingly low for all staff members, especially when taking into consideration that children's wellbeing and social competence are highly valued in Norwegian ECEC (Wagner and Einarsdottir 2006). It is also intereresting that staff, on average, receive moderate scores for respect for children's autonomy, since children's agency has been emphasised in the Norwegian model (Wagner and Einarsdottir 2006). Children's right to participation is also regulated by law in Norway. In order to receive a high score (6,7) in the CIP scales, the staff have to show respect by actively encouraging children to do things on their own as much as possible and make choices themselves, and by showing appreciation of children's ideas and allowing the children to negotiate. They ask children to cooperate instead of commanding them and giving orders.

Findings from the current study are in line with findings from the main BePro-project which found lower interaction quality than expected for staff members working in toddler groups, both for basic interactions and educational interactions, and lowest for educational interactions, especially for fostering positive peer interactions (Bjørnestad et al. 2019). Results from the current study are also in line with other studies in Norway that found low quality regarding staff members´ language support and facilitated exploration (related to CIPs domains of educational development) and higher quality for emotional, supportive interactions (related to CIPs domains of basic interactions) (Drugli and Berg-Nielsen 2019; Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl 2018). Whereas Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl (2018) found low quality across institutions for staff members´ sensitivity and Drugli and Berg-Nielsen (2019) found higher quality for emotional supportive interactions than for instructional interactions, the current study finds that individual staff members´ sensitive responsiveness (emotional support) range from moderate to high quality. However, most prominently there seems to be an imbalance between staff members´ basic interactions and educational interactions. Looking at the Norwegian ECEC tradition where free play, 'motherly' skills and positive relationships between staff and children have been highly valued (Alvestad, Tuastad, and Bjørnestad 2017), it is not surprising that staff mainly focused on basic interactions. On the other hand, considering the guidelines for pedagogical work in ECEC in the FWP where care, play and learning are all viewed as impotant for children's development, we expected the staff to be more focused on facilitating children's learning and development during free play and routine situations/periods, and especially that they would challenge children in naturally occurring situations (based on children's interest and experiences). While international research stresses

the importance of staff balancing basic interactions and educational interactions to facilitate children's wellbeing and development, this seems not to be the case in the current study (see Siraj et al. 2017 for an overview). It can be questioned whether staff meet the FWP requirements for staff with regard to creating both a caring community and a challenging learning environment for *all* children (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017). According to the FWP, children's wellbeing, happiness and achievement should be in focus and should be something that all staff members strive for (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017).

Limitations and implications

Due to practical considerations (time, researchers and funding), it was not possible to expand sampling outside the region included, and the sample limits the scope of the study. Because of the fairly limited number of observations in the current study, it is not possible to generalise from the findings. Other staff members working in other ECEC institutions might have achieved other quality scores and produced other findings. We only analysed three video-recorded situations (free play, mealtimes and transition periods) for each of the staff members (though we alanysed in total 30 min per staff members) (Helmerhorst et al. 2015), something that might be a limitation. However, the developers of the scales have video-recorded and analysed only three situations in a recent study (cf. Fukkink et al. 2019). Another limitation of the study can be related to the tool itself. Even if it fits well with the Norwegian FWP (see The Directorate of Education and Training 2017), it can be questioned whether the CIP scale is too demanding, particularly regarding educational interactions in the Norwegian ECEC context. On the other hand, moderate quality scores for fostering positive peer interaction require that the staff sometimes – not consistently – give attention to positive interactions between the children; sometimes staff react to or promote positive interactions and sometimes not. This should be realistic in the Norwegian ECEC context where children's emotional wellbeing and social competence are assumed to be highly valued (see also Alvestad, Tuastad, and Bjørnestad 2017; Bjørnestad et al. 2019) Another limitation may be that the CIP scales were created in the Netherlands for Dutch child care groups. However, the scales were discussed and translated to Norwegian in close cooperation with the developers of the scales, and minor adaptations were made due to differences between the Dutch and the Norwegian ECEC context (see also Bjørnestad et al. 2013). The CIP scales build on systematic literature reviews and empirical evidence underpinning the relationship between the interaction skills described in the scales and children's developmental outcomes (Helmerhorst et al. 2014, 2015) and are concidered valid for observing interaction quality in ECEC (OECD 2015). Beliefs about 'motherly' skills, particularly sensitive responsiveness, seem to a large degree to be similar across country borders, though some aspects of interactions (e.g. eye-to-eye contact) can vary across cultures (Kärtner, Keller, and Yovsi 2010; Mesman et al. 2015). On this basis we can assume that findings related to sensitive responsiveness (and maybe also respect for children's autonomy and structuring and limit situations) are not biased by cultural differences between the Netherlands and Norway. However, the findings may be biased by the fact that the CIP scales are not age-specific, since they do not make any distinctions between interaction quality criteria due to children's age. A 1 year-old child needs different attention and interactions from staff than a 5 year-old child. Results are related to the researchers'

understanding of childen's development, learning and attachment theory. Further research is needed to validate the CIP scales for the whole age-span in the Norwegian ECEC context, as well as the age-specific (0–5) relevance of the scales.

However, findings from the current study resonate with findings from other Norwegian studies, using different tools and methods, and support both concerns and recommendations from these studies. There seems to be a need to focus more on interacion quality in the Norwegian ECEC context and to increase staffs' interaction skills independent of children's age. While staffs' interactions with children are key to children's experiences and the quality in ECEC, we should at least ensure staff's interaction competences (Evertesen et al. 2015) are sufficient to offer high-quality interactions on a daily basis (Riksen-Walraven 2004 in Vermeer 2008). As argued by Van Oers (2003), to be sensitive to a child's experiences and when the child is developmentally open to new experiences, is one of the most important tasks for the staff to master. Findings from this study suggest that all staff members, regardless of children's age, need to focus more on their own interactions with children and especially on how to develop/increase their own interactive skills.

Notes

1. Education directed towards pedagogical work with children aged one-to-five in ECEC institutions.
2. Education directed towars health- and pedagogical work with children and youth aged one-to-eighteen in different health and educational institutions.

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Interaction Quality in Norwegian ECEC for Toddlers Measured with the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) Scales

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Abstract

The core aspect within process quality is quality of interactions between caregivers and children. This article investigates six interaction skills of caregivers in ECEC groups for toddlers in Norway using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales. The participants are 110 teachers and 58 assistants in 111 toddler groups. Results show that caregivers score between moderate and adequate-to-good levels on the more basic interaction skills. For the more educational interaction skills, scores were mostly at the inadequate level. Comparing teachers and assistants, teachers score higher on respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, and developmental stimulation. In addition, correlations show that the CIP scores were differentially associated with several ITERS-R scales, which supports the applicability of the measure. Because of the overall moderate-to-low scores, there is a need for in-service training to improve the process quality of ECEC for toddlers.

Keywords: ECEC, process quality, interaction skills, toddlers, CIP, ITERS-R

Interaction Quality in Norwegian ECEC for Toddlers Measured with the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) Scales

Over the past 15–20 years, there has been a substantial expansion of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Norway, which, in terms of public expenditure on ECEC, now ranks fifth among all OECD countries, after Iceland (first), Sweden (second), Denmark (third), and France (fourth) (OECD, 2016). This expansion of ECEC in Norway is the direct result of a 2003 government decision to ensure access for all children whose parents want their children to be enrolled in ECEC. Furthermore, in 2009, a place in ECEC became a legal right for all children from the age of 1. Currently, 91% of all Norwegian children aged 1–5 years and 82.5% of children younger than 3 years old are enrolled in ECEC (Statistics Norway [SSB], 2018). All children receive a full-time offer of ECEC, at 41 hours per week or more. Given this relatively rapid expansion, especially for children aged 1–3 years, it is not clear whether the sector is equipped to provide them with high-quality ECEC. The OECD (2015) states that research to monitor this expansion has been insufficient so far.

When examining ECEC quality, a distinction is often made between structural quality characteristics (e.g., child-to-caregiver ratio, level of pre-service training, accessible play and learning materials) and process quality (e.g., caregiver–child interactions) (Lamb & Ahnert, 2006; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011). Whereas structural quality characteristics can be seen as prerequisites for high-quality ECEC (though they do not guarantee it), process quality taps into the actual, everyday quality of education and care received by children (Lamb & Ahnert, 2006). The core aspect within process quality is the quality of interactions between caregivers and children, and between children and other children that are embedded in daily experiences (Bjørnestad et al., 2012; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011). Sensitive and responsive caregivers who provide high levels of verbal and developmental stimulation in positive classroom climates with developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn and explore are seen as

caregivers who provide high-process-quality ECEC (Bjørnestad et al., 2012; Hamre et al., 2013; Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2015). High-process-quality ECEC contributes directly to children's immediate and future well-being, learning, and development (Broekhuizen, Mokrova, Burchinal, & Garrett-Peters, 2016; La Paro, Williamson, & Hatfield, 2014; Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011; Sanders & Howes, 2013; Sylva et al., 2006; Thomason & La Paro, 2009; Vandell, Belsky, Burchinal, Steinberg, & Vandergrift, 2010).

Until recently, large-scale quantitative studies examining ECEC quality in Norway have largely focused on structural quality characteristics, and only few, much smaller qualitative studies have been conducted on the process aspects of high-quality ECEC (Bjørnestad et al., 2012; Gulbrandsen & Eliassen, 2013). The OECD (2015) has stated that there is a lack of knowledge on process quality in Norwegian ECEC, and that nationwide monitoring of these aspects is highly recommended. To follow this recommendation, and to enhance the research knowledge related to process quality in Norway, two large-scale national research projects–the Better Provisions for Norway's children in ECEC (BePro) project and the Searching for Qualities (SfQ) project–were commissioned to examine process quality in a large sample of Norwegian ECEC institutions. The present study is part of these projects.

The two projects used an internationally widely used and valid measurement for examining quality: The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2006). This is the first time in Norway that the ITERS-R is used (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018). The ITERS-R measures several aspects of quality, ranging from the physical and organisational aspects of the ECEC setting to the quality of caregiver–child interactions. However, despite including some aspects of interaction quality, the measure is superficial, in terms of observing the quality of caregiver–child interactions (Bisceglia, Perlman, Schaack, & Jenkins, 2009; Bjørnestad & Os, 2018; Helmerhorst et al., 2014). In addition, ITERS-R is a group measure that does not distinguish between individual

caregivers' practices. For these reasons, the CIP scales are included as an additional tool to measure caregivers' interaction skills. The CIP scales were originally developed for use in a Dutch context and have been validated by Helmerhorst et al. (2014). Since the interaction skills in the CIP scales are assumed to positively influence children's well-being and development (Helmerhorst et al., 2014), using them to assess caregivers' interaction skills is a valuable contribution to the ITERS-R study. Additionally, this may be valuable in the Norwegian context because the staff composition in Norwegian ECEC groups consists of both teachers with bachelor's degrees in ECEC and assistants with no pre-service ECEC qualifications. Scores on the CIP scales may show whether this difference in educational background is related to differences in interaction skills between teachers and assistants.

The primary aim of the study is to examine the quality of caregivers' interactions with children under 3 years of age in Norwegian ECEC groups, paying special attention to possible differences between ECEC teachers and assistants. Since this study is the first Norwegian study using the CIP scales, its secondary aim is to examine the applicability and usefulness of the scales in a Norwegian context by relating CIP scores to ITERS-R scores in the same ECEC groups.

Norwegian ECEC: Context and Earlier Research

Norwegian ECEC provision has become a welfare benefit and a universal offer to all families and their children under the age of 6. Strongly rooted in the Nordic tradition and emphasising a holistic approach to children's care, play, learning, and formation, the care aspects are regarded as more important than the educational aspects (M. Alvestad, Tuastad, & Bjørnestad, 2017). To ensure quality in all ECEC centres, both private and municipality-driven facilities are required to follow the Kindergarten Act (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005) and the guidelines in the National Framework Plan for Kindergartens

(Ministry of Education and Research, 2005; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a). The framework plan is not age-specific. ECEC teachers are responsible for adapting the requirements in the framework plan to specific groups and children's ages and abilities, based on their professional judgment. However, it is strongly highlighted in the framework plan that everyday interactions between people are vital for children's well-being, development, and learning (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a).

Up to 2018, there was no regulation of the caregiver-to-child ratio (including both ECEC teachers and assistants) or group sizes, except that one of the caregivers in each group is required to hold a bachelor's degree in ECEC or the equivalent. In contrast to the caregiver-to-child ratio, the ECEC teacher-to-child ratio is regulated by law, with one ECEC teacher per 7–9 children under the age of 3 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005). The OECD (2015) states that this lack of regulation of the caregiver-to-child ratio and group size is a potential threat to the quality provided by Norwegian ECEC. Consequently—and with pressure from practitioners—the Norwegian government decided to increase both the ECEC teacher-to-child ratio (Goverment, 2017a) and regulate the caregiver-to-child ratio (Goverment, 2017b). The new regulation took effect in August 2018 with a teacher-to-child ratio of one ECEC teacher per maximum seven children under the age of 3 and, beginning August 2019, the caregiver-to-child ratio will be a minimum of one caregiver per three children under the age of 3. There are, however, no fixed regulations for group size. Group composition in Norway is often divided into ECEC groups with children 1–3 years old (defined as toddler groups) and 3–5 years old or with mixed-aged groups of children 1–6 years old traditionally located in the same centre. The average group size for the 1–3-year-old group is nine children per group (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017b).

The workforce that works directly with children in Norwegian ECEC centres consists of ECEC teachers holding a 3-year tertiary degree (bachelor's degree in ECEC or equivalent

pedagogical education) and assistants with no specific requirements related to qualifications or pre-service training in ECEC. However, almost all of the assistants have completed the upper secondary level (age 19) or higher, and a small proportion (around 20%) have completed vocational training programmes related to childcare and youth work for children aged 1–18 (Statistics Norway [SSB], 2017).

When it comes to defining the responsibilities and work tasks carried out in ECEC, the National Framework Plan for Kindergartens states that the ECEC teacher in a child group is responsible for planning, documenting, and leading the pedagogical work, based on good professional judgement. In their pedagogical work, teachers are obliged to fulfil the requirements of the Kindergarten Act and the framework plan (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a). In contrast, there are no descriptions or guidelines in the framework plan that specifically describe assistants' responsibilities and work tasks. Nevertheless, there is a strong tradition in Norwegian ECEC related to equality in the workforce that involves flat organisational structures. Research indicates that, in practice, the division of labour between ECEC teachers and assistants is rather minimal: they largely do the same tasks (Børhaug, Helgøy, Homme, Lotsberg, & Ludvigsen, 2011; Eik, 2014; Steinnes, 2014; Steinnes & Haug, 2013). For example, in a national survey, Steinnes (2014) found that both teachers and assistants report having equal responsibility for reading to children, changing nappies, playing with the children, supervising physical activities, and helping children get dressed. In addition, the survey showed that assistants spent 81% of their total working hours with children, whereas teachers spent only 66% of their total hours working with children (Steinnes, 2014).

Despite the relative equality in the division of labour and pedagogical work and the flat organisational structure, there are indications that educated ECEC teachers score significantly higher than assistants in terms of the provided process quality. One recent

ITERS-R study by Bjørnestad and Os (2018) from the same research project as this study found that groups with an ECEC teacher present during the observations—versus groups with no ECEC teacher present (only assistants present in the group) during the observations—scored significantly higher on the two 7-point scales in the ITERS-R that specifically focus on process quality: interactions (ECEC teacher present $M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.49$; non-qualified teacher present $M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.33$; $p = 0.01$) and listening and talking (ECEC teacher present $M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.37$; non-qualified teacher present $M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.24$) (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018). This is in accordance with studies in which higher levels of caregiver formal education seem to be associated with higher levels of process quality in ECEC for toddlers (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Dalli et al., 2011; Manning, Garvis, Fleming, & Wong, 2017; Melhuish & Gardiner, 2017; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000).

The total ITERS-R score in the Norwegian ITERS-R study falls within the minimal level of quality ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.80$) on a 7-point scale (1 is inadequate, 3 is minimal, 5 is good, and 7 is excellent) and is in line with other international studies (Vermeer, van IJzendoorn, Cárcamo, & Harrison, 2016). Quality at the subscale level in the Norwegian study ranges from an average score of 3.49 for both personal care routines ($SD = 1.00$) and activities ($SD = 0.77$), 3.80 ($SD = 0.90$) for space and furnishings, 4.34 ($SD = 1.37$) for listening and talking, 4.72 ($SD = 1.50$) for interactions, and 4.34 ($SD = 1.31$) for programme structure. This indicates minimal quality at the subscale level (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018). The authors of the study argue that the quality for toddlers in Norwegian ECEC is not as good as expected, and there seems to be a need to enhance the quality (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018). Although these ITERS-R scores provide a broad picture of the quality of the ECEC environment, they provide only limited information on the interactions between caregivers

and children (Fenech, 2011). Therefore, in the present study, we also administer the CIP, to assess individual teachers' and assistants' interaction skills.

Caregiver Interaction Skills

High-quality interactions between caregivers and young children drive children's development and are important for their well-being (Helmerhorst et al., 2014; Melhuish et al., 2015). The Netherlands Consortium for Research in Child Care (NCKO; Helmerhorst et al., 2014) developed a tool for measuring quality in caregivers' interactions with children in ECEC: the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales. Based on systematic literature review and empirical evidence the consortium developed six interactional key aspects that underpin the relationship between caregiver interactive skills and developmental outcomes in children. These are considered to play an important role in fostering the well-being and development of children from birth to 4 years (Helmerhorst et al., 2014; Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Deynoot-Schaub, & Fukkink, 2015). The six specific caregiver interaction skills that constitute the CIP scales are: (1) sensitive responsiveness, (2) respect for autonomy, (3) structuring and limit-setting, (4) verbal communication, (5) developmental stimulation, and (6) fostering positive peer interactions. The first three skills are related to basic aspects of care. *Sensitive responsiveness* refers to the extent to which a caregiver recognises and responds to children's individual and physical needs, as well as their signals and cues. *Respect for autonomy* relates to the extent to which a caregiver is non-intrusive and recognises, respects, and supports children's intentions and perspectives. *Structuring and limit-setting* relates to a caregiver's ability to communicate clear expectations, to structure situations accordingly, and to provide children with clear and consistent limits regarding their behaviour. The last three skills focus on educational aspects. *Verbal communication* refers to both the frequency and quality of verbal interactions between caregivers and children. *Developmental stimulation* is described as a caregiver's deliberate attempts to foster different

aspects of children's development (e.g., social, motor, cognition and creativity) using a diverse range of activities and materials that are attuned to children's attention, states, and developmental levels. *Fostering positive peer interactions* focuses on the quality of guidance that a caregiver provides about the interactions between children in the group.

The first time the CIP scales were used in the Netherlands, the results revealed a moderate average score across the six CIP scales (M = 3.6 on a 7-point scale; inadequate = 1–3.4, moderate = 3.5–4.4, and adequate to good = 4.5–7. However, substantial differences were found between the different caregiver interaction skills, with adequate-to-good scores for the more basic caregiving skills of sensitive responsiveness (M = 4.81, SD = 0.93), respect for autonomy (M = 4.51, SD = 0.84), and structuring and limit-setting (M = 4.90, SD = 1.17). The scores in educational skills ranged from moderate for verbal communication (M = 3.60, SD = 0.90) to inadequate for both developmental stimulation (M = 2.16, SD = 0.93) and fostering positive peer interactions (M = 1.72, SD = 0.83) (Helmerhorst et al., 2015).

There are several reasons for choosing the CIP scales as a tool for measuring caregivers' interactions with children in this study. The tool is regarded as a valid measurement for interactional quality in ECEC (OECD, 2015). In addition, as stated by Helmerhorst et al. (2014), the CIP scales are time-efficient and designed to be administered together with ITERS-R (and ECERS-R) by a single researcher during an one-day visit with a group. Another advantage of the CIP scales is that they take into account that ECEC is a group setting. It is not sufficient for caregivers to have the capability to interact with individual children; they also must be able to divide their attention and react consistently between groups of children (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). The caregiver interaction skills measured with the CIP scales have also been found to be suitable in training programmes for improving caregivers' interactive skills in the Netherlands (Helmerhorst et al., 2017).

Current Study

This study uses the CIP scales (Helmerhorst et al., 2014) to examine the quality of caregivers' interactions with toddlers in a subsample of Norwegian ECEC groups, with special attention to differences between ECEC teachers and assistants. Despite the considerable knowledge available about the importance of interactions between caregivers and 1–3-year-old children in ECEC, research shows that interactional quality is lower for toddlers in ECEC compared to children 3–6 years old (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018; Dalli et al., 2011; Helmerhorst et al., 2015; La Paro et al., 2014). Given that the CIP scales were developed and validated in the Netherlands and have only recently been used for the first time in Norway, the study also aims to confirm the applicability and usefulness of the scales in the Norwegian context by relating them to the ITERS-R scales applied to the same groups. Significant, but not-too-high, positive correlations between the CIP scales and ITERS-R are expected, as this would indicate that the CIP scales capture an additional aspect of process quality, which would make them a useful addition to ITERS-R. More specifically, we expect that the ITERS-R *listening and talking* and *interaction* scales—the two scales that focus on caregiver–child interactions—would be most strongly correlated with the CIP scales. We also expect significant and positive associations with the more organisational activities and programme structure scales, as these more content- and curriculum-oriented scales are presumed to be prerequisites of high-quality caregiver–child interactions (Dalli et al., 2011; Sylva et al., 2006). In addition, we expected to find no—or only weak—associations with the personal care routines and space and furnishings scales, as these scales focus least on interaction skills. Although there are interactional aspects included in these scales, they are mainly at the high end of the items (a score of 5–7). However, the earlier ITERS-R study by

Bjørnestad and Os (2018), showed that most groups do not reach this level. Finally, based on earlier research, we expect the correlations to be somewhat stronger for ECEC teachers than assistants, as ECEC teachers have more responsibility for leading and planning pedagogical work (Steinnes & Haug, 2013), and as such are expected to contribute more to the overall quality of ECEC groups, as assessed with the ITERS-R (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a).

Regarding the quality of young children's interactions with their caregivers, as assessed with the CIP scales, we expect moderate to good scores among the ECECgroups for the more basic interaction skills (sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, and structuring and limit-setting) and lower scores for the more educationally focused interaction skills (verbal communication, developmental stimulation, and fostering positive peer interactions). In addition, we expect these scores to be somewhat higher for Norwegian ECEC groups than for Dutch groups, given that Norwegian teachers have bachelor's degrees in ECEC, while the majority of Dutch caregivers have completed 3-year vocational training at the intermediate level in general social-pedagogical work.

In addition to interaction quality at the ECEC group level, we investigated the mean differences in average scores on the CIP scales between teachers and assistants. Based on both the differences in pre-service education and the fact that teachers have more responsibility for leading and planning the pedagogical work in their groups, we hypothesise higher scores for ECEC teachers than assistants, especially for the more educationally focused interaction skills. However, because of the flat organisational structure in Norwegian ECEC, in which the planning of the pedagogical work and the leading of the classroom and activities might be more equally divided than stated in the National framework plan for Kindergartens (Steinnes, 2013, 2014; Steinnes & Haug, 2013), we expect that these differences would not be large.

Methods

Participants

This study is a part of the two longitudinal research projects BePro and SfQ. These projects collaborated in evaluating the quality in Norwegian ECEC using the ITERS-R, ECERS-R, and CIP scales. Using a stratified random sampling procedure, 158 ECEC centres in five regions in Norway were approached to participate in the study, and 93 centres agreed to participate. Groups within these centres were observed with ITERS-R (n = 206) when parents of at least two children in the group actively consented to participation in the individual assessments (e.g., cognitive skills). In addition, in 111 of the 206 groups, at least one caregiver and enough parents consented to video recordings made as part of the CIP assessment. Those 111 participating groups, distributed over 66 centres, scored somewhat higher (M = 4.11, SD = 0.76) than the 95 non-participating groups (M = 3.64, SD = 0.76) on the average ITERS-R total score, $t(204) = 4.47$, $p < .001$. This sample includes somewhat more municipal (62.10%) and fewer private centres (37.90%) compared to the national distribution (47% public and 53% private; Statistics Norway [SSB], 2018). However, there were no significant differences on the ITERS-R total score when comparing the classrooms of municipal (M = 4.16, SD = 0.76) and private centres (M = 4.00, SD = 0.78, $t(109) = 1.00$, p = 0.32). Table 1 provides sample characteristics at the group and caregiver levels for these 111 groups. These statistics show that most observed groups had a 1–3 years old age group (84.5%), and that there were relatively large variations, in terms of group sizes, caregiver-to-child ratios (both teacher and assistant), and teacher-to- child ratios, as observed during the ITERS-R assessment. In only 28 of 66 centres was more than one group observed; in 14

centres, two groups were observed; in 12 centres, three groups were observed; in one centre, four groups were observed; and in one centre, five groups were observed.

All caregivers in the groups received an opt-in letter to actively consent to the video recordings, resulting in a total sample of 168 caregivers. These 168 participating caregivers can be divided into teachers (n = 110), who have a 3-year tertiary degree in ECEC (bachelor's level) or equivalent, and assistants (n = 58), who complete the upper secondary level of education (age 19) or higher. Two teachers had not yet completed a bachelor's degree, though they received dispensation from the educational requirement. The reason for the unequal distribution in our sample—fewer assistants than teachers—might be the free choice given to participate in the video study; the teachers seemed more confident and willing to participate in these situations. In all participating groups, one teacher was observed, except for two groups in which only an assistant consented to be recorded and one group in which two teachers and no assistant were observed. In 54 groups, one teacher and one assistant were observed. There was one group in which, in addition to one ECEC teacher, two assistants were observed. This was the only group in which three caregivers were observed. In 55 groups, only one teacher and no assistant was observed.

Table 1. ***Sample characteristics at the group and caregiver levels***

Procedures

As recommended by Helmerhorst et al. (2014), a trained observer visited the toddler group from 8:00 a.m. to approximately 3:00 p.m. to collect data for ITERS-R and video record situations to be rated later according to the CIP scales. In addition to the written information sent to the centres in advance, the observer informed the caregivers about the four naturally occurring situations (diapering, mealtime, free play, and transition between group activities) that would be recorded for 8–10 minutes per participating caregiver. Apart from

this information, the caregivers did not receive specific instructions, and the observer followed the regular day's structure.

The inclusion of four everyday situations can illuminate variations in interactional features in different situations (Degotardi, 2010; Dickinson, 2001; Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002; Rhyner, Guenther, Pizur-Barnekow, Cashin, & Chavie, 2013). The chosen situations constitute a powerful context in which caregivers' interactions with children are embedded and can give a valid and reliable estimation of the interactions as they happen on a daily basis. Routine situations also create opportunities to engage children in meaningful interactions that promote their learning and development (Hallam, Fouts, Bargreen, & Perkins, 2016).

The observer completed ITERS-R and made video recordings in the first 3–4 hours of the visit. Next, in line with the ITERS-R manual, the observer interviewed the teachers, to collect additional information that could not be observed (e.g., how frequently certain activities take place and the kind of additional material available). Finally, if the recordings could not be completed during the first 3 - 4 hours, additional recordings were made in the afternoons. General information about the ECEC centres and specific groups was collected through a questionnaire filled out by the heads of the centres.

Measures

ITERS-R. ITERS-R is a widely used, standardised observation instrument to assess global quality in child care groups in which more than 50% of the children are younger than 30 months of age (Harms et al., 2006). Eleven of the 111 groups studied had children aged 1–6, and fewer than 50% of the children in these groups were younger than 3 years old. However, for reasons of comparability, ITERS-R was still used, with special attention paid to the environment as experienced by the children younger than 3 years old. The ITERS-R consists of seven scales, six of which were used in this study: 1) space and furnishings (5

items), 2) personal care routines (6 items), 3) listening and talking (3 items), 4) activities (10 items), 5) interactions (4 items), and 6) programme structure (4 items). The parents and staff scale was not used in this study. The ITERS-R data in the current study was available from the former study by Bjørnestad and Os (2018).

When comparing the ITERS-R total score for these 11 groups with children aged 1–6 to the other 100 groups, we found that there was a marginally significant effect, with the 11 groups scoring somewhat higher (M = 4.51, SD = 0.61) than the other 100 groups (M = 4.08, SD = 0.78, $t(109) = -1.79$, $p = 0.08$). However, separate follow-up analyses of variance (ANOVA's) for the six scales showed that there was a difference only for the scale *activities*, and not on the other five scales used. Therefore, and to prevent data loss, we decided to keep those 11 groups in our analyses.

Through several yes/no indicators, the items in each subscale were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = inadequate, 3 = minimal, 5 = good, 7 = excellent). Next, scale scores were calculated by taking the means of the items belonging to each scale: space and furnishings (M = 3.91, SD = 0.89), personal care routines (M = 3.63, SD = 1.01), listening and talking (M = 4.62, SD = 1.30), activities (M = 3.66, SD = 0.74), interactions (M = 5.16, SD = 1.44), and programme structure (M = 4.64, SD = 1.26). In addition, an overall ITERS-R score was calculated by averaging the scores across all 32 items (M = 4.11, SD = 0.76).

Two researchers (the first and third authors of this study) completed the online ITERS-R course offered by the Environment Rating Scales Institute (ERSI), followed by intensive training with the developers of ITERS-R. This training was completed with a reliability check, with an average within-1-point reliability score of 96%. The two certified researchers trained the twelve observers for this study (2–4 per region), following the same procedures described by ERSI. The observers were trained in the field by one of the two researchers until they reached an interrater agreement of at least 85%. The average agreement during this

training in the field was 88%, with a range of 85–96% for all items. In addition, when observers scored wrong indicators for certain items, they were further trained until they could reliably apply these specific indicators.

CIP scales. Since the CIP scales were available only in Dutch at the time of the study, the coding manual was translated from Dutch to Norwegian in cooperation with the Dutch NCKO team, to ensure the international comparability of the results. The CIP scales were developed for child care groups with children from 0–4 years of age.

The six CIP scales are rated on a 7-point scale, with 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate/low, 4 = moderate, 5 = moderate/high, 6 = high, and 7 = very high. The coding manual provides a general definition of the specific interactive skills for each of the six scales, followed by three brief descriptions characterising the scores at the low (1, 2), moderate (3, 4, 5), and high (6, 7) levels of the scale. For example, the description of the scale *sensitive responsiveness* is as follows:

A caregiver scoring in the high (6, 7) range:

> "Shows warm and genuine interest in the children and provides emotional support when needed. In general, the caregiver responds promptly and appropriately to the children's signals, thereby functioning as a ''secure base'' for the children. If unable to respond, she acknowledges having noticed the signal and provides a more complete response as soon as possible.

A caregiver scoring in the middle range (3, 4, 5):

> provides emotional support to the children, but her support is inconsistent. The emotional support she provides may vary across children and/or across time. She sometimes misses signals and her reactions are not always adequate.

A caregiver scoring in the low (1, 2) range:

> hardly provides emotional support to the children. She misses many signals or her reactions are too slow or inadequate. She may show indifferent or detached behavior."

(Helmerhorst et al., 2014, p. 778).

These brief descriptions are further illustrated with more-detailed behavioural descriptions for each of the seven possible scale points. Four trained observers independently rated the video episodes on the six CIP scales. For 129 caregivers, there were four episodes; for 33 caregivers, there were three episodes; and for six caregivers, there were two episodes. Since there was no situation that was systematically missing, and Little's MCAR test—$\chi^2(239) = 273.88$, $p = .06$—revealed that the data were missing completely at random, an average score per skill was calculated across the available episodes for each caregiver. These average scores have been classified into three quality levels, which have been labelled using Helmerhorst et al. (2015) as inadequate ($M < 3.50$), moderate ($3.50 \leq M < 4.50$), and adequate-to-good ($M \geq 4.50$).

Four researchers were trained by the developers of the CIP scales in the Netherlands in rating the scales. The researchers completed the training when they reached a within-1-point agreement of 80% with the expert score for five videos. Interrater reliability during the coding process was computed for 10% of the videos. The intra-class-correlation (ICC) with absolute agreement was 0.85 for sensitive responsiveness, 0.90 for respect for autonomy, 0.94 for structuring and limit-setting, 0.91 for verbal communication, 0.91 for developmental stimulation, and 0.78 for fostering positive peer interactions. Researchers did not score video episodes they had recorded themselves.

Results

Preliminary Analysis: Correlations Between the Six CIP Scales

As a preliminary analysis, we calculated the correlations between the six individual CIP scales (see Table 2). As expected, the correlations between the six scales were positive and moderate to strong, as the scales measure related—but conceptually different—aspects of the same concept (interactional skills). Only the correlation between fostering positive peer

interaction and structuring and limit setting was not significant. This correlational pattern is very similar to the pattern in the Dutch validation study of the CIP scales (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). An exploratory factor analysis for the total group, using an oblique rotation, yielded a 1-factor solution that explained 66% of the variance, and Cronbach's alpha for the six scales was .90 for the teachers and .88 for the assistants. This is very similar to the results in the Dutch validation study, in which 68% of the variance was explained by one factor (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). Based on these findings, the six scales were averaged into one total CIP score per caregiver. However, as several of the correlations were below .50, and mean level differences can occur between the scale scores—to reflect relative strengths and weaknesses in interactive skills—it remains important, as in the studies of Helmerhorst et al. (2014; 2015; 2017), to analyse the individual scales as well.

Relationships Between the CIP Scales and the ITERS-R Scales

To examine the applicability and usefulness of the CIP scales in the Norwegian context, bivariate correlations were calculated between the ITERS-R-scales and the averaged CIP scores in the 55 groups in which both a teacher and an assistant were observed (see Table 2). There was one group in which one teacher and two assistants were observed. For this group, the scores of the assistants were averaged before the group-level scores were calculated. The correlations in Table 2 show that there were, as expected, no significant associations between the ITERS-R scales space and furnishings and personal care routines and any of the six CIP scales at the group level. However, as expected, the strongest associations were found between the ITERS-R scales listening and talking, interactions, and programme structure and the CIP scales *verbal communication* and *developmental stimulation*. In addition, there were marginally significant associations between these ITERS-R scales and the CIP scale *sensitive responsiveness*, and there was a marginally significant

association between the ITERS-R scale *interactions* and the CIP scale *structuring and limit-setting.* These meaningful, but not-too-high, correlations indicate that the CIP scales measure something different than ITERS-R, which makes them a useful addition to ITERS-R. There were no associations between the ITERS-R scales and the CIP scales *fostering positive peer interactions* and *respect for autonomy*.

When separately evaluating the correlations for teachers and assistants, associations were somewhat stronger for teachers than for assistants, both in significance level and absolute size. In addition, in contrast to the correlations at the level of the ECEC groups and for assistants, there were significant associations between the ITERS-R scales listening and talking, interactions and programme structure and the CIP scales *respect for autonomy* and *structuring and limit-setting* (correlations between .19 and .28) for teachers.

Table 2. ***Correlations between CIP scales and ITERS-R at the level of the ECEC groups (n = 55)***

Mean Scores on the CIP Scales: Group Level, Teachers, and Assistants

Descriptive statistics for the CIP scales at the group level, and for the teachers and assistants separately, are displayed in Table 3. Again, we averaged the CIP scores in the 55 groups in which both a teacher and an assistant were observed, to calculate mean scores at the group level. Average scores on sensitive responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit-setting, and verbal communication were between moderate and adequate-to-good levels and covered almost the whole range of the 7-point scale. *Verbal communication* was at an inadequate level only for assistants. For *developmental stimulation* and, especially, *fostering positive peer interactions*, the average scores were at the inadequate level, and the range of scores was more restricted. For the total CIP score, the scores at the group level and

for teachers were at the moderate level, and for assistants they were at the inadequate level, just below the moderate level. There was a similar pattern for teachers and assistants (and thus also at the group level) regarding scales with the highest and lowest scores (i.e., rank order stability), and the standard deviations were also comparable.

In addition to the mean scores, we also calculated the percentage of ECEC groups (only for the 55 groups in which both a teacher and assistant were observed), teachers, and assistants who scored at the inadequate, moderate and adequate-to-good levels for the total CIP score. A total of 54.54% of the ECEC groups, 36.36% of the teachers, and 48.27% of the assistants scored at the inadequate level; 36.36% of the ECEC groups, 43.63% of the teachers, and 46.55% of the assistants scored at the moderate level; and 9.09% of the ECEC groups, 20.00% of the teachers, and only 5.17% of the assistants scored at the adequate-to-good level.

Differences between teachers and assistants. Our data is clustered into three levels (centre, group, and caregiver). To evaluate whether it is important to take this clustering of our data into account, we calculated the square root of the design effect (DEFT) to evaluate. If DEFT is small (e.g, 1.50 or less; Lai & Kwok, 2015; Muthén & Satorra, 1995), then the standard errors are minimally affected by clustering, and results will be essentially identical, compared to, for example, multilevel modelling. In our sample, with 66 centres and 111 groups, and thus an average cluster size of 1.68, the DEFT (SQRT[1 + (Average Cluster Size -1)*ICC]) would only exceed the value of 1.50 with an ICC of 1.47. As the maximum value of an ICC is 1.00, this value is not possible.

Although DEFT was minimal for the clustering of groups in centres, we calculated an ICC to assess the level of consistency between the scores on the CIP scales of teachers and assistants in the same group, in the 55 groups in which both a teacher and an assistant were observed. Only for respect for autonomy was there a significant ICC between teachers and assistants (r =.31, p = 0.01). For the other CIP scales and the total CIP score, the ICCs were

not significant. These results mean that, in terms of respect for autonomy, teachers and assistants in the same groups are only slightly more similar to each other than teachers and assistants from different groups. Moreover, using the ICC, we calculated the DEFT for respect for autonomy, which is 1.14 (SQRT[1 + (2 -1)*0.31]). Based on these findings, and to ease interpretation, we decided to conduct single-level analysis instead of multilevel analysis when evaluating the mean differences between the scores of teachers and assistants.

To test the mean differences between the scores of teachers and assistants, a MANOVA was conducted, with the six scales as dependent variables. There was no significant difference between the average six CIP scale scores of teachers in a classroom with or without an observed assistant (*p*'s between .37 and .87), so we decided to include the total group of teachers (n = 110) and assistants (n =58) in these analyses. Preliminary analyses showed that the assumptions for MANOVA (e.g., homogeneity of variances) were met. Using Wilks' Lambda, there was a marginally significant difference between teachers and assistants in their interaction skills ($\Lambda = 0.93$, $F(6, 161) = 2.01$, $p = 0.07$). Separate, follow-up, univariate ANOVAs (Table 3) and calculations of effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) revealed that teachers scored significantly higher than assistants on the scales respect for autonomy (d = 0.40), verbal communication (d = 0.45), and developmental stimulation (d = 0.48) and even marginally higher for structuring and limit-setting (d = 0.28). These effect sizes can be interpreted as being small (0.2) to medium (0.5) in size (Cohen, 1992). There were no significant differences for the scales *sensitive responsiveness* and *fostering positive peer interactions*. A separate univariate ANOVA for the total CIP score showed that, in line with the results for the individual scales, the total CIP score was also significantly higher for teachers (d = 0.44). When these analyses were run for the 55 groups in which there was both a teacher and assistant present, the conclusions remained the same, except that the marginally significant effect for structuring and limit-setting disappeared.

In summary, the results at the level of the ECEC group are in line with our expectations, with more moderate and adequate-to-good scores for the more basic interaction skills and lower scores for the more educationally focused interaction skills. In addition, and as expected, teachers have better interaction skills than assistants, especially in terms of respect for autonomy, verbal communication, and developmental stimulation. However, even with these higher skills, there remains room for improvement, in terms of mean-level scores, as more teachers scored at the inadequate level (36.4%) than at the adequate-to-good level (20.0%), in terms of overall interaction skills. Logically, this holds even more strongly for the mean-level scores of the assistants.

Table 3. ***Mean scores on the CIP scales at the group- and individual-caregiver levels (separately for teachers and assistants)***

Discussion

This study examines the quality of caregivers' interactions with children under 3 years of age in Norwegian ECEC groups, with a special focus on the possible differences between ECEC teachers and assistants. As expected, the quality of interactions was moderate, on average, with higher scores on the more basic interaction skills, compared to the educational skills. Moreover, ECEC teachers scored higher than assistants on several of the interaction skills. Since this study is the first Norwegian study using the CIP scales, the second aim of the study is to examine the applicability and usefulness of the CIP scales in the Norwegian context by relating the CIP results to the results of quality measured with ITERS-R in the same ECEC groups.

With regard to the applicability of the CIP skills, our results reveal that the relationship between the ITERS-R scales and the CIP scales largely resembles the

correlational pattern presented in the Dutch validation of the CIP scales by Helmerhorst et al. (2014). In contrast to their study, however, we found no significant associations between the ITERS-R scales *space and furnishings* and *personal care routines* and the CIP scales. Although there are interactional aspects at the higher end (a score of 5–7) in some of the items of these two subscales, our sample mostly did not reach the high levels in these items. Together with the fact that these scales are not at the heart of the interaction skills assessed with the CIP scales, our findings support the applicability and usability of the CIP scales in the Norwegian ECEC context for toddlers.

When comparing interaction quality at the group level with the Dutch scores, the Norwegian scores were in the same range, both for the more-basic interaction skills and more-educational interaction skills, as reported in Helmerhorst (2015). Based on Norway having a higher caregiver-to-child ratio for children under the age of 3 (1:3) than the Netherlands (1:3 for children under the age of 1, and 1:5 for children between the age of 1 and 2), as well as the number of qualified teachers with bachelor's degrees in ECEC, we expected that the interaction quality would be higher in Norway than in the Netherlands. We were surprised that the Norwegian scores on sensitive responsiveness were within the moderate level and were lower than the Dutch scores, since one of the most important values in Norwegian ECEC is close relationships and attachment between caregivers and children (Bae, 2004; Drugli, 2010; Ministry of Education and Research, 2012). An explanation for the low scores might be that Norwegian caregivers' sensitivity is based on individual approaches, while CIP presupposes caregivers' abilities to divide their attention between the children in the group (Os, accepted for publication). Other structural factors, such as differences in the schedule of the day, group sizes, and in organisational form, may also have influenced these scores. Future, also qualitatively oriented, studies might investigate this further.

The scores for the scales focusing on the more-educational aspects of interaction were mainly at inadequate levels for both teachers and assistants. It was expected that scores for the educational skills would be lower than the more-basic skills, but it is remarkable and deserves attention that the educational skills were low in an absolute sense (inadequate levels). However, even with the low score, Norwegian caregivers score higher than the Dutch on developmental stimulation. An explanation might be the already-mentioned unequal structural conditions between the two countries.

Although teachers score higher than assistants on verbal communication and developmental stimulation, they still score relatively low on the educationally focused interaction skills. Scoring lower on the educational skills than the basic interaction skills is in line with the findings of other international studies (Helmerhorst et al., 2014; Helmerhorst et al., 2015; Mashburn et al., 2008; Thomason & La Paro, 2009). This calls for attention, since it is the provided level of educational support that often has the strongest positive influence on children's cognitive and language development (Belsky et al., 2007; Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta, & Mashburn, 2010; Manning et al., 2017; Mathers et al., 2011). It can be questioned whether teachers receive enough specific training to provide high-quality interactions in ECEC (Melhuish et al., 2015; OECD, 2015; Sanders & Howes, 2013). Even if caregiver and child interactions are the focus in the Norwegian teacher education curriculum, there is no attention paid to the special competence related to working with children under the age of 3 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012). Like the framework plan for ECEC, the curriculum is broad and holistic and does not specify learning approaches for specific age groups.

Another explanation for the low scores on educational interaction skills in the Norwegian context could be the holistic view on care, play, and learning in which care and play are the main focus. The concept of learning is highly debated, and a share of Norwegian

teachers resist including learning as a part of children's everyday lives in ECEC (M. Alvestad et al., 2017). Based on this ideological approach, it seems natural that both teachers and assistants score higher on more care-focused interaction skills than more education-focused interaction skills, especially in ECEC for younger children.

As expected, assistants generally scored lower on the interactional skills than teachers, both on the more-basic and the more-educational skills. Based on the different educational levels and pre-service training, we expected that the teachers would score higher for the more-educationally focused skills, although we expected the difference to be minimal, based on the flat organisational structure. Teachers scored higher than assistants for both the interactional skills *verbal communication* and *developmental stimulation*. It appears that the ECEC teachers' higher levels of pre-service education—compared to assistants—provides them with tools to have more high-quality verbal interactions with children and to grasp more opportunities to foster children's development. However, an important and noteworthy finding is that a teacher and an assistant in the same group were not more similar to each other in their scores on the CIP scales than a teacher and an assistant from different groups. This may indicate that there is a lack of in-service training directed towards improving interaction skills that includes all staff members in a certain group (Slot et al., 2015). This finding also brings into question ECEC teachers' roles as models for their assistants and their ability to help their staff improve their competence in interaction skills. According to Steinnes (2014), assistants spend 81% of their working hours with the children. Therefore, there is an urgent need for training, to increase assistants' interaction skills and competence, which in the literature has been shown to improve caregivers' interactions with children (Helmerhorst et al., 2017; Jilink, Fukkink, & Huijbregts, 2018; Mathers, Singler, & Karemaker, 2012).

Thus, despite earlier research in Norway stating that the division of labour is organised in a flat organisational structure, and that teachers and assistants report doing mainly the same

work tasks (Børhaug et al., 2011; Eik, 2014; Steinnes, 2013, 2014), we found that teachers, overall, score higher than assistants on both the basic and educational aspects of interaction. This difference is even more salient when considering that assistants spend a greater number of their total work hours with the children. These results also indicate that teachers' claims that they are better equipped to perform high-quality interactions with children compared to assistants might, to a certain degree, be correct (Steinnes, 2013).

When it comes to the skill *fostering positive peer interaction*, both teachers and assistants scored very low. The low level in encouraging interactions between peers is in accordance with results from the Netherlands (Helmerhorst et al., 2015) and international research (File, 1993; Howes & Clements, 1994; Kutnick et al., 2007; Williams, Mastergeorge, & Ontai, 2010). It can be questioned whether the reason for the low scores is that the scale is too demanding, with unrealistically high standards. However, the definition of a score at the moderate level is that the caregiver sometimes provides positive interactions between the children, but—not consequently—several opportunities to promote positive interactions are not used in this score range. Based on this description, a moderate level does not seem to be an unrealistic criterion to be met in everyday interactions with a group of children. The inadequate level of *fostering positive peer interactions* calls for attention, both in research and in practical work. According to Fabes, Hanish, and Martin (2003, p. 1039), peers are "…one of the most important, but unrecognized, contributors to child care effects…" Interactions between peers might contribute to children's learning of social skills and enhance friendship, well-being, and togetherness in the group (Gevers Deynoot-Schaub & Riksen-Walraven, 2006a, 2006b; Musatti, Mayer, Pettenati, & Picchio, 2017; Os, 2013). Despite this, research-based knowledge about how to foster peer interactions is still sparse (Acar, Hong, & Wu, 2017; Musatti et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2010). Unfortunately, research shows that involvement in peer interactions often seems to be restrictive, intrusive, and adult-centred

(Williams et al., 2010), even though positive, non-intrusive, and non-restrictive strategies seem to be more adequate in fostering positive peer interactions among children (de Haan & Singer, 2003; Kemple, David, & Hysmith, 1997; Singer & Hännikäinen, 2002).

Limitations, Strengths, and Future Directions

This study has some limitations and strengths. The first limitation is that the groups that participated in this research scored somewhat higher on the ITERS-R total score than the groups that did not participate in this study, which is an indication that the lowest quality groups probably did not participate. However, despite this slight positive bias, the average scores on the CIP scales were still relatively low and in line with results from the Dutch study (Helmerhorst et al., 2015). This indicates that, although Norwegian teachers are better-educated than Dutch teachers (bachelor's degrees versus intermediate vocational degrees), they do not score higher on interaction skills, and they perhaps would have scored even worse if we had been able to include more lower-quality groups. It is not expected that this slight positive bias influenced the identified differences between teachers and assistants in their interaction skills, as there is no reason to assume that more groups with (than without) differences between teachers and assistants in their interaction skills participated, though some caution with interpreting and generalising these findings is warranted. Future studies should aim to include more representative samples, especially in the case of national quality measurements.

A second, related, limitation of this study is the low participation rate (59%). One explanation might be that, in Norway, it is voluntary to participate in any research, and researchers are obliged to not pressure potential participants. When it comes to video recording, there is a resistance among caregivers and parents to give their consent. Based on that, we had a relatively small sample size, especially for the assistants. It is likely that

assistants who were not secure about their professional skills did not consent to be video recorded. As such, the difference in interaction skills found in this study might be an underestimation of the actual difference in interaction skills, compared to when an assistant from each group was included in the analysis. Future studies should aim to include at least one teacher and one assistant from all groups in their samples.

A final limitation concerns that there were six caregivers (three teachers and three assistants) for which we recorded only two instead of the minimum of three situations (Helmerhorst et al. 2014; 2015). We decided to keep these six cases in our analyses, because data were missing completely at random and excluding them would mean unnecessary data loss. However, future studies should try to record caregivers at least three times, to ensure the validity of these caregiver's scores on the CIP scales.

Besides these limitations, this study also has some important strengths. First, to our knowledge, this is the first large-scale, quantitative study to observe the quality of caregiver–child interactions in Norwegian ECEC centres and investigate individual-level differences between Norwegian ECEC teachers and assistants in the quality of their interactions with children. As such, it provides us with important knowledge about the level of interaction quality that young children experience with different types of staff members. Second, the CIP scales seem to be an adequate and stable measure to assess individual differences in caregivers' interaction skills. As such, the CIP scales appear to be a valuable extension of ITERS-R, when it comes to measuring individual teacher and assistant interaction quality in Norwegian ECEC for toddlers. Future studies should further investigate the psychometric properties of the CIP scales by, for example, investigating the measurement invariance of the CIP scales across countries (e.g., the Netherlands and Norway) and over different video recorded situations (e.g., meal time and a transition period) (cf. Degotardi, 2010; Hallam et al., 2016; Rhyner et al., 2013). Through these analyses, it can be evaluated whether the CIP

scales work similarly in different countries and over different situations, which would strengthen any comparative studies using the CIP scales.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings from this study have some important implications for policy and practice. First, it appears that teachers' pre-service education does matter for high-quality interaction (Manning et al., 2017). However, as indicated by the relatively low scores for teachers on several of the interaction skills, the effect of education seems not to be as thorough as practice and policy would imply. This outcome is in line with the general concern that there is a lack of specific competence for working with children under the age of 3 in Norwegian ECEC (T. Alvestad et al., 2014; Expert panel for kindergarten teacher education, 2015, p. 100; Ministry of Education and Research, 2012; NOKUT, 2010, p. 28). Future teachers need comprehensive theoretical and research-based knowledge about high-quality interactions in general, as well as detailed understandings of various aspects of high-quality interactions that address basic aspects and, especially, educational aspects. Student teachers should also be given rich opportunities to improve their interaction skills during periods of practice under the guidance of skilled pre-service teachers. Furthermore, training should emphasise that ECEC is a group setting in which both the distribution of attention between individual children and more group-focused approaches are necessary to provide high-quality interactions with children in toddler groups.

Second, several studies have shown that in-service training and professional development is probably more important for teachers' and assistants' interaction skills than pre-service education (Slot et al., 2015). As such, high-quality in-service training and professional development for the whole workforce is recommended to improve caregivers' interaction skills (Henrichs, Slot, & Leseman, 2016). Helmerhorst et al. (2017) and Jilink et

al. (2018) have shown that the interaction skills in the CIP scales can be improved by training. Several reviews and meta-analyses indicate that effective professional development needs to consist of some essential elements, such as successful implementation, permanence, reflection, and joint participation as a team (Egert, 2015; Henrichs et al., 2016; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle, 2010). However, there are contradictions concerning the duration of intervention and training programmes. Both longer and more-intensive interventions (Nelson, Westhues, & MacLeod, 2003) and short-term, targeted interventions seem to have effect (Jilink et al., 2018; Werner, Linting, Vermeer, & Van IJzendoorn, 2016). Werner et al. (2016) show in their meta-study that short time targeted interventions have a small to moderate effect in improving caregivers' interaction skills. However, more research is needed to find effective intervention strategies.

On the political level, it is necessary to consider and take action regarding the challenges Norwegian ECEC has in providing high-quality interactions for the youngest children. These interactions are of utmost significance for children's well-being and development. To obtain this, a sustainable system of continuous professional development in which the whole team—both teachers and assistants—participates is required (Henrichs et al., 2016).

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Table 1. *Sample characteristics at the group and caregiver level.*

	M (SD)	Range
Group level (*n* = 111)		
Group size (# children present)	10.68 (4.07)	4.00-28.00
Child-caregiver ratio (# children present)	3.01 (0.93)	1.00-6.33
Child-teacher ratio (# children present)	9.05 (3.36)	4.00-19.00
Age group %		
1-3 years old	84.54%	
1-4 years old	5.45%	
1-6 years old	10.00%	
Caregiver level [a] (*n* = 168)		
Female %	93.45%	
Type %		
Teacher (*n* = 110)	65.48%	
Assistant (*n* = 58)	34.52%	

Note. [a] Caregiver refers to both teachers and assistants.

Table 2. *Correlations between CIP scales and ITERS-R at the level of the ECEC groups (n = 55).*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
CIP															
1.	Sensitive responsiveness	-													
2.	Respect for autonomy	.78**	-												
3.	Structuring and limit setting	.73**	.68**	-											
4.	Verbal communication	.73**	.62**	.48**	-										
5.	Developmental stimulation	.67**	.52**	.32*	.81**	-									
6.	Fostering positive peer int.	.46**	.35**	.21	.54**	.54**	-								
7.	CIP Total	.93**	.86**	.75**	.86**	.80**	.57**	-							
ITERS-R															
8.	Space and Furnishings	.06	-.02	-.04	.22	.14	.00	.08	-						
9.	Personal Care Routines	.00	-.04	-.11	.19	.12	.05	.03	.37**	-					
10.	Listening and Talking	.26†	.22	.09	.52**	.42**	.20	.35**	.48**	.53**	-				
11.	Activities	.03	.03	-.11	.22	.21	.01	.08	.39**	.58**	.51**	-			
12.	Interactions	.23†	.16	.23†	.39**	.26†	.02	.28*	.39**	.52**	.54**	.44**	-		
13.	Program Structure	.25†	.18	.15	.40**	.33*	.01	.29*	.45**	.28*	.51**	.47**	.57**	-	
14.	Total ITERS-R	.15	.10	.02	.41**	.31**	.07	.22	.65**	.77**	.77**	.81**	.77**	.68**	-

Note. † p <.10. * p <.05. ** p <.01.

Table 3. *Mean scores on the CIP scales at the group- and individual caregiver-level (separately for teachers and assistants).*

	Group-level (n = 55)[a]		Teachers (n = 110)		Assistants (n = 58)		p	d
CIP scales	M (SD)	Range	M (SD)	Range	M (SD)	Range		
Sensitive responsiveness	4.05 (0.79)	2.00-5.67	4.21 (1.15)	1.00-6.50	3.94 (1.05)	1.00-6.00	.140	0.25
Respect for autonomy	4.45 (0.85)	2.17-6.63	4.65 (0.99)	2.25-7.00	4.23 (1.10)	1.50-7.00	.012	0.40
Structuring and limit setting	4.80 (0.74)	3.33-6.13	4.99 (0.99)	2.50-7.00	4.70 (0.99)	2.67-6.75	.073	0.28
Verbal communication	3.65 (0.67)	2.33-5.50	3.84 (0.91)	2.00-6.00	3.44 (0.87)	1.67-5.25	.007	0.45
Developmental stimulation	3.02 (0.77)	1.50-4.63	3.25 (1.09)	1.25-6.25	2.77 (0.89)	1.00-4.25	.004	0.48
Fostering positive peer int.	1.53 (0.35)	1.00-2.63	1.61 (0.54)	1.00-3.50	1.49 (0.46)	1.00-2.75	.154	0.24
CIP Total	3.58 (0.57)	2.11-4.88	3.76 (0.78)	2.01-5.67	3.43 (0.73)	1.67-4.92	.008	0.44

Note. [a] The mean-scores on the group level were only calculated for the 55 groups in which both a teacher and an assistant was observed.

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Norwegian ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction

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ABSTRACT

This study presents Norwegian ECEC staff members' thinking on *quality of interaction*. Open-ended interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis based on the Caregiver Interaction Profile scales. Findings are that ECEC staff members include both basic *care* aspects of interaction and *educational* aspects of interaction in their thinking, but weigh them differently. Immediate responses focussed mainly on seeing, meeting, supporting and communicating with children, characterized as *sensitive responsiveness,* and an aspect of basic *care* interaction. After prompts, the focus was still on the above-mentioned aspects, but thoughts characterized as *educational* aspects of interaction also featured. They focused on *verbal communication,* mainly as a social tool, linked to *sensitive responsiveness* and rarely expressed thoughts about child development theories or objectives in the Norwegian framework plan. Their own role beyond basic *care* aspects was seldom mentioned, and they seemed to hold a 'taken for granted attitude' to children's learning and development.

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Norwegian ECEC; ECEC staff's thinking; quality of interaction; basic care and educational interaction; the CIP scales

Introduction

In Scandinavia, including Norway, interest in research on quality in ECEC has increased steadily, as well as research on relationships, interaction and communication (see Bondebjerg, Jenssen, Larsen, Schunck, & Vestergaard, 2017). Quality in ECEC includes different dimensions of quality, often described as structural, process and result quality. Process quality focuses on 'what is going on' in ECEC, including relationships, interaction and communication between ECEC staff and children, and is acknowledged as the most important dimension of quality in ECEC. A review of Scandinavian ECEC research from 2006 to 2015 focusing on educational environments in ECEC, concluded that there is need for more research focusing on quality of interaction between ECEC staff and children in Norway (Evertesen, Tveitereid, Plischewski, Hancock, & Størksen, 2015). The authors argued that it 'must be ensured that adults' relational/interaction competence is good enough' (Evertesen et al., 2015, p. 60). Few studies[1] in Norway or Scandinavia have focused on ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction, including their theories and beliefs about basic care aspects of interactional quality versus educational aspects of interactional quality. Overall, there have been few studies focusing on ECEC staff's thinking on interaction particularly related to educational interaction, compared to research on teachers' thinking on educational interaction (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014). However, one Swedish study, investigating preschool teachers' professional identity and professional development, found, based on the preschool teachers' narratives, that preschool teachers changed their view of basic care and education during eight years of practice (Hensvold, 2011). In the study, Hensvold

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(2011) found that children's learning and educational content were invisible when preschool teachers described their pedagogical work after four years of practice. The preschool teachers focused mostly on their own actions, and basic care was in focus. After 12 years of practice, they focused more on children's learning as well as educational content than on basic care aspects, and they focused less on their own actions (Hensvold, 2011). To our knowledge, no studies in Norway, or Scandinavia, have focused mainly on ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction, in particular their theories and beliefs about basic care aspects of interaction versus educational aspects of interaction. The aim of the current study is to explore Norwegian ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction, posing the following research question: *What theories and beliefs do Norwegian ECEC staff hold and articulate about quality of interaction, in particular about caring versus educational dimensions of interaction?*

Teachers' thinking

Since around 1980, teacher education research has made significant progress regarding the complex relationships between teachers' thinking and behaviour (cf. Fang, 1996, p. 47). Core assumptions within this research have been that teachers as professionals (a) make reasonable judgements and decisions in complex environments and often unpredictable moment-to-moment situations, and that (b) their thoughts, judgements and decisions guide their classroom behaviour (see Fang, 1996; Stern & Shavelson, 1983). Research has conceptualized *teachers' thinking* into three fundamental categories; teachers' planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, and teachers' theories and beliefs (Fang, 1996), something which has inspired the current study.

ECEC staff typically need to deal with many unpredictable moment-to-moment situations during a day and have to make fast judgements and decisions affecting their behaviour. Depending on the age of the children, they are also involved in different aspects of interactional quality, basic care interactions and more educational interaction (Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Vermeer, Fukkink, & Tavecchio, 2014). In addition, ECEC staff often, as in Norway, work in teams consisting of members with different educational backgrounds. All these features might create challenges for ECEC staff members' thinking on interaction, and particularly on educational aspects of interaction (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014). However, research has found that theories and beliefs influence how teachers behave, their educational decisions and classroom practices (Fives & Gill, 2017), especially when teachers are coping with unpredictable moment-to-moment situations (cf. Kagan, 1992).

Teachers' theories and beliefs

What do we know about teachers' theories and beliefs and how they develop? Theories and beliefs have often been described and used interchangeably with terms such as values, perceptions, perspectives, images, conceptions, views, thoughts, judgments,and personal practical knowledge (cf. Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992). They are viewed as individuals' constructions of something being 'true', based on experiences (cf. Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992; Watt & Richardson, 2017). According to Richardson (2003), theories and beliefs come from three experience sources: individual experiences, experiences related to work, and experiences with formal knowledge. Alternatively explained, they are a 'rich store of general knowledge … that teachers' have and that affects their planning, their interactive thoughts and decisions, as well as their classroom behaviour' (Fang, 1996, p. 49). Research has for example found that teachers often use their own experiences and experiences from members in their own community to justify their own actions and practices, often as a replacement of more formal knowledge (cf. Fives & Buehl, 2012).

ECEC staff members' thinking, practices and articulation of thoughts

Research and literature is limited regarding the role of ECEC staff members' thinking when it comes to interaction (Cobanogulu & Capa-Aydin, 2015). However, research shows a reasonable level of

congruence between what ECEC staff think is important and their behaviour (Wilcox-Herzog, Ward, Wong, & McLaren, 2015). Theories and beliefs seem to underpin ECEC staff's interactions and relationships with individual children, as well as the interactions and relationships and the socio-emotional climate within the child group (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rubie-Davies, 2017). Particular moment-to-moment interactions between ECEC staff and children have been found to have a strong impact on children's learning and development. Children seem in particular to benefit from adults 'that have the skills, knowledge and judgement to make good decisions and that have the opportunity to use them' (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 5).

Because teachers have theories and beliefs about many issues, they seldom reflect actively upon them, unless challenged, and may not be aware of their own theories and beliefs (cf. Watt & Richardson, 2017). Similar to what we know about teachers, we assume that ECEC staff's expertise is closely embedded in different experiences and that they often have difficulties articulating what constitutes their behaviour, theories and beliefs, and that much of their knowledge is tacit (Polyani, 2009). International research has also found that articulating theories and beliefs is difficult (Moyles, Adams, & Musgrove, 2002; Stephen, 2010; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Stephen (2010) found that ECEC staff who had an intuitive or tacit approach to teaching and actions had challenges regarding articulating goals behind educational and behavioural strategies. He also found that it was less common for ECEC staff to articulate how and when to scaffold children's learning (Stephen, 2010). According to Stephen (2010), ECEC staff who had 'taken for granted' attitudes to children's learning also underestimated their own role in influencing and supporting children's learning and development.

However, we also bear in mind that theories and beliefs are usually conveyed in the form of anecdotes and stories, through what Bruner termed the narrative mode of thought (Munby, Russel, & Martin, 2001, p. 877). The *paradigmatic mode of thought*; talking in terms of theoretical concepts and ideas, is much less common, and is something one needs to take into account when aiming at tapping staff's thinking about current central concepts and ideas in the field.

The Norwegian ECEC context

Today, nine out of ten children in Norway aged between one and five attend an ECEC institution, named *barnehage*,[2] and the majority of children (including one-year olds) have a full-time place (SSB, 2018). They can stay in their ECEC institution 41 h or more each week, Monday to Friday, from around 07:00 to 17:00, with no limit of hours per day.

Norwegian ECEC institutions are defined as the first step in the national educational system as well as being a part of the welfare service. As regulated by law currently, one ECEC teacher can have responsibility for maximum seven children when the children are under the age of three, and can be responsible for maximum 14 children when the children are above three. However, when this study was conducted the regulation for number of children were nine and 18 respectively. On average, the staff[3]-child ratio is 1–3 when children are under the age of three and 1–6 when children are above three (SSB, 2018).

The Norwegian Framework Plan for Kindergartens' Content and Tasks (FWP) has a holistic view on children's wellbeing, learning and development. Care, play, learning and formation are core activities related to children's development, and children are viewed as active learners who develop through experiences and interaction with the environment (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Focusing on interaction in ECEC have been one of the main tasks for ECEC staff in Norway. For example, the previous FWP (in force from 2006 to 2017) particularly pointed to the importance of quality of interaction for children's learning and development, and ECEC staff were expected, on a regular basis, to pay attention to the interactional quality in their groups (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Quality of interaction is thus not a new concept or idea for Norwegian ECEC staff, especially not for those who have worked in the field for some years. The new FWP, in force from 2017, also states that all staff shall monitor, actively encourage and maintain relationships

between staff and children and between the children 'in order to foster well-being, happiness and achievement' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, p. 19).

Quality in ECEC is a multifaceted and complex construction, though it can be broadly defined as different 'aspects of the environment and children's experiences that nurture child development' (Layzer & Goodson, 2006, p. 558). What constitutes the core quality and most important for children's wellbeing, learning and development, is interaction between people in ECEC, and the most important of all is staffs' skills and capacity of being both sensitive and stimulating (cf. Howard et al., 2018; Siraj et al., 2017). The difference between high and low interactional quality is often related to how, and to what extent, staff provide emotional support and developmental stimulation (ex. staff who quickly see and respond to children's signals versus staff who overlook or react inadequately to children's signals, and staff who provide much extra developmental stimulation versus staff who not provide any extra stimulation).

Recent observation studies in Norway have shown surprisingly low interactional quality in ECEC institutions. One large-scale study using the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R), measuring process quality in 206 toddler groups (one-to-three year olds) at group level, found considerable variation between toddler groups regarding quality scores for listening and talking, and interaction; from low (ex. little sensitivity, communication or book reading) to high (ex. staff expanding children's thinking and playing by adding new ideas). For interaction, the groups on average scored at minimal quality level range (ex. friendly staff, but few attentions given when children behave well) (Bjørnestad & Os, 2018). Another large-scale study using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales, measuring 168 staff members' individual interaction skills while interacting with groups of children during regular activities such as free play and mealtimes, found relatively low scores. The study revealed only small differences between ECEC teachers[4] and assistants,[5] found moderate scores for sensitive responsiveness (ex. inconsistency in the way staff provide emotional support), low scores for developmental stimulation (ex. staff rarely provide something extra) and lowest scores for fostering peer interaction (ex. staff give little attention to positive peer interactions) (Bjørnestad, Broekhuizen, Os, & Baustad, 2018). Klette, Drugli, and Aandahl (2018) found similar patterns as Bjørnestad and Os (2018) and Bjørnestad et al. (2018) in a small-scale study investigating staff's interactions with children during lunchtime in 11 toddler groups. Klette et al. (2018) revealed low quality of interaction for ECEC staff's sensitivity, language support and facilitation for exploration.

The current study

The current study investigates 22 ECEC staff members' thinking and articulation of quality of interaction and is part of an in-depth study investigating how to improve staff members' interaction quality through in-service training. Before starting in-service training, it was of importance to gain knowledge about staff members' thinking and articulation of quality of interaction. Focusing on staff's thinking is also important in the Norwegian context where we have limited research on ECEC staff members' thinking on interactional quality and limited research involving all groups of staff members' voices.

The Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales are used as the theoretical framework for the analysis of the data as it defines both basic care aspects of interaction and more educational aspects of interaction, all assumed to influence positively on children's wellbeing and development (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). The CIP scales are explicitly divided into six different aspects of interaction; three basic care interaction scales (sensitive responsiveness, respect for children's autonomy and structuring and limit setting) and three more educational interaction scales (verbal communication, developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interaction). The CIP scales were developed in the Netherlands by the Dutch Consortium for Research into Child Care (NCKO) in order to assess individual caregivers' interaction skills while interacting with a group of children (see Helmerhorst et al., 2014). To apply the scales for research in Norway, they were translated into Norwegian in close

collaboration with the creators, and minor adaptions were made, due to organizational differences between the Dutch and the Norwegian ECEC context (see Bjørnestad, Gulbrandsen, Johansson, & Os, 2013). The CIP scales are inspired by attachment theory and research, theory about prosocial development, and theory about developmental appropriate practice, as well as other tools developed for assessing interaction skills, such as the Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (ORCE), and the Environment Rating Scales (see Helmerhorst et al., 2014; Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Fukkink, Tavecchio, & Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, 2017). However, it differs from other tools by focusing on individual caregivers' interactions with a group of children instead of reflecting all caregivers' interaction skills at group level or by focusing on individual caregivers' interactions in one-to-one-situations with children.

To our knowledge, the current study is the first to investigate and identify ECEC staff members' thinking on quality of interaction through using the CIP scales as theoretical framework for the analysis, interpretation and discussion.

Research method

In order to investigate Norwegian ECEC staff's thinking and articulation on quality of interaction, in particular their theories and beliefs about basic care aspects of interaction versus more educational aspects of interaction, a qualitative approach was applied, consisting of open-ended face-to-face individual interviews based on the principle of hierarchical focussing (cf. Tomlinson, 1989). As suggested within the hierarchical focussing approach, the interviews started with one broad, pre-defined main question: 'What comes to your mind when I say good relationships and good interaction in ECEC?' The content and the questions throughout the interview went from the general to the more specific, and respondents were asked to elaborate their expressions or provide examples (Tomlinson, 1989). The respondents were also asked to respond to pre-defined themes unless they touched upon the themes themselves (cf. Marton & Booth, 2000). For example: 'Can you say something about what you think characterizes good interactions between you and the children?' 'How do you see your own role concerning interaction in ECEC?' 'Can you give me one example from practice?' Follow-up questions were planned and used to accommodate for ECEC staff's difficulties articulating theories and beliefs. The hierarchical focussing approach was seen as relevant to help staff articulate their thinking, theories and beliefs, aspects that may otherwise remain tacit. Hierarchical focussing functions as a pedagogical tool and helps respondents further reflect on their thinking and become more aware of their own knowledge base. The nature of hierarchical focusing also allows us to compare results across the respondents.

The respondents were recruited from ECEC institutions in a specific region participating in the large-scale study Better Provison for Norway's Children in ECEC (BePro). One criteria for participating in the current study was that all staff members working with a child group had to give their consent, resulting in all staff members from three child groups in one institution and all staff members from four child groups in another institution gave their consent. Due to practical considerations (time, researchers and funding) it was not possible to expand sampling outside this region, something that limits the scope of the study.

The respondents represent public ECEC institutions with no specific educational philosophy beyond the Nordic tradition. Apart from one, all respondents were female, and the age range was between 28 and 56. Their working experience in ECEC institutions varied from four to 36 years. However, on average they had 16 years of experience and were quite experienced. Half of the respondents hold a bachelor degree as ECEC teacher, five hold an upper secondary school trade certificate as childcare- and youth worker, and six had no ECEC specific education (assistants). The fact that the current study includes respondents who do not share a common educational background, poses challenges.

The interview agenda was piloted before data collection, and minor changes were done before the face-to-face interviews with the respondents. The respondents were informed in advance

about the focus of the interview, and more details were presented at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to allow for more in-depth analysis of the data. The study follows ethical standards and privacy policies approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service and the Norwegian Data Protection Authority. The data has been anonymised by making generic reference to the respondents.

Data analysis

As mentioned previously, the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales were chosen as the theoretical framework for data analysis because they focus on different aspects of interactional quality, both basic care aspects and more educational aspects, all assumed to influence positively on children's well-being and development in ECEC (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). The CIP scales were also chosen because they have a holistic view on children's learning and development, in line with the Norwegian FWP (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Other reasons for chosing the CIP scales were due to two of the authors' earlier experience with the scales, recent research showing relative low interactional quality in Norwegian ECEC institutions, and that the CIP scales are theory- and research based, and designed explicitly to measure different aspects of interactional quality in ECEC (Helmerhorst et al., 2014, 2017).

The CIP scales were originally designed as a video-observation tool to study caregivers interacting with groups of children in physical care situations (ex. diapering), free play situations (ex. free choice in activities and materials), meal moments (ex. children having snack or meal), and transition periods (ex. in the wardrobe between indoor and outdoor activity) (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). Three scales are characterized as basic care aspects of interaction, whereas the other three are characterized as more educational aspects of interaction. The first scale, *sensitive responsiveness,* refers to the extent to which a caregiver recognizes children's individual emotional and physical needs and responds appropriately and promptly to their cues and signals. *Respect for autonomy* refers to the extent to which a caregiver is nonintrusive and recognizes and respects the validity of children's intentions and perspectives, while *structuring and limit setting* refers to the ability of a caregiver to clearly communicate expectations towards children and structure situations accordingly, and to set clear and consistent limits on the children's behaviour. The scale *verbal communication* refers to the frequency and quality of verbal interactions between caregiver and children, while *developmental stimulation* concerns the degree to which a caregiver deliberately attempts to foster children's broad development. The sixth scale, *fostering positive peer interaction,* refers to a caregiver's guidance of interactions between children in the ECEC centre (Helmerhorst et al., 2014, pp. 773–774).

In the current study, concepts and content from the CIP scales were used in a modified way as a framework for analysing the respondents' thinking and saying instead of their actions or doings. Due to the focus of the study, we searched for *thematic* responses (Edwards, 2010) in line with different aspects of interactional quality described in the CIP scales. Thematic segments of texts and fine-grained meaning units (Edwards, 1997, 2010) were identified and placed into different categories consisting of concepts and aspects of interactional quality in the CIP scales. We then searched for immediate (without prompts) and extended (after prompts) responses related to two main categories; basic care interaction and educational interaction, and for the six sub-categories referred to above. Due to the amount of data MaxQda, electronic software for qualitative analysis, was used to organize and analyse the data. MaxQda particularly helped us systematise data into different groups as well as linking relevant quotes to each other.

See Table 1 below for an overview of types of responses, main categories and sub-categories.

Results

In this section of the paper, the findings are presented under four main headings: *immediate responses – basic care aspects of interactional quality; immediate responses – educational aspects of*

Table 1. Overview of types of responses, main categories and sub-categories.

Type of responses	Main categories	Sub-categories
Immediate/extended responses	Basic care interaction	Sensitive responsiveness Respect for autonomy Structuring and limit setting
Immediate/extended responses	Educational interaction	Verbal communication Developmental stimulation Positive peer interaction

interactional quality; extended responses – basic care aspects of interactional quality; extended responses – educational aspects of interactional quality.

As part of the analysis, we compared the thematic focuses held by the respondents against their level of qualification and years of experience but found very little variation between the respondent groups. We thus decided not to present data divided by different sub-groups of respondents.

Immediate responses – basic care aspects of interactional quality

Seventeen out of twenty-two respondents focused on basic care aspects of interactional quality in their immediate responses (Table 2).

Fifteen respondents focused on the importance of staff being *sensitive and responsive*, recognizing children's individual emotional and physical needs and responding appropriately and promptly to their cues and signals. They talked about being physically and mentally close to children, to see, listen to and meet the children. They expressed themselves in quite general terms, and often exemplified own actions or what they thought all staff should do, as shown in the following quotes. Staff 'being on the floor together with the children and getting in contact with the children' (Assistant 1) characterizes good interaction as well as 'seeing the children and meeting the children so that everyone is seen, it is the adults' responsibility first and foremost' (ECEC teacher 6). The same teacher (6) also said that it is important to see and meet children in order to make children feel secure.

Three respondents (including one who also mentioned sensitive responsiveness) focused on the importance of *respecting children's autonomy*, recognizing and respecting the validity of children's intentions and perspectives in their immediate responses. They particularly focused on the importance of mutual respect between staff and children and between the children, exemplified in the following way: 'Good interaction, I think that everybody goes along with what they have to offer, in play and in dialogue, and that no one takes control of everything' (Childcare- and youth worker 5). One ECEC teacher (3) connected mutuality explicitly to children's experiences of 'being a participant in the group', to the importance of 'belonging'.

Table 2. Immediate responses.

Main categories	Sub-categories	Examples
(1) Basic care aspects (17)	(a) Sensitive responsiveness (15)	Understanding children Seeing/listening and meeting children Promoting children's security
	(b) Respect for autonomy (3)	Mutuality Respecting and accepting each other
	(c) Structuring and limit setting (2)	Dividing children in small groups Distributing staff in different rooms
(2) Educational aspects (6)	(a) Verbal communication (4)	Listening to children, try to understand them Mutuality, turn-taking
	(b) Developmental stimulation (2)	Teaching children to become independent Helping children to use and develop the language
	(c) Positive peer interaction (6)	Teaching children how to play Helping children how to get friends

Note: Number of respondents providing answers within the different categories in parentheses. Examples of thematic responses observed in the data.

In addition, two respondents who focused on sensitive responsiveness also focused on aspects related to *structuring and limit setting*, particularly on structuring situations accordingly so children can play well. Exemplified by the Childcare- and youth worker (1) who said: 'we are where it is needed, and we distribute ourselves in different rooms and catch up with what's going on.'

Immediate responses – educational aspects of interactional quality

Only six out of twenty-two respondents focused on educational aspects of interactional quality in their immediate responses.

Four respondents focused on *verbal communication* or communication more generally, but closely linked with basic care aspects of interaction and particularly *sensitive responsiveness*: 'the adult listens and catches what the child tries to … or understands what the child tries to express' (ECEC teacher 2). Or like this one expressed it: 'then I think we communicate well and they trust me, and can feel that I am listening to them' (Assistant 3). The last respondent was the only one who talked about herself. The respondents mainly talked in terms of 'we' or 'you' and about general actions and what you should do.

One respondent, a childcare- and youth worker (4), focused on *developmental stimulation*, but in an implicit way. She focused on the importance of stimulating children's language by saying that good interaction is 'to help them [children] to use the language'. In addition, one respondent who also focused on sensitive responsiveness, focused implicitly on how they supported children's independence by stating that 'we do teach them a little so they can get dressed, and things like that' (Childcare- and youth worker 2).

Extended responses – basic care aspects of interaction quality

After prompts and follow-up questions, all the respondents focused on care aspects of interaction quality (Table 3).

Table 3. Extended responses.

Main categories	Sub-categories	Examples
(1) Basic care aspects (22)	(a) Sensitive responsiveness (22)	Seeing/listening and meeting children Interpreting children's signals Promoting children's security Confirming children
	(b) Respect for autonomy (18)	Seeing children as individuals Respecting and supporting children's perspectives Showing interest in children's interests Mutuality
	(c) Structuring and limit setting (21)	Helping children organizing their play Distributing staff in different rooms Dividing children in small groups Setting limits, being consequent
(2) Educational aspects (22)	(a) Verbal communication (21)	Having a common interest in conversations Interpreting children's expressions Listening to children Mutuality, turn-taking
	(b) Developmental stimulation (20)	Meating children on their own level Helping children master new things Much learning though play and everyday activities Children learning through being together
	(c) Positive peer interaction (20)	Children playing together, listening to and respecting each other, waiting for turn Mutuality in play Having fun

Note: Number of respondents providing answers within the different categories in parentheses. Examples of thematic responses observed in the data.

All the respondents focused on importance of staff being attentive and on *sensitive responsiveness.* They still focused mostly on their own or others' actions, or on what they think is important to do, as shown in the following quotation:

> I think it is important to see everyone during the day … to have eye contact with them, repeat what they say, or ask them questions about what they say, to confirm what they want to say, then, what they are occupied with. To meet them with eye contact as well as with body contact (ECEC teacher 6).

The respondents highlighted children's security. Security seemed to be a goal in itself, and it was only occasionally that they focused on why security was important for the children.

Twenty-one respondents focused on *structuring and limit situation*s, particularly on structuring situations and themselves accordingly, as shown by this one: 'it is important that we [the staff] split up and not just stay there talking with each other' (Childcare- and youth worker 1). Twelve of these respondents also focused on the importance of communicating expectations clearly to children, and setting clear and consistent limits for children's behaviour. Once again, children's security was highlighted, both explicitly and implicitly, though mostly implicitly like this: 'Once we [children and I] have got a good relationship I am strict, but I try to be clear and try to be fair so that they know where they have me' (ECEC teacher 8). Alternatively said like this: 'I think it's very important to set limits. They [children] know what is allowed, they know what is not allowed, and they know that they should ask' (ECEC teacher 4).

Eighteen respondents focused on *respecting children's autonomy,* and particularly on recognizing and respecting the validity of children's intentions and perspectives, meeting and supporting children's views and choices. As shown in this example: 'it is that I see her [a girl] … what she is able to do, to see her, and that I meet her at her level' (Childcare- and youth worker 4). Alternatively, as expressed by this one:

> I think it is important to be present when you are at work … not just physically in the room, but by being where the children are and by participating in what they find interesting, and be happy because of that … it is about being interested in the same that the children are interested in (Assistant 2).

Extended responses – educational aspects of interactional quality

After prompts and follow-up questions, all respondents focused on aspects related to educational interaction.

Twenty-one focused on *verbal communication*, though mostly for emotional and social supportive purposes, closely related to basic care aspects of interaction, and particularly sensitive responsiveness: '[we] answer children when they wonder about something or when they want to talk with us or … to answer children and be present is actually very important' (ECEC teacher 11). Six of them focused explicitly on being a good listener, like in this example: 'It is important to be a good listener, to give the child time to talk before you say something' (Assistant 5). Eight of them focused on being in dialogue with children as shown by this example: 'It is a lot about communication … I try all the time to communicate, I try to talk with them and not be passive' (ECEC teacher 2). However, they rarely focused on their own role in stimulating children's language, or children's language development.

Twenty respondents also focused on *developmental stimulation,* though they focused mostly on children's learning through everyday events and playing with peers and not on how they deliberately attempted to foster children's broader development. None of the respondents focused on stimulating children's creativity or cognitive development, and they rarely linked interaction to educational goals or educational content, except for the use of communication, learning about colours, songs, music and rhymes and learning to use their body. One of the respondents said the following: 'when you hear the word learning, I think about the school. However, they [children] learn all time, all day … it permeates throughout the day. Much of that [learning], of course, comes through play' (ECEC teacher 5). How some of the respondents view their own role regarding stimulating children's learning and

development became particularly visible through responses like this: 'We very rarely have some learning-time. It is sometimes if they [children] want to, but that is not what I think … that is not what I spend so much thoughts and energy on … no, it is not' (ECEC teacher 3).

Twenty respondents also focused on *positive peer interaction,* like this one expressed it: 'it is first and foremost that they [children] play, that they can communicate with each other, talk with each other, and help each other, share toys and fix it if something happens … ' (Assistant 5). They highlighted that children learn to play together, learn social rules, learn to behave, solve conflicts, give and take, and experience and learn to trust each other, learn to care for others, and learn how to develop friendships through play and interactions with each other. Less than half of the respondents explicitly talked about their own role in fostering positive peer interaction or helping, supporting and guiding children's play or interactions, and when they did, they focused on: 'it is about being there, being observant to what is happening and follow, regulate, guide [them] and be there' (Childcare- and youth worker 4).

Discussion

The current study provides insight into 22 Norwegian ECEC staff members' thinking and articulation regarding quality of interaction, in particular their perspectives on basic care aspects of interaction versus more educational aspects of interaction.

The main finding is that Norwegian ECEC staff focus on both basic care interaction aspects and more educational interaction aspects in their characterization of quality of interaction, though they seem to weigh them differently and hold a fairly narrow perspective on quality of interaction. By using a hierarchical focussing interview approach, the respondents had many opportunities to reflect on their own thinking, theories and beliefs about the concept. They were explicitly asked to elaborate their view of education, learning and caring in ECEC if they did not touch upon the theme themselves. Despite this, they mostly focused on and articulated perspectives related to what the CIP scales characterize as basic care aspects of interaction and most of all on *sensitive responsiveness*. Their focus relates closely to the understanding of warm relationships in ECEC (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004; Sabol & Pianta, 2012), in line with the Norwegian ECEC tradition, where warm relationships between ECEC staff and children have been highly valued (ex. Bae, 2004). Questions about how the staff in this study understand educational interaction, and particularly the importance they place on education and children's learning in ECEC, can also be raised. ECEC staff in the current study seemed somehow to relate education in ECEC to education in schools, in particular formal education. On the other hand, they also had a 'taken for granted' attitude to children's learning, saying that children learn a lot particularly through peer interaction. They clearly do not seem to want to identify themselves with the school system, despite the fact that ECEC institutions are defined as the first phase in our national educational system. However, in Norwegian research, there has been little focus on educational aspects in ECEC, and few studies have defined education or educational environment in ECEC (see Evertesen et al., 2015).

The findings in this study support earlier research showing that ECEC staff have challenges regarding their thinking and articulation of theories and beliefs (ex. Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014; Moyles et al., 2002; Stephen, 2010; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Stephen (2010) found for example that it was difficult for ECEC staff to articulate how and when to scaffold children's learning and development, something that also seemed to be difficult for the respondents in the current study. Caring aspects might be more visible while working with young children (1–6 years old), and ECEC staff may reflect more actively upon care aspects and are also more aware of them (Watt & Richardson, 2017). This may explain why they focused mainly on basic care aspects of interaction, or on educational aspects of interaction closely related to basic care aspects, particularly to sensitive responsiveness in the CIP scales

Without having a clear understanding of how to scaffold educational aspects in ECEC institutions, it might be difficult for ECEC staff to articulate their theories and beliefs about it. Looking at educational aspects of interaction based on the CIP scales, the concept involves different aspects; verbal

communication, developmental stimulation and fostering positive peer interaction, all assumed to be important for children's well-being, learning and development (Helmerhorst et al., 2014). Of these, the ECEC staff in the current study focused mostly on *verbal communication*, though mainly as a social tool. Regarding *developmental stimulation* and *positive peer interaction,* they most of all highlighted children's opportunities to learn from each other through everyday events and play. Implicitly, they highlighted children's social competence and social development. They rarely focused on their own roles, on child development theories, or on educational goals or content in the FWP in their characterizations of quality of interaction. Their theories and beliefs were mostly conveyed through the narrative mode of thoughts (Bruner, 1985, cited in Munby et al., 2001, p. 877) and it might be that their expertise has a tacit character, and is therefore difficult to articulate (Polyani, 2009). This is in line with Stephen (2010) who found that ECEC staff with a tacit approach to their actions in particular had challenges articulating goals behind educational and action strategies, and he also found that they had a 'taken for granted' attitude to children's learning.

The strong focus on basic care aspects of interactional quality in the current study, in particular *sensitive responsiveness* both in the respondents' immediate and extended responses, indicate that ECEC staff are aware of this aspect regarding children's well-being and development. However, whereas theory and research on quality of interaction link ECEC staff's sensitive responsiveness to childrens emotional, social and academic competences (cf. Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Helmerhorst et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2004), the respondents mostly linked it implicitly to children's emotional and social development. They rarely explicitly linked sensitive responsiveness to children's academic competence or to their own role in influencing and supporting children's learning and development, by for example using language or verbal communication in order to support children's acquisiton of language, or to develop or challenge children's thinking, or fostering children's broader development (Helmerhorst et al., 2014; Sylva et al., 2007). In this way, the respondents hold a narrow view of interactional quality, especially related to their own roles beyond facilitating basic care. On the other hand, being sensitive and responsive, particularly recognizing children's individual emotional and physical needs and responding appropriately and promptly to their cues and signals, are among the most important skills for ECEC staff (Helmerhorst et al., 2014).

To sum up, the main finding in the current study shows that the respondents, Norwegian ECEC staff, focus on both basic care interaction aspects and educational interaction aspects in their thinking on quality of interaction, though they hold a narrow perspective. They mostly focus on and articulate perspectives related to what the CIP scales describe as basic care aspects of interaction and seemed to highlight different dimensions of basic care aspects differently as well. In this way, our findings show similar patterns as found in recent national observation studies, particularly Authors (2018), but also to some extent Klette et al. (2018). The same patterns are also found in recent Dutch observation studies using the CIP scales (Helmerhorst, Riksen-Walraven, Gevers Deynoot-Schaub, Tavecchio, & Fukkink, 2015; Helmerhorst et al., 2017).

Interestingly, we found little variation between thematic focuses held by the ECEC staff based on their educational background and years of experiences. We did not find, as Hensvold (2011) did, that more experienced ECEC staff to a larger degree focused on children's learning and educational content (ex. related to the FWP) and focused less on their actions compared to staff with less experience. All respondents, regardless of years of experience, mostly articulated their thoughts in terms of actions, not in terms of theoretical concepts or ideas, or in the form of what Bruner called paradigmatic mode of thought (Munby et al., 2001, p. 877). However, this finding is in line with Stephen (2010) who also found that ECEC staff had challenges regarding articulating goals behind educational and behavioural strategies.

Limitations

Due to the fairly limited number of respondents in the current study, it is not possible to generalize from the findings, and interviews with staff from ECEC institutions in other parts of Norway might

have given other findings. The interviewer in this study has many years of experience from working in ECEC centre, something which might have influenced both the respondents and the interviewer. However, the goal was not to generalize from the study, but to gain valuable insight into some staff's thinking and articulation on interaction.

Conclusion and implications

The current study presents 22 Norwegian ECEC staff members' thinking and articulation on quality of interaction, in particular their theories and beliefs about basic care aspects of interaction versus more educational aspects of interaction. On average, the staff members were quite experienced and the idea of quality of interaction should be well-known for most of them, particularly through statements in the national FWP (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). However, the study shows that ECEC staff only to a limited degree balance between care aspects of interaction and educational aspects of interaction in their descriptions of daily interactions with children. Our study indicates a further need for focusing on quality of interaction in ECEC. This might be related to cultural understanding or weighing of basic care versus educational aspects of interactional quality. However, because ECEC staff have been found to have challenges articulating their theories and beliefs, investigating staff's actual actions or doings will provide valuable additional knowledge, something which will follow. By using the CIP scales for the analysis, it will be possible to investigate the role of ECEC staff's thinking about interaction with their actual practices, a research area that today is limited, both nationally and internationally.

Notes

1. Studies including ECEC staffs' articulation of personal theories, beliefs, views and perspectives on quality of interaction.
2. Barnehage = Kindergarten.
3. Including ECEC teachers, childcare- and youth workers and/or assistant.
4. Holding a bachelor degree in ECEC.
5. Have no educational background in ECEC.

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La recherche action sur la qualité d'accueil des jeunes enfants dans les jardins d'enfants en Norvège

Children Under the Age of Three in Norwegian Childcare: Searching for Qualities

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The research project Searching for Qualities (2012–2018) has studied the quality in Norwegian kindergartens for children under the age of three years. Through a variety of methods, the complex concept of quality is elaborated. The results from the research conducted challenge the reputation of high quality in Nordic kindergartens and offer suggestions for how to enhance multiple qualities in Norwegian kindergartens. The findings indicate a need for greater knowledge about toddlers in kindergartens, and increased competence regarding educational content for toddlers in group settings. Further, structural aspects, such as staff-to-child ratio and group size, seem to affect the quality in toddler care. From a Nordic perspective, future joint research efforts could contribute to the exploration and development of qualities in Nordic kindergartens.

Le projet de recherche Searching for Qualities (2012-2018) a étudié la qualité dans les jardins d'enfants norvégiens pour les enfants de moins de trois ans. Grâce à une variété de méthodes, le concept complexe de qualité est élaboré. Les résultats de la recherche menée remettent en question la réputation de haute qualité dans les jardins d'enfants nordiques et proposent des suggestions sur la manière d'améliorer les multiples qualités dans les jardins d'enfants norvégiens. Les résultats indiquent un besoin de connaissances plus approfondies sur les tout-petits dans les jardins d'enfants et de compétences accrues en matière de contenu éducatif pour les tout-petits en groupe. En outre, des aspects structurels, tels que le ratio personnel-enfants et la taille du groupe, semblent affecter la qualité des soins aux tout-petits. D'un point de vue nordique, les futurs efforts de recherche conjoints pourraient contribuer à l'exploration et au développement des qualités dans les jardins d'enfants nordiques

Quality in Norwegian childcare for toddlers using ITERS-R

- December 2017

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  - Ellen Os

- European Early Childhood Education Research Journal 26(2):1-17

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the quality of toddler childcare in Norway using the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ITERS-R; [Harms, Thelma, Debby Cryer, and Richard M. Clifford. 2006. Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales Revised Edition. New York: Teachers College Press.]), drawing on a sample of 206 toddler groups. Possible associations between quality (as assessed using ITERS-R) and selected structural features in toddler classrooms were investigated. Those features are as follows: ownership, the presence of qualified teachers, the staff-to-child ratio and group organization. According to the results, Norwegian toddler care scored at the minimal level of quality. The presence of qualified teachers, high staff-to-child ratios and small and stable groups all seemed to have positively impacted quality. Detailed analyses revealed that Norwegian toddler classrooms did not fulfil the ITERS-R requirements for hygiene, safety and access to play materials. Because of the good reputation Norwegian childcare enjoys, these results were unexpected and suggest the need to enhance the quality of Norwegian toddler care.

Le but de cette étude était d'explorer la qualité des services de garde d'enfants en bas âge en Norvège à l'aide de l'édition révisée de l'échelle d'évaluation de l'environnement du nourrisson et du tout-petit (ITERS-R ; [Harms, Thelma, Debby Cryer et Richard M. Clifford. 2006. Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales Revised Edition. New York : Teachers College Press.]), en s'appuyant sur un échantillon de 206 groupes de tout-petits. Les associations possibles entre la qualité (telle qu'évaluée à l'aide d'ITERS-R) et certaines caractéristiques structurelles dans les salles de classe pour tout-petits ont été étudiées. Ces caractéristiques sont les suivantes : la propriété, la présence d'enseignants qualifiés, le ratio personnel/enfants et l'organisation du groupe. Selon les résultats, les soins aux tout-petits norvégiens ont obtenu un niveau de qualité minimal. La présence d'enseignants qualifiés, des ratios personnel/enfants élevés et des groupes petits et stables semblaient tous avoir eu un impact positif sur la qualité. Des analyses détaillées ont révélé que les salles de classe norvégiennes pour tout-petits ne répondaient pas aux exigences ITERS-R en matière d'hygiène, de sécurité et d'accès au matériel de jeu. En raison de la bonne réputation dont jouissent les services de garde d'enfants norvégiens, ces résultats étaient inattendus et suggèrent la nécessité d'améliorer la qualité des soins aux tout-petits norvégiens.

Interaction Quality in Norwegian ECEC for Toddlers Measured with the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) Scales (article joint)

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Abstract The core aspect within process quality is quality of interactions between caregivers and children. This article investigates six interaction skills of caregivers in ECEC groups for toddlers in Norway using the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales. The participants are 110 teachers and 58 assistants in 111 toddler groups. Results show that caregivers score between moderate and adequate-to-good levels on the more basic interaction skills. For the more educational interaction skills, scores were mostly at the inadequate level. Comparing teachers and assistants, teachers score higher on respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting, verbal communication, and developmental stimulation. In addition, correlations show that the CIP scores were differentially associated with several ITERS-R scales, which supports the applicability of the measure. Because of the overall moderate-to-low scores, there is a need for in-service training to improve the process quality of ECEC for toddlers

L'aspect central de la qualité des processus est la qualité des interactions entre les soignants et enfants. Cet article étudie six compétences d'interaction des soignants dans les groupes d'EAJE pour enfants en bas âge en Norvège à l'aide des échelles Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP). Les participants sont
110 enseignants et 58 assistants dans 111 groupes de tout-petits. Les résultats montrent que les soignants marquent entre les niveaux modéré et adéquat à bon sur les compétences d'interaction plus élémentaires. Pour le plus de compétences d'interaction éducative, les scores étaient pour la plupart au niveau inadéquat. Comparant enseignants et assistants, les enseignants obtiennent des scores plus élevés sur le respect de l'autonomie, la structuration et la limite milieu, la communication verbale et la stimulation du développement. De plus, les corrélations montrent que les scores CIP étaient associés de manière différentielle à plusieurs échelles ITERS-R, ce qui soutient l'applicabilité de la mesure. En raison des scores globaux modérés à faibles, une formation continue est nécessaire pour améliorer la qualité du processus d'EAJE pour les tout-petits.

Norwegian ECEC staff's thinking on quality of interaction (article joint)

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ABSTRACT
This study presents Norwegian ECEC staff members' thinking on quality of interaction. Open-ended interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis based on the Caregiver Interaction Profile scales. Findings are that ECEC staff members include both basic care aspects of interaction and educational aspects of interaction in their thinking, but weigh them differently. Immediate responses focussed mainly on seeing, meeting, supporting and communicating with children, characterized as sensitive responsiveness, and an aspect of basic care interaction. After prompts, the focus was still on the above-mentioned aspects, but thoughts characterized as educational aspects of interaction also featured. They focused on verbal communication, mainly as a social tool, linked to sensitive responsiveness and rarely expressed thoughts about child development theories or objectives in the Norwegian framework plan. Their own role beyond basic care aspects was seldom mentioned, and they seemed to hold a 'taken for granted attitude' to children's learning and development.

Cette étude présente la compréhension que les équipes d'EAJE ont la qualité des interactions. Des entretiens semi-dirigés ont été analysés à l'aide d'une méthode analytique thématique qualitative basée sur l'échelle de profil d'interaction avec les aidants (CIP). Les résultats montrent que les membres du personnel de l'EAJE incluent dans leur compréhension des interactions à la fois les aspects de soins de base et les aspects éducatifs ; mais ils les évaluent. Les réponses spontanées se concentraient principalement sur le fait que superviser, rencontrer, soutenir les enfants et communiquer avec eux fait partie des soins de base et nécessite des qualités de réactivité et de sensibilité aux besoins des enfants. Dans un second temps, l'accent était toujours mis sur les aspects mentionnés ci-dessus, mais les équipes considéraient aussi l'aspect éducatif des interactions. Les membres du personnel se sont concentrés sur l'importance de la communication verbale, principalement en tant qu'outil social, lié à une réactivité et à une sensibilité aux demandes des enfants mais ont rarement fait le lien avec les théories sur le développement de l'enfant ou les objectifs du plan-cadre norvégien. Leur propre rôle au-delà des aspects de soins de base était rarement mentionné, et ils semblaient considérer l'apprentissage et du développement des enfants comme tenus pour acquis.

Everyday interactions between staff and children aged 1-5 in Norwegian ECEC (article joint)

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Abstract

High-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is related to childrens' socioemotional and cognitive development, and the most important aspect regarding quality in ECEC is staff's interpersonal or interactive skills. Despite this, research on staff's interactive skills is currently sparse in Norway. This study uses the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP) scales to evaluate staff's interactions with children aged 1–5, asking whether staff interact differently with children aged 3–5, compared to those aged under 3. 19 staff members participated in the study. Videos of individual staff members interacting with groups of children were recorded, coded and analysed in accordance with CIP scales. The main findings show that staff score adequate-to-good for basic interactions (sensitivity responsiveness, respect for autonomy, structuring and limit setting) and inadequate for educational interactions (verbal communication, developmental stimulation, fostering positive peer inetractions) during free play and routine situations. Similar patterns are found for staff regardless of children's age. Limitations and implications are discussed, proposing further research on interaction quality in Norwegian ECEC contexts.

Une éducation et un accueil de la petite enfance (EAJE) de haute qualité sont liés à un bon développement socio-émotionnel et cognitif des enfants, et l'aspect le plus important concernant la qualité dans l'EAJE est la qualité des relations interpersonnelles ou compétences interactives. Malgré tout, les recherches sur les compétences interactives du personnel sont actuellement rares en Norvège. Cette étude utilise le CIP (Echelle de profil des interactions des caregivers) pour évaluer les interactions du personnel avec les enfants de 1 à 5 ans. Les auteurs se demandent si le personnel interagit différemment avec les enfants de 3 à 5 ans, par rapport aux enfants de moins de 3 ans. 19 collaborateurs ont participé à l'étude. Des vidéos de membres du personnel individuels interagissant avec des groupes d'enfants ont été enregistrés, codés et analysés conformément aux échelles CIP. Les principaux résultats montrent que le personnel obtient un score allant d'adéquat à bon pour les interactions de base (sensibilité réactivité, respect de l'autonomie, structuration et fixation de limites) et un score inadapté pour les interactions pédagogiques (communication verbale, stimulation du développement, promotion des interactions positives avec les pairs) pendant le jeu libre et les situations de routine. Des tendances similaires sont observées pour le personnel, quel que soit l'âge des enfants. Les limites et les implications sont discutées et sont proposées des recherches supplémentaires sur la qualité de l'interaction dans les contextes norvégiens de l'EAJE