

Background Report

OECD – Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Norway

The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

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Glossary

The Ministry is asked to use the Norwegian terms in the sector in this report. Here is a translation and brief information about the terms used:

Barnehage:

Direct translation of the German word *Kindergarten*. A common term for different types of ECEC under the legislation of the Norwegian Day Care Institution Act, covering the age group 0 – 5 years.

Familiebarnehage:

Family day care with teaching guidance from an educated pre-school teacher.

Åpen barnehage:

Open *barnehage*. A *barnehage* where the children attend with one of their parents or another person who takes care of the child, under the leadership of an educated pre-school teacher.

Pedagogisk leder:

An educated pre-school teacher with responsibility for a group of children in a *barnehage*.

Styrer:

Head teacher. An educated pre-school teacher who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the *barnehage*.

Foreword

In March 1998, the OECD Education Committee initiated a Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy. Of the twelve countries participating in this review, Norway was the second country to be visited by an OECD review team (in December 1998).

This Background Report was a part of the preparation for the visit of the review team. It was written in the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs within frames and guidelines given by the OECD. These frames are given because the OECD wants to make a comparative report based on all the country reports and visits. The report deals with several issues in the early childhood education and care services in Norway, which comprise services for children 0/1 – 5 years. It also briefly mentions the primary school reform of 1997, when the compulsory school age was lowered from 7 to 6 years.

Several organisations and ministries have made written background contributions to the report.

The Ministry would like to thank

- The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs
- The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
- The Norwegian Union of Teachers
- The Norwegian Association of Privately Owned Kindergartens
- The Norwegian Union of Municipal Employees
- The Norwegian Research Council.

The Ministry also wants to thank Assistant Professor Pino Kosiander at the College of Nord-Trøndelag for valuable contributions and comments during the making of the report.

General Information about Norway – The Relation between Central and Local Authorities¹ – The Local Government Act

Norway is situated in the north western part of Europe, has an area of 324 000 km² and has 4,4 million inhabitants. Our country is a constitutional, democratic monarchy with a king as head of State. The Storting is Norway's national assembly and consists of 165 representatives from 19 counties. The Government is led by a Prime Minister and has 18 ministers. Since October 1997 Norway has had a coalition government whose parliamentary basis consists of the three centrist parties: the Christian Democratic, the Centre and the Liberal Parties. Like the Labour Party government which preceded it, it is a minority government.

The Saami people form an ethnic and cultural minority in Norway, with a population of about 75 000, or 1,7% of the total population. The majority of the Saami live in the northern part of the country and in the capital (Oslo). The Saami Assembly was established in 1989. This Assembly is independent, elected by the Saami people and consists of 39 representatives. The Saami Assembly is consultative for the authorities in all questions concerning the Saami population.

The 19 *counties* have from about 75 000 to 480 000 inhabitants. Each county is led by a county governor, but two of the counties (Oslo and Akershus) have a common county governor. The county governor is the representative of the King and Government. The county governor is responsible for seeing that the decisions and goals of the Norwegian Parliament and National Government are followed in the district. The county governors' tasks are both extensive and varied e.g. family affairs, such as separation, divorce, child welfare, ECEC, and tasks concerning nature and the supervision of the local authorities.

The 19 *county municipalities* are responsible for e.g. hospitals and upper secondary education.

The country is further divided into 435 *local authorities*. These are called *municipalities* and are led by local governments. The Norwegian municipalities celebrated the 150th anniversary of local self-government in 1987. The years following World War

II has been a continual process of reforms of the relationship between state and local authorities. The goal of the reforms have been an "acceptable" balance of power and functions between the two.

A new Local Government Act² came into force 1 January 1993³. The act applies both to *municipalities* and *county municipalities*. The Act is primarily concerned with *the system of government* in municipalities and county municipalities and with *central government supervision/control* of municipal and county municipal administration. The Act accordingly contains no provisions concerning municipal/county municipal divisions, the division of responsibility between Norway's three administrative levels: the state, county municipalities and municipalities or the material rights of private individuals. Nor does the Local Government Act entail any specific amendments to other legislation affecting the municipal sector. Sector legislation has been reviewed according to guidelines given by the Storting.

A paramount objective of the Local Government Act is to strengthen and further develop municipal and county municipal autonomy, while at the same time establishing conditions which enable municipalities/county municipalities to become sufficient suppliers of services to their inhabitants. This objective is mainly realised in two ways. One is by giving municipalities/county municipalities greater freedom to organise their activities according to local needs and circumstances. The other is by toning down the central government supervision/control of the local government sector embodied in legislation.

The Act emphasises and expands the role of municipal and county councils as the principal popularly elected local government bodies. In principle, to ensure overall political control, "all powers" are vested in them. At the same time, the municipal council/county council is given greater freedom than before to establish other popularly

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nytt fra Norge, oktober 1996

² Act no 107 of 25 September 1992 on Local Government

³ Ministry of Local Government and Labour 1993

elected (and administrative) bodies, and to give them assignments and delegate decision-making powers to them.

According to the Act, all municipalities/county municipalities have a *chief executive in charge of the administration* (head of administration). The chief executive post conveys full powers to issue instructions to all employees. In addition there is a right to delegate decision-making powers to the chief executive. Authority can be delegated to him/her in connection with all matters which do not involve questions of principle.

The Local Government Act introduces a mandatory *control committee* in every municipality/county municipality. On behalf of the municipal council/county council, the control committee will monitor the municipal/ county municipal administration.

National authorities have generally justified their initiation of largescale reforms as constituting a wish to grant the municipalities sufficient resources to provide needed services for their residents. The goal has been to enable the municipal sector to take over services given high priority by the central authorities. In this endeavour, concern for equal access to public services on a national level has formed the basis of central government reasoning. The state has made the municipalities (and counties/regional authorities) take over vital welfare services at the price of giving the municipalities more financial elbow room and thus more power. But this power is to some extent

still controlled by state law and regulations. This transfer of tasks includes duties of considerable size and importance which are often thought of as the core of the welfare state structure: The managing of hospitals, primary health services, primary and secondary schools, care of the elderly, ECEC, cultural functions, various forms of public aid, in addition to such traditional municipal responsibilities as roads, water and sewage systems, planning and approving for construction, etc.

The expansion of municipal finances has altered the ratio between state and municipal control of public finances, where the municipal share of total public expenditures has increased from around 30% in the first postwar years to around 45% in the 1990ies (the exact figure varies according to different methods of calculation). The main reason for this change is the considerable shift of responsibility from the state to the municipal authorities.

Municipalities and county municipalities account for about two-thirds of the public services provided in Norway. Their activities are largely financed by means of taxes and grants from central government.

In order to carry out centrally determined goals on the local level, the state is dependent on a cooperating municipal sector and a collaboration which is in the interest of both parts.

The Norwegian Currency is *kroner* (NOK). 100 NOK equals 11,31 ECU, 8,01 GBP and 13,58 USD (October 1998).

Summary – Challenges in the field

Summary

The Norwegian *barnehage* (ECEC) has existed for more than a hundred years, but the access has been low up to recent years.

The funding of ECEC has three sources, the national government, the owner of the ECEC institution and fees paid by the parents. The Norwegian GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was 1084,8 billion Norwegian Kroner (NOK) in 1997. In 1997 the state grants for *barnehager* were 4 280 million NOK and the municipal support was estimated to 2 400 million NOK. Totally public support was 6 680 million NOK, which is 0,6% of GDP.

In 1997 the total Family allowance was 12 835 million NOK and the total Parental benefit 6 614 million NOK. This means that 1,8% of the GDP was devoted to family support in 1997.

Equality between women and men is a crucial part of the Nordic Welfare Model. The objective of equality is that men and women shall have equal rights, obligations and opportunities in all fields of life. This involves not only ensuring equality through legislation, but also implementing measures to ensure that equality exists in practice.

The Gender Equality Act⁴ was adopted in 1978. The desire was to procure a practical instrument for work which could otherwise easily be characterised by well-meaning, non-committal statements. The Nordic philosophy of equality stresses that equal opportunity is not enough. Active efforts are required to promote the status of women.

The first Gender Equality Ombudsman was appointed in 1979. The Ombudsman is a person appointed by the Government to take care of other people's interests, a person given special powers to receive complaints from individuals or groups, working to bring injustice to an end. The primary task of the Ombudsman is to ensure that the provisions of the Act are followed. A second function of the Ombudsman is to provide the public with information about the Act, in particular concerning interpretation of its provisions.⁵

The most common pattern for a Norwegian family is that both parents are employed in the labour market. About 79% of married women with children 0 – 6 years work outside the home, almost 54% of these women work part-time. On the whole, 10% of all employed men work part-time.

The educational level in the population has increased enormously after World War II; the number of young women with education at college or university level is higher than among men of the same age. In 1996 33,6% of women and 27,2% of men in the ages 25 – 29 years had their education at college or university level.⁶

In 1997, 16% of children between the ages 0 – 17 years lived with a single mother, while only 1,6% lived with a single father.

In 1995, 4,4% of the population below 18 years had an equivalent household income below 50% of the adjusted equivalent income for all individuals.

In Norway there are various national basic rights for parents with small children:

1. Leave of absence in connection with childbirth and/or adoption
2. The time account scheme in connection with parental leave and/or adoption
3. Family allowance
4. Special tax rules and
5. The new cash benefit scheme, for children not attending an approved *barnehage*.

All families and children living in Norway are entitled to these basic allowances.

The national rights have two main intentions:

- 1) To make it possible for parents with small children to work outside home. 2) To contribute to equality between men and women.

This background report shows the development in the ECEC field from about 1975 until today in

⁴ Act no 45 of 9 June 1978 on Equality between the Genders

⁵ Gender Equality by law, Gender Equality Ombudsman, QO:510

⁶ Statistics Norway

Norway. In 1976 the coverage for the ages 0 – 7 was 8,6%, at the end of 1997 60% for the age group 1 – 5. Recent reforms have given parents the right to one year's leave of absence with 80% pay in connection with childbirth and/or adoption⁷, and the compulsory school age was lowered from seven to six years in 1997⁸. The Cash Benefit for parents with Small Children Act⁹ (*kontantstøtteleven*) came into force on 1 August 1998. This reform gives parents with one-year-olds NOK 3 000 per month if their child does not have a place in a *barnehage* with governmental support. Families with a child in part time *barnehage* will be entitled to partial cash benefit according to the number of hours in *barnehage*. The reform enters into force for two-year-olds in 1999.

In Norway all kinds of approved ECEC (*barnehage*) are under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. The *barnehager* are for children under six years. There are different modes of operation within the frames of the "Act on Day Care Institutions"¹⁰. All approved *barnehager* get national governmental support. The *barnehager* serve a dual function; 1) education as part of the broader education system and 2) providing care during the parents' working hours.

It is the Norwegian government's goal that all children whose parents wish it should have a place in *barnehage*, full time or part time, by the year 2000. The municipalities are responsible for reaching the goal within the year 2000. The municipalities may cooperate with the private sector in order to reach this goal. Norway has 6260 ECEC institutions, 3289 are privately owned and run. About 51% of all children 0 – 5 years old have access to ECEC. There is a great variation in coverage between the municipalities - from below 30 – 40% up to 90%. In about 40% of the municipalities the coverage is below 55%. It will be necessary to make new investigations of the demand for access for children below three years of age after the new reform of the cash benefit scheme has entered into force.

A national curriculum, called a *Framework Plan*, entered into force in January 1996. This was the first national plan in the history of the Norwegian *barnehage*. The plan must be used by all *barnehager*. The curriculum is based on the Nordic tradition of combining education and care, c.e. *educare*¹¹.

The national Act on Day Care Institutions section 1 says that *barnehager* should provide children with sound opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the

children's homes. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is, according to the Act, responsible for establishing the national Framework Plan. This plan is a regulation of the Act. The plan provides a pedagogical/educational basis for the *barnehage*.

The Framework Plan defines the *barnehage's* function within society and its goals, and gives guidelines for key areas of the *barnehage's* responsibilities, which means care, play and development of social, intellectual and physical skills.

Each *barnehage* must establish an *annual* plan for the educational/pedagogical activity. A concrete evaluation programme must be a part of this plan.

Challenges

Below are listed some of the main challenges in the field. As mentioned in the different sections of this report, there are quite a few other present or future challenges. The end of the report (section V) will give a complete list of challenges.

It is a challenge to reach the political goal of giving access to ECEC, full time or part time, to all children whose parents wish so in the year 2000. (Challenge II B 1)

It is a challenge to ensure that all municipalities should feel responsible for meeting the demands for access in order to give families equal services regardless of in which part of the country they live. (Challenge II B 2)

The Norwegian *Storting* (the National Parliament) has approved that the sharing of the running costs for *barnehager* shall be 40/30/30 %, divided among state funding, municipalities and parents. Today parents pay more, especially in privately owned *barnehager*. The municipalities pay 8,2% of the total running costs in private *barnehager* and 27,9% in the public institutions owned by the municipalities.

It is a challenge to meet the families demands at a price which do not exclude children because of their families' economic situation. There should be better monitoring of the consequences of public expenditure. (Challenge III B 2)

⁷ Act no 12 of 17 June 1966 on National Insurance

⁸ Amendment of Act no 24 of 1. June 1969 on Primary Schools

⁹ Act no 41 of 26 June 1998 on Cash Benefit for Parents with small Children

¹⁰ Act no 19 of 5 May 1995 on Day Care Institutions

¹¹ UNESCO 1992: *Educare in Europe*

It is a challenge to create a more impartial *barnehage* funding. The parental part of the funding must become more acceptable. The local authorities must be responsible for supporting both public and private institutions more equally. (Challenge III B 3)

Today the municipalities may not decide the parents' fees, admission criteria etc. in private *barnehager* unless they give financial support to these *barnehager*. The provision of *barnehager* in the municipalities should be coordinated whether the *barnehager* are public or private. Today there is an inappropriate tendency towards a divided field. This tendency is shown in quite a large difference in the parents' fees in public and private *barnehager*. The municipalities should develop suitable ways of cooperating with the private sector.

It is a challenge to aim for equality in quality and price between public and private *barnehager*. (III B 4)

It is a challenge for the owners of *barnehager* and the staff to make efforts to offer a variety of opening hours and programmes in order to meet the needs of both children and parents. (Challenge II B 3)

(The challenge numbers refer to the different sections in this report).

The government has decided to put forward a white paper on *barnehager* to the Storting in 1999. The topics to be discussed are strategies to meet the need for access, financing of the sector, frames for the private sector and acceptable parents' fees. Further the white paper will discuss questions concerning quality, with emphasis on the content in the *barnehager*, internal organisation, staff and competence in the sector. As seen from the structure of the white paper planned for 1999, the Ministry will try to meet all the challenges mentioned above.

Section I. Definitions, Contexts and Current Provision

This section gives the historic background for the Norwegian *barnehage* (ECEC), the increase in access until today and the frames the state gives for establishing and running *barnehager*. Further Norwegian family policy in general and the roles of actors outside the Government are mentioned.

ECEC

All ECEC institutions in Norway are called *barnehager*. *Barnehager* in Norway are part of a shared European tradition. The emergence of the modern *barnehage* has two roots: 1) social and 2) educational. The social basis is the *daghjem* (day care institutions open all day) with the main emphasis on care for children, while the educational influence derives from the short-time *barnehage* (kindergarten open only part time). These two traditions have merged into today's Norwegian *barnehage*, where care of the children and their learning and development are seen as a totality.

The first Norwegian *barneasyl* was established in Trondheim in 1837. The *barneasyl* was modelled on the English Children's Asylums who were established in the beginning of the 19th century. They were established to relieve some of the great social need and distress among the poor labour force in industry. This asylum can be seen as a precursor of the institution called *daghjem*.

At the end of the 19th century some *Fröbel* kindergartens/*barnehager* were established, grounded on the pedagogy of the German philosopher Friedrich Fröbel. The *barnehager* focused on education. They were usually run in private homes for a few hours a day. The running costs were paid by the parents and the owners of the *barnehager*.

Between 1953 and 1975 *barnehager* and *daghjem* were regulated as a part of the Child Welfare Act with regulations pursuant to that Act. The institutions had to meet rather detailed and strict national regulations and standards, with little or no possibilities for local adjustments. State funding started in 1963.

The contemporary *barnehage* grew very slowly until the 1970ies. In 1970 the access was 2,8% for children

under the age of seven. In 1985 the access was about 28% for children under seven. In 1997 the access was 51% for children under six. The official debate around the topic *barnehage*, has been whether it is a good thing for small children to stay away from their parents or not, and whether the *barnehage* should be an educational or a social institution. Should the *barnehager* be part of the educational system, or primarily social institutions for care of children? The historic development of the *barnehage* shows that this is not a question of either/or, but of both.

The first Act specially designed for the Norwegian *barnehage* came into force in 1975¹², under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Government Administration (FAD). Later it became the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (BFD). This *barnehage* Act opened for a wider variation in the pattern of operation. The term *barnehage* denoted that an educated preschool teacher was responsible for the education. A decentralised development policy gave the institutions and the local authorities the possibility of adapting the new Act more to local needs and conditions. This ideology was extended in subsequent law revisions e.g. in the Day Care Institution Act of 1995¹³.

In Norway ECEC of today is for children aged 0 – 5 years. The compulsory school age was lowered from 7 to 6 in 1997. The school entry date is once a year in the autumn. The debate about lowering the school age was an issue for about thirty years. Different committee reports have dealt with questions concerning the education of 6-year-olds, and whether the education for this age group should be compulsory or voluntary. There have also been different projects in this field. A first proposal to lower the school age was given to the Storting in a white paper¹⁴. The main reason for this proposal was that the 6-year-olds would be offered a compulsory education without parental fees. From 1991 the *barnehage* Act opened for volunteer educational programmes in primary schools. There was a long and hard debate among the different political parties, teachers and

¹² Act no 30 of 6 June 1975 on Kindergartens etc.

¹³ Act no 19 of 5 May 1995 on Child Care Institutions

¹⁴ St. meld. nr. 43 (1988-89)

parents about the question of lowering the school age. The debate concluded that the education in the first years of primary school (grade 1 to 4) should be grounded on the traditions from both *barnehage* and school, and give a good transition between the two institutions. The first school year should be based on pre-school methods, with emphasis on play and age-mixed activities.

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is responsible for the Act concerning ECEC. The county governors carry out tasks on behalf of the Ministry or are given them by law. The county governor pays the state support to the municipalities for both the public and the private *barnehager*. The county governor also has the responsibility for giving the local authorities information and supervision. According to the Act the local authorities are responsible for building and operating *barnehager*. The Act regulates the authorisation, operation and supervision of *barnehager*. The *barnehager* must be authorised by the local authorities before they start. The municipalities pay the state grants for the private *barnehager* to the private owners.

The *barnehager* are run either by the municipalities or by public institutions, firms or private organisations under the supervision of the municipality. Modes of operations and activities may be adapted to local conditions and needs. The *barnehager* can be full-time or part-time institutions or family day care institutions under the supervision of educated pre-school teachers. There are also open *barnehager* where children can come together with their mother, father or another person taking care of them.

The different modes of operation and age groups are all integrated in the same administrative system both locally and centrally. Childminders are not included in this system. Within the same *barnehage*, the children may have full-time or part-time attendance, and they may attend every day or some days a week. The owners or the staff of the *barnehager* decide whether children of only the same age are put together in the same groups/classes, or if they will have mixed age groups. The *barnehage* Act makes it possible to organise primary school and *barnehage* as one unit. If so, the head teacher of the school may also be the *styrer* of the *barnehage*.

Table 1. Different tasks in the *barnehage* sector and responsible authorities for these tasks from 1954 until today

Authority	Ministry	County governor	Local authorities	Owner
Tasks				
Regulations	1954 -			
By-laws				1954 -
Administration of state grants	1963 -	1963 -	1963 -	1963 -
Approval of <i>barnehager</i>	1954 - 1979	1980 - 1988	1989 -	
Supervision	1954 -	1954 -	1954 -	
Grant temporary disp. from ed. requirement	1954 - 1989	1980 - 1983 (<i>ped. ledere</i>) 1988 - (<i>styrere</i>)	1984 - (<i>ped. ledere</i>) 1989 - (<i>styrere</i>)	
Grant permanent disp. from ed. req.	1954 - 1988	1988 -		
Children per pre-school teacher	1954 -			
Total staff	1954 - 1975			1975 -
m ² per child	1958 - 1988			1989 -
Parents' fees				1958 -
Control of police certificates				1996 -

According to the Act the purpose of the *barnehager* is to ensure that children are provided with favourable opportunities for development in close co-operation with the children's homes. The *barnehager* shall assist the parents giving the children an upbringing that is consistent in Christian values.

The table at page 10 shows the trend toward increased decentralisation. The trend towards decentralisation has been the same in several sectors. The local authorities have acquired more responsibility and more qualified staff. The tasks have become more demanding, and the sector has increased enormously.

National family policy

It is the Norwegian government's view that family policy and gender equality are closely connected. The objective is to enable women and men to participate in the working force on an equal basis and at the same time share work at home. It is an important political objective to ensure that the policy relating to gender equality supports a committed family life. Tomorrow's welfare society must be based on equality between women and men, in the family and in working life, and on children's need for time with both their parents. One of the consequences of linking family policy together with gender equality policy, is that considerable attention is being paid to the father's role, and efforts are being made on several fronts to promote fathers' participation in child care. Further, the government's policy on *barnehager* must be seen in connection with the family policy.

Parental and adoption benefits are payment that replace wages and salaries during leave of absence. The parental or adoption benefit period is the period during which a person receives parental and/or adoption benefits from the national government.

By using *time account*, parents may combine parental and adoption benefits with reduced working hours. The period of full-time leave of absence is reduced, but the size of the parental and adoption benefit remains the same.

In addition to parental and adoption benefits for working parents, there are other financial support schemes and tax rules for families with children.

Family allowance is the most important financial benefit for families with children. Everyone living in Norway with children under the age of 16 has the

right to family allowance. The allowance is national funded through the general taxes.

There are also two special *tax rules for families with children*. Families with dependants up to 18 years are entitled to a general deduction in income tax. Families with children up to 10 years are entitled to deduct documented child care expenses.

It is generally agreed in Norway that parents with small children spend too little time with their children. The new *Cash Benefit Act* entered into force 1. August 1998. The Act demands that cash benefit is given to families with one-year-olds from August 1998 and two-year-olds from January 1999 if they do not use a *barnehage* with state support. The intention is to give parents more opportunity to be together with their children

Further information about these rights for parents with small children is given in Section III E Family engagement and support.

The roles of other ministries

Other ministries involved at the national level are the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, which is responsible for special education for children under school age, the education of pre-school teachers at the colleges and the education of youth and child workers in upper secondary education, and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs concerning mother and child health stations and the Regulation on environmental health care in *barnehager* and schools. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs co-operates in different ways with these ministries.

The roles of NGOs

All Norwegian *barnehager* have to be approved by the local authorities and follow the demands of the *barnehage* Act and the Framework Plan. Private organisations, parents' groups, parishes and other non-profit organisations have a long tradition of operating *barnehager* in Norway. There are different kinds of co-operation between the private *barnehager* and each local authority. On the national level the Organisation of Privately Owned Kindergartens have fairly regular meetings with the Ministry, also with the minister herself.

The staff unions, especially the Norwegian Union of Teachers, have their own policy programme in the sector. They have fairly regular meetings with the minister and other representatives from the Ministry.

The Ombudsman for Children¹⁵

According to sections 1, 2 and 4 in the Ombudsman Act the purpose of the Act is to contribute to promoting the interests of children in society. The King appoints an Ombudsman for a period of four years, and the Ombudsman has free access to all public and private institutions for children.

Section 3, Duties of the Ombudsman, says:

"The duties of the Ombudsman are to promote the interests of children vis-a-vis public and private authorities and to follow up the development of conditions under which children are growing up.

In particular the Ombudsman shall:

- a) On own initiative or as a hearing instance protect the interests of children in connection with planning and study-reports in all fields,*

- b) ensure that legislation relating to the protection of children's interests is observed*
- c) propose measures which can strengthen children's safety under the law*
- d) put forward proposals for measures which can solve or prevent conflicts between children and society*
- e) ensure that sufficient information is given to the public and private sectors concerning children's rights and measures required for children.*

The Ombudsman may act on own initiative or at the request of other people. The Ombudsman for Children himself decides whether an application offers sufficient grounds for action."

¹⁵ Act no 5 of March 6 1981 relating to the Ombudsman for Children

Section II. Policy Concerns

This section focuses on the main concerns related to ECEC policy. Especially discussed are different ways of defining quality, who should be the stakeholders when discussing and defining quality and in what way can quality be measured? Further the discussion concerns the Norwegian Government's goals for access, the need for flexible attendance and the increase in access in recent years is shown. Both public and private access are emphasised, as well as the access for children with special needs.

A. Quality

General information

Quality is a concern in relation to all the children in the different kinds of *barnehager*, and all the age groups involved. Special attention is paid to the quality of the services for children with disabilities and children at risk. The Norwegian *barnehage* has a long tradition on integration of these groups, and much attention is paid to give these children opportunities to develop as well as possible in contact with other children in play and interaction.

Measures of quality

Measures of structural quality are given by the state, the local authorities and the owners of the *barnehager*. The national Act concerning *barnehager* says that the *styrere* and the *pedagogiske ledere* must be educated pre-school teachers. The regulations concerning teaching staff say that there must be one educated pre-school teacher per 14 – 18 children over the age of three and per 7 – 9 children below this age. In family day care there should be one pre-school teacher per 30 children, and maximum five children over three years of age per home. The total staffing in *barnehager* must, according to the *barnehage* Act section 17, be sufficient for the staff to be able to carry on satisfactory educational activity. This demand allows the owner of the *barnehage* to relate staff numbers to the needs of the children involved. In this way the adult : child ratio may be different from *barnehage* to *barnehage*. If the supervisory authority finds that the amount of staff is not according to the Act, it may order rectification.

These regulations do not cover childminders unless they are part of an authorised family day care system.

The owner of the *barnehage* makes provision for the area stipulated per child for play and other activities in by-laws (internal regulations). The stipulated area may vary, but even here the supervisory authority may order rectification. The municipality may set conditions concerning the by-laws in its conditions for municipal support.

The National Government's aim of quality in the *barnehage's* content

The government has had as an aim to focus on both access and quality in the *barnehager*. In a white paper to the Norwegian Storting in 1987¹⁶, the central aims were to improve both access and quality. In this white paper the government gave a summary of what the Ministry had already initiated, and what it would initiate to improve quality in the educational work in the *barnehager*. The Ministry had had a working group to make the book "*Purposeful work in the barnehage*"¹⁷ which gave a summary of the Norwegian *barnehage* tradition and pointed out new goals and working methods. Further the Ministry had sent out a circular about the goals and content in the *barnehager*. The term annual plan had been introduced in the regulations to the Act as an invitation to the *barnehager* to work towards more goal-oriented planning of the educational programme.

The Ministry had given support to guidance and upgrading courses given by the county governors. The Ministry had also given support to experimental schemes that aimed at renewing of the educational work in the *barnehager*. The white paper made it clear that the central authorities had to put much more effort into developing quality and content in the *barnehager*. As a result of the Storting's discussion on the white paper, several initiatives to strengthen this work were taken. These initiatives were to increase the capacity in pre-school teacher education, intensify the recruiting of pre-school teacher students, to find new ways to organise this education in order to recruit new groups of students, e.g. adults who wanted to combine work and studies, organising education for care workers in upper secondary

¹⁶ St. meld. nr 8 (1987-88)

¹⁷ Forbruker- og administrasjonsdepartementet (Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Government Administration) 1982

school, give grants to local developmental projects, stimulate more professional supervision and to work out a framework plan (national curriculum) for the *barnehager*. Within the frames of the research resources, the Ministry should give priority to research concerning *barnehager*.

In the period 1987 – 1990 the government got some funds to start a project on educational/pedagogical development work in *barnehager* in three counties. The evaluation report¹⁸ said that this work gave the staff more involvement, joy and motivation for their work, and led to better collaboration within the *barnehage* and with the parents, better planning and more systematic work. Since 1990 funds have been given for educational/pedagogical development work in all counties. These funds are administered by the county governor.

The greatest milestone in improving quality was the Storting's decision in 1995, that the Ministry should lay down a framework plan (national curriculum) for the *barnehager*. The decision was made when handling the proposal for the new Act on *barnehager*. This Framework Plan provides guidelines for the content and tasks in the *barnehager*. The owner of the *barnehage* may adapt the framework plan to local conditions. There is no structural feedback-process from the *barnehage*'s owner to the local authorities on how the plan is perceived in each institution, but the local authorities may ask for the annual plans from the *barnehager* in connection with their supervision.

Evaluation

The Framework Plan demands that a concrete evaluation programme must form part of the annual plan in each *barnehage*. The plan must define what is to be evaluated, the criteria for evaluation, how information is to be compiled, who shall evaluate and when, and how the basis for evaluation is to be presented and discussed.

The evaluation should be coherent, comprehensive and encompass both the individual child's development and the functioning of the children as a group. The individual adult, the staff as a team, the relationship between children, parental collaboration, the *barnehage* as an organisation and the external activity should be followed up and subjected to methodical evaluation.

The Framework Plan sets out aims in regard to developing basic competence and aims in terms of

children's attainment within the plan's various content-areas. The staff should through evaluation follow up and ascertain whether the individual child acquires the above basic knowledge, attitudes and skills based on his/her own premises. At the same time it must be realised that personal and social development are at issue here, and that the results of educational work can not or should not be measured in a cursory manner.

In addition to the directions for evaluation given in the Framework Plan, the Ministry has published a guidance booklet on evaluation. The Ministry has informed local authorities and owners of *barnehager* as part of the implementation of the new national curriculum. The county governors have had as one of their tasks to establish courses for the *barnehage* staff about using the plan. The county governors have chosen different ways of solving this task. Many of them have had good co-operation with the colleges for pre-school teacher training as well as with the municipalities. At the same time the county governor has given support to municipalities and/or networks of *barnehager* that have worked on local initiative with the implementation of the plan.

Commissioned by the Ministry, the College of Hedmark has a research project to gather information about how the Framework Plan is implemented in practice. This project has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Surveys have been distributed to county governors, local authorities, private owners, staff and parents on different aspects of the Framework Plan. The next phase is to interview staff, parents and owners about their experiences. When the results from the project are available, the Ministry will consider how to follow up the implementation process.

Quality may also be evaluated from the parents' point of view. Each *barnehage* shall have a parents' council and a co-ordinating committee. This committee comprises representatives of parents, staff and owner. The co-ordinating committee shall establish an *annual plan* for the educational activity. The plan must be drawn up on the basis of the Framework Plan and the owner's local guidelines. This confers on parents substantive influence on the content of the *barnehage*. The annual plan is an important link between the *barnehage* and the society. The annual plan must draw up objectives for the children's attendance, how the objectives are to be attained and how the work is to be followed and evaluated.

The parents can be involved in planning the content

¹⁸ Abrahamsen & Hæreid, 1991

and play an active role in various ways. Questions related to basic views on education, content and priorities should also be discussed by the parents' council, and by the co-ordinating committee as part of the work on the annual plan. The children should also be involved in parts of the planning process. They will often produce new, spontaneous suggestions for the adults' already established plan.

Local differences and experimentation

The *barnehager* have a high degree of freedom within the frames of the *barnehage* Act and the Framework Plan. The plan does not impose detailed guidelines for the activity or prevent freedom, adaptations and variation at the local level. The plan does not contain detailed instructions in regard to the types of topics that have to be included and the methods to be employed. There is great room for experimentation and innovation, and programmes from abroad are used in some *barnehager*. Examples of such programmes are the Italian *Reggio Emilia*, the American *High Scope* and the Dutch *Marte Meo*.

Research on quality

In general, research concludes that the Norwegian *barnehager* have high quality. Research projects in this field are mentioned in Section IV, Evaluation and Research.

Viewpoints on quality from external contributors

The Norwegian Union of Teachers have demanded¹⁹ supervision by the authorities of the quality of the *barnehage* services. They want a public discussion both on the *conception of quality*, and which standards are to decide that a *barnehage* satisfies the society's criteria for quality. When do the children have a good pedagogical/educational service, and the users the services they have paid for? The Union says that the development of *barnehager* must be based on improvement of children's services. The most important task for the *barnehager* is to organise care, play and learning. The work to increase the number of new *barnehager* must not be at the sacrifice of the children who already have a place. The Union says further that all children should have a legal right to a place in a *barnehage* free of parents' fees. This must be a public responsibility.

In a sample survey²⁰ The Association of Local and Regional Authorities asked the municipalities about their appraisal of physical quality indicators in the *barnehager*: outdoor areas, buildings, indoor

environment and equipment. On the whole the standard of the buildings is evaluated to somewhere on the scale between "acceptable" and "good". Bad ventilation and indoor climate are emphasised by the municipalities. The survey also shows that the quality of outdoor areas varies a lot from place to place.

The Association of Privately Owned Kindergartens says²¹ that many of the privately owned *barnehager* are established because parents are in need of *barnehager* for their own children. They want the best for their children, also good quality. Unpaid work and the will to work for their children's interests are great. According to the association, the staff do a good job as well.

Challenge II A 1:

It is a national responsibility to start the discussion and initiate the development of new quality standards for the Norwegian *barnehage* and discuss whether they should be regulated nationally or locally based.

Quality can also be measured from a consumer point of view. The National Institute of Consumer Research (SIFO) has, commissioned by the Ministry, had several research projects on parents' satisfaction with the *barnehager*, and on the children's enjoyment and progress. In the report *Kindergartens - providers and receivers*²², one part of the report is on parents' satisfaction with their *barnehage*. Generally, the results show a clear association between positive evaluations of the possibilities for influence and a high level of satisfaction. Particular areas of interest are those concerning information, understanding of parents' wishes, and not least the approach of the staff to the children, for example how much time should be devoted to play, which needs must be catered for, what will be used to stimulate the child, and in addition, information on the individual child. In the first instance this is related to the parents' subjective evaluation of the possibilities of influence and the informal contact between parents and staff emerges as being very important.

The frequency of contact through formal channels such as staff meetings, parents' meetings and thematic meetings appears to have just a small effect on the parents' general level of satisfaction. Good, ongoing information (preferably verbally) on their own children, however, provides clear evidence of parental satisfaction.

¹⁹ Letter 2 September 1998 to the Ministry

²⁰ Association of Local and Regional Authorities 1997

²¹ Letter 31 August 1998 to the Ministry

²² Mordal 1997

B. Access

No child has a legal right to a place in *barnehage* in Norway. At the end of 1997 184 514 children aged 0-5 years had a place in *barnehage*, this was 50,7% of the whole group.

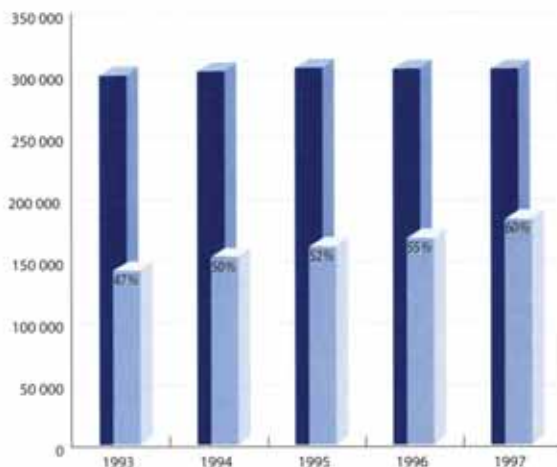
Challenge II B 1:

It is a challenge to reach the political goal of giving access to ECEC, full time or part time, to all children whose parents wish so in the year 2000.

Increase in access

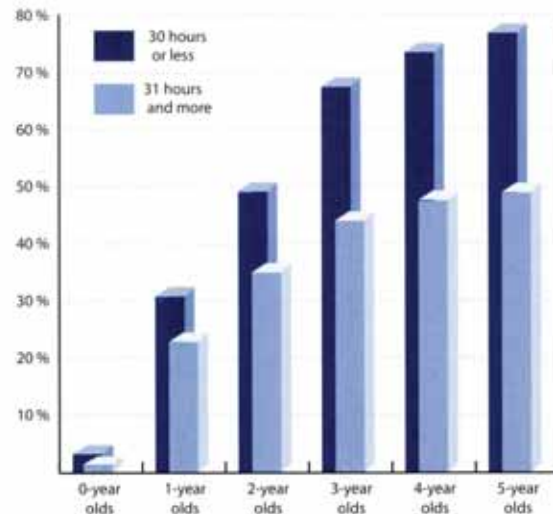
In the summary (p.6) is described the development in the access to *barnehager* since 1976. The most rapid development has come during the 1990ies. Thus the cohort of new born children has grown from approximately 50 000 in 1984 to approximately 61 000 in 1997, the percentage of children attending *barnehager* has increased. The fertility rate has increased from 1,82 in the period 1986 – 90 to 1,89 in 1996 (Official Statistics of Norway).

Table 2. The development of children in *barnehager* compared with the total child cohort in the age group 1 – 5 years, in the period 1993 – 1997. The percentage in the diagram illustrates the access for the same age group. (Statistics Norway)



During the 1980ies and the beginning of the 90ies the Government's policy was to give priority in access to the oldest pre-school children, that is the children over three. The means have been to subsidise these places at a higher scale (in %) than the places for children below three years of age. The result of this policy is that present access varies strongly between different age groups:

Table 3. Children in *barnehager* in the age group 0 – 5 divided into hours of attendance 1997 per week (Statistics Norway).



This table shows that there is a difference in the age groups of children attending *barnehager* and also a difference between age groups when it comes to attendance hours.

Public and private access

At the end of 1997 there were 6 240 *barnehager* in Norway. 47% of these were public and 53% private. The private institutions are in average smaller than the public ones, which means that 42% of the children are enrolled in private and 58% of the children in public *barnehager*.

Local variations in access

There are great differences in the level of access from one municipality to another. The variations are in the scale from 30 – 40% to around 90%. The majority of the municipalities have access on a middle level (about 50 – 60%).

The map on page 22 illustrates the variety of access in the different parts of the country by the end of 1996.

Different colours are given to the different municipalities according to the percentage of access. Especially in the south and west of Norway there are municipalities with access below 40%. The north-, mid- and the south inland of Norway have many municipalities with high access.

The reasons for these variations are complex. The Association of Local and Regional Authorities claim that the main cause is the economic situation in the municipalities. The Ministry, through its own

Table 4. Children in public and private barnehager, total number and per cent. Nation-wide 1997 (Statistics Norway)

	Total	Absolute figures		Per cent	
		Private	Public	Private	Public
All age groups	184 514	76 798	107 716	41,6	58,4
0 years	1 580	21 941*	28 138*	43,8*	56,2*
1 year	18 723				
2 years	29 776				
3 years	40 794	54 750**	79 409**	41,0**	59,0**
4 years	45 012				
5 years	47 691				

* Cover the ages 0 – 2 years

** Cover the ages 3 – 5 years

Table 5. Children in barnehager by age group and hours of attendance per week. Nation-wide. Public and private. 1997 (Statistics Norway)

Hours of attendance per week	Total	0 - 2 years		3 - 5 years		
		Public	Private	Total	Public	Private
6 – 15	2 671	1 785	886	8 814	4 237	4 577
16 – 20	2 478	1 694	784	11 632	6 650	4 982
21 – 30	8 806	4 975	3 831	27 901	16 690	11 211
31 – 40	1 978	1 110	868	8 340	4 206	4 134
41 –	34 146	18 574	15 572	77 470	47 624	29 846

Table 6. Municipalities by access for children 1-5 years. Total number and per cent 1996

	Number of municipalities	Access in per cent			
		Less than 40	40 - 55	56 - 69	70 and more
Total number	435	24	162	152	97
Per cent	100	6	37	35	22

documentation, agrees partly, but also claims that the local political priorities is another main cause. A third explanation is, of course, the variety in demand from the parents.

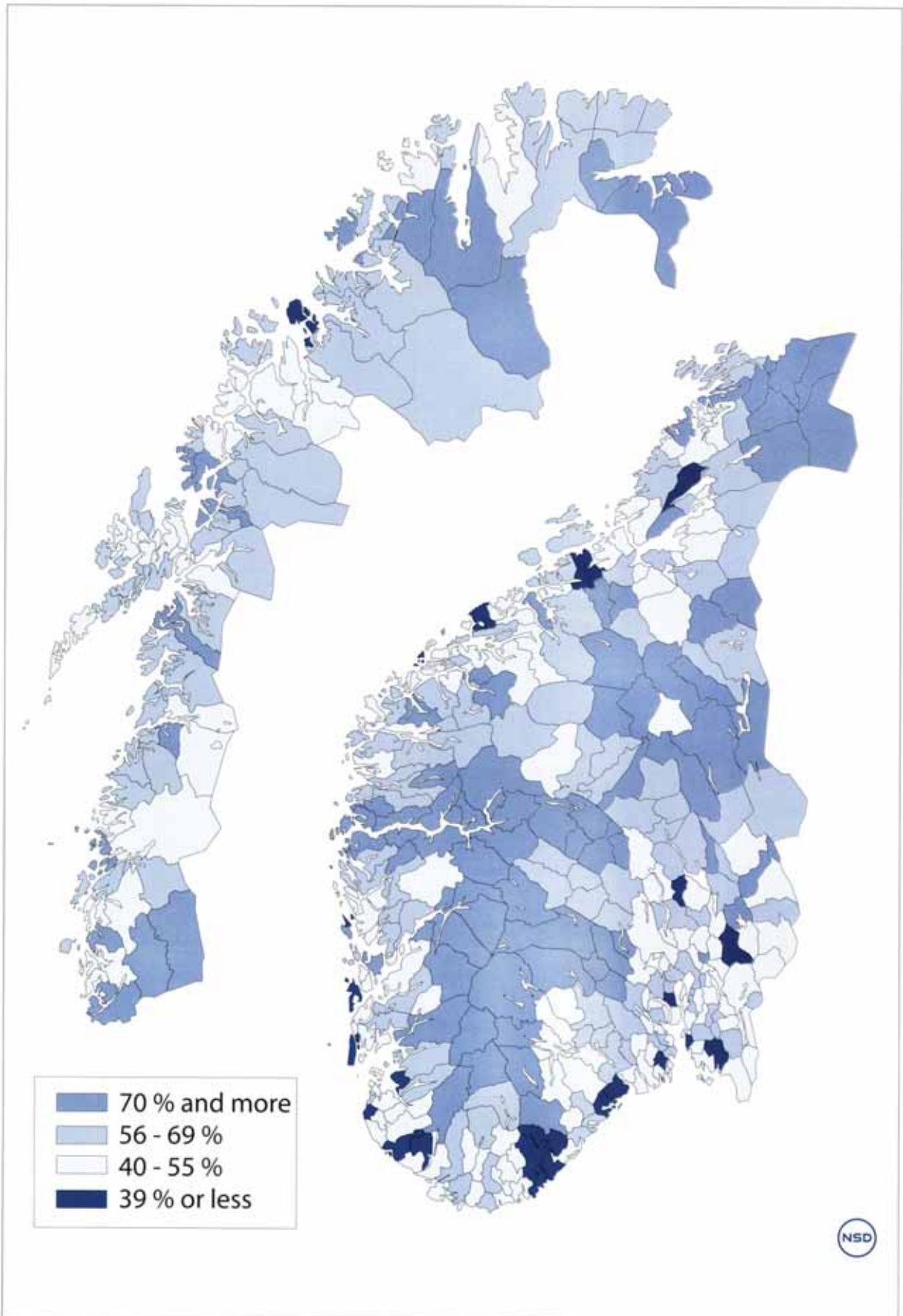
Challenge II B 2:

It is a challenge to ensure that all the municipalities feel responsible for meeting the demands for access in order to give families equal services regardless of in which part of the country they live.

Future access

There is still an unmet demand for access for all age groups, especially for the younger children. This demand may be lower when the cash benefit scheme enters into force.

Parents seldom have the opportunity to choose among different *barnehager* because of the lack of places in their local community. When full coverage is reached, or in municipalities with high coverage, there are certain possibilities for choosing among



different *barnehager*. Even today it is a fact that some *barnehager* are preferred to others, but the reasons for this are not known by the Ministry. The lack of possibilities for choice has not been regarded as a problem by the national government, while the lack of places is given a lot of emphasis. It is the government's impression that parents are satisfied as long as they get a place. This may change when full access is achieved.

The Ministry expects 13 500 new children in *barnehager* in 1998 (governmental budget 1998) and 2 500 in 1999 (governmental budget proposal). The low estimate in 1999 is because it the Ministry does not yet know how the cash benefit scheme will change the demand for new places.

Experience shows that a high level of access and a good variety in opening hours and programmes in the municipality create demands from families who when access was lower, did not ask for *barnehager*. This means that it may be expected an even higher demand in the future. It also seems that more parents than before think that *barnehage* is a good educational preparation for school, at least the last years before starting school. The demand for access for these age groups will thus stay higher and probably more stable than the demand for places for children below three years of age. It is uncertain how the cash benefit scheme will influence the future demand for access.

Challenge II B 3:

It is a challenge for the owners of *barnehager* and the staff to make efforts to offer a variety of opening hours and programmes in order to meet the needs of both children and parents.

National means and programmes to increase access

The National government's main strategies to encourage the municipalities and private owners to establish *barnehager* have been economic support, information and supervision. There have also been different campaigns and programmes. Besides government grants for the running costs, there have been various forms of grants for the establishment of new *barnehager*. Such grants have not been given from this year.

The owners of the institutions set admission criteria in their by-laws (local regulations). If the municipalities provide financial support for the operation of the *barnehage*, they may demand in return the right to stipulate admission criteria or to conduct the

admission procedure. Traditionally the admission criteria were of a social kind, e.g. single parents who are working or studying, families with special needs, working parents etc. Nowadays the criteria may vary according to the level of possibilities for admittance.

The lowering of the school age from seven to six years in 1997 influenced the *barnehage* sector because of deliberation of places in *barnehager* for younger children. To prepare for this change, the Ministry established a development programme in 50 municipalities for the period 1995 – 1997. The programme focused on three main questions: 1) how to take the places left by the six-year-olds into use for younger children, 2) how to organise the institutions to meet the families' needs and 3) how to reduce the increase of costs in the sector. Important results and experiences from the programme are:

- The level of full *barnehage* access for all who wish is rather high in many municipalities, presupposed that the supplies are flexible and varied
- Municipalities with high accessibility to *barnehager* are characterised by having taken the responsibility for all the *barnehager* whoever the owners are
- 30% more places for children under three years of age have been established by changing places for older children into places for younger, more intake of children in and extension of already existing *barnehager*
- *Barnehager* which are open all day, are the most effective concerning running costs. Variation in type of places and attendance hours may be given within the frames of this mode of operation
- Staff are willing to change and adjust the *barnehager*, but they are dependent on common attitudes, time, competence and frames to implement the changing processes
- The first concern for parents whose child has got a place in a *barnehage* is whether the child gets the necessary attention and care
- The youngest children in the *barnehage* are dependent on having a permanent adult to relate to
- The user's concern to increase the variation of the supplies of provision of places and also to improve the relations and the dialogue between children, staff and parents must be met
- The ideas and experiences from other municipalities and *barnehager* are important, but solutions must be adjusted locally.²³

²³ Barne- og familiedepartementet (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs) 1998

A main task for the Ministry, the county governors and the participating municipalities is to spread the results and experiences to the other municipalities in Norway. The Ministry has published reports and information material from the programme. These documents have been distributed to all municipalities and *barnehager*.

The Ministry has no data on the total number of childminders. Childminders in Norway are not a part of the national *barnehage* system. The Tax Directorate had, at the end of 1997, registered about 10 000 childminders paying taxes. Besides this there is a black market. The Ministry commissioned Opinion AS²⁴ to carry out a survey among 2033 parents with children under school age. They were asked how they organised their child care. Among parents with children born in 1995 (2 – 3 years old), 49% answered that they cared for their children themselves, 37% had a place in *barnehage*, 8% were cared for by a childminder, 45 were in outdoor play parks (under the leadership of an adult) and 2% were taken care of by family.

Children with special needs

Barnehage is especially important for children who experience a deficit of care. The *barnehage's* role in terms of preventive child welfare is steadily increasing in importance. The municipalities are responsible for child welfare, and a place in *barnehage* is often the first way of helping small children at risk.

Children with disabilities are to be given priority admission provided that it is deemed by expert assessment that the child will be able to benefit from attending the *barnehage* (see the *barnehage* Act section 9). The expert assessment is to be undertaken in collaboration with the parents, who make the final decision whether the child may benefit from attendance. The municipalities are by law responsible for ensuring that children with disabilities gain admission to a *barnehage*.

In 1997 3 374 children (1,8%) of the total number of children in *barnehager* were disabled, admitted by the Child Care Institutions Act section 9, while 5 483 children (3,0%), received additional support. 80% of the children with disabilities are in *barnehager* run by the municipalities.²⁵

Research has shown that almost all children with disabilities have a place in *barnehage*²⁶. The Ministry very seldom get questions which reveal problems in this field.

According to the Primary School Act²⁷ children with special needs have a legal right to special education/ special educational help before school age. The municipalities are responsible for this help and the funding of it. There is no lower age limit. Siblings with special educational needs may also receive special educational help. The regulations to the Act say that special educational help for children under school age may consist of different kinds of stimulation of the child's senses, special training and guidance to parents and *barnehage* staff. The most common reason for giving children special educational help is that they have communication and language problems, but many of these children also have movement difficulties, concentration problems, mental retardation or psycho-social problems. Problems concerning the senses of sight or hearing are rather rare.

Expert advice must be given before the municipality makes a decision concerning special education. The educational-psychological service in the municipality has the main responsibility for giving this advice. If the service does not have the competence needed, such advice may be obtained from a special education competence centre or another expert body.

From 1992 – 93 to 1995 – 96 the number of pre-school teachers with special education teacher training working in *barnehager* increased from 14,1% to 20,4% of the total pre-school teacher staff²⁸.

Children under care of the Child Welfare Service

A place in *barnehage* is often used as a voluntary measure in the child welfare services. Many of the children under such care have special needs because of their family situation.

Children in crisis

Due to their family situation many children suddenly may be in some sort of crisis. It is a challenge for the *barnehage's* staff to help these children to manage their everyday life.

Children from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities

Children from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities have no legal right to access, but the state gives special grants to the municipalities who provide

²⁴ St.prp. nr. 53 (1997-98)

²⁵ Statistics Norway

²⁶ Madsen 1993, Lorentzen 1994

²⁷ Act no 24 of 13 June 1969 on Primary School

²⁸ Skårbrevik 1996 (here from the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs)

barnehager for these groups. A new report²⁹ shows that only 39 per cent of children from linguistic and cultural minorities in the greatest towns have a place in *barnehage*.

The Framework Plan (chapter 2, brief version) says:

"The day care institution must have regard to the individual child and the individual home's orientation in terms of culture, religion or values. Its work must be organised in such a way as to promote a shared understanding of the institution's policy and practice, and the integrity of the individual child and the individual parent must be respected. Children from different religions should be able to feel pride and joy over their own religious roots".

The Framework Plan expands on this topic.

The Ministry gives special grants for the wages of bilingual assistants. Further the state finances 15 hours weekly attendance in *barnehager* for eight months for newly arrived refugees.

From August 1998 the Ministry finances a three year project with 20 hours weekly free *barnehage* service for all five-year-olds in the urban neighbourhood Old

Oslo. This is a part of the town where there is a high degree of immigrant children. The intention is to give immigrant children better language skills before they start school. The project also will gain experiences with giving all five-year-olds a year in *barnehage* before they start school.

According to the *barnehage* Act section 7, the municipalities have the responsibility to secure that Day care institutions for Saami children in Saami districts shall be based on the Saami language and culture. The Framework Plan has a special chapter about *barnehager* for Saami children.

Challenge II B 4:

It is a challenge for the municipalities and the *barnehage's* staff to give all children with special needs good care and understanding in the *barnehage*, and to establish good contact and co-operation with the parents of these children.

Challenge II B 5:

It is a challenge to ensure that children from language minorities have a good understanding of the Norwegian language before they start school.

²⁹ Djuve/Pettersen 1998

Section III. Policy Approaches

In this section the frames for establishing and running *barnehager* are reviewed. The *barnehage* Act regulates the authorisation, operation and supervision of *barnehager*, and defines tasks for the municipalities, owners and staff. Further are the Child Welfare Service and the Regulation on Environmental Health Care mentioned. The funding and financing of the *barnehager* are mentioned. The report especially emphasises on the share of costs between the state, municipalities and the parents. It also gives information about the staff and the education of staff. The Framework Plan for the *barnehage*'s content is emphasised. It also gives an overview of different ways the Norwegian society supports families with small children.

A. Regulations

Barnehager

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is responsible for the overall ECEC regulatory policy. The *barnehage* Act regulates the authorisation, operation and supervision of *barnehager*. The *barnehager* must be approved by local authorities. They are defined as educationally oriented enterprises for children under school age, e.g. for children under six years. The *barnehager* are run either by the municipalities or by public institutions, firms or private organisations under the supervision of the municipality. The *barnehager* can be full-time or part-time institutions or family day care under the supervision of an educated pre-school teacher. The Ministry has laid down regulations according to the Act, and has also laid down a framework plan (national curriculum) for the activities and the content of the *barnehager*. The Framework Plan is a regulation under the Act, which means that all approved *barnehager* are obliged to follow the plan.

All Norwegian *barnehager* must follow the Act on Day Care Institutions and the regulations. To ensure that child care activities that provide children supervision and care are satisfactory, the Act has regulations (Section 13 Approval obligation) on the obligation to seek approval as a *barnehage*, when:

- a the activity is regular and the majority of the children attend for more than 20 hours a week, and

- b the number of children present at the same time is 10 or more when the children are three years of age or older, alternatively five or more when the children are less than three years of age, and
- c the supervision is carried out for financial reward.

This demand ensures that larger enterprises taking care of children under school age have to be approved as *barnehager* and follow the *barnehage* Act and the Framework Plan.

According to law the owners of the *barnehager* must lay down by-laws (local regulations) (Section 15 By-laws). The by-laws must provide information of significance to the parents' relationship to the *barnehage*. The by-laws must contain provisions on e.g.

- a ownership,
- b who has the authority to admit children,
- c admission criteria,
- d who is to stipulate the parents' fees,
- e area stipulated per child for play and other activities,
- f the *barnehage*'s opening hours.

The municipality may set conditions for municipal support. Such conditions must be incorporated in the by-laws.

The regulatory standards are a combination of child-focused and facility-focused. The justification for this approach is to ensure that the *barnehager* provide the children with good opportunities for development and activity.

According to the Act section 10, the municipality maintain the local supervision of the *barnehager*. This means that the municipalities must give guidance to *barnehager*, and they may order the rectification of unwarrantable or unlawful circumstances. If the deadline for complying with the order is not observed, the municipality may order the temporary or permanent closure of the establishment. Decisions of the municipality may be appealed to the county governor.

The county governor is responsible for giving guidance to municipalities and private owners, and may on his/her own initiative exercise supervision identical to that of the municipality.

The styrer and the owner of the *barnehage* are duty bound to provide the supervisory authorities with such information as is deemed necessary to exercise supervision pursuant to the Act. They are also bound to provide the supervisory authorities with access to the *barnehager*.

There are no governmental regulations about the professional background of the supervisory authorities. Nowadays most of the local authorities have one or more educated pre-school teachers on their administrative staff. The local authorities themselves decide their routines for supervision and inspection.

The Ministry has no registration system for decisions the municipalities make concerning rectification of unwarrantable or unlawful circumstances. There are, however, very few cases that are appealed to the county governors.

In Norway the regulations on educated staff, the Framework Plan and the emphasising on close co-operation with the parents are the basis for quality.

Child Welfare Services³⁰

According to the Child Welfare Act all municipalities are obliged to have a child welfare service. The purpose of the Act is (section 1 – 1)

- to ensure that children and young people who live in conditions which may be detrimental to their health and development receive the necessary assistance and care at the right time,
- to help to ensure that children and young people are brought up in a secure environment.

Each municipality must have a child welfare administration to perform the day-to-day child welfare and (section 2 – 1)

- give advice and guidance
- adopt decisions in accordance to the Act
- prepare cases for consideration by the county social welfare board
- implement and monitor child welfare measures.

The child welfare services have both preventive activities and the authority to give care orders. The municipality shall (section 3 – 1, 3 – 2 and 3 – 3) keep

a close eye on the conditions under which children live, and has particular responsibility for bringing to light inadequate care, behavioural social and emotional problems at a sufficiently early stage to avoid lasting problems, and for instituting measures to this end. The child welfare service must collaborate with other sectors and levels of the public administration and voluntary organisations.

Crucial importance must be attached to the child's best interests. Importance must also be attached to giving the child stable and good contact with adults and continuity in the care provided.

Regulation on Environmental Health Care³¹

The regulation concerning environmental health care entered into force 1. January 1996. The purpose of the regulation is to contribute to that the environment in *barnehager* and schools promotes health, well-being, good social and environmental conditions and prevents illness and injury.

A main demand in the regulation is that undertakings shall carry out internal control (section 4). The owner of the undertaking shall see to that an internal control system is established, while the leader of the undertaking shall see to that the demands in the regulations are obeyed. All undertakings that are comprised by the regulation, should be approved before 1. January 1999 or by new establishing (section 6).

The general demand of the regulation is that the undertakings shall be satisfactory for health reasons (section 7). There are regulations on e.g.

- possibilities for activity and rest
- psycho-social circumstances
- cleaning and maintenance
- security and health state
- protection against infection
- smoking
- indoor climate/quality of air
- light and acoustics
- sanitary conditions and handling of garbage

The local government maintains the responsibility to see that the regulation is obeyed. Possible sanctions for the supervision authorities are inquiry, rectification, fine and closure (section 26). There is also legal authority for penalties, but this authority may only be used in serious and special circumstances.

³⁰ Act no 100 of 17 July 1992 on Child Welfare Services

³¹ Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1 January 1996

B. Funding and financing

Local Government Financing in Norway³²

The bulk of grants from central to local government budget are made through the general purpose grants scheme, in the form of block grants that are not earmarked for particular purposes. The grants scheme is closely connected to taxes: three-quarters of the income base of the local government sector is made up of taxes and block grants. The general purpose grants scheme is thus the most important means at the central government's disposal for controlling expenditure in the local government sector.

Through the general purpose grants scheme, central government funds are transferred to meet operating costs. Grants which are kept apart from the general purpose scheme include grants towards investments, research and development. Also excluded are grants for provisions for refugees and for labour market measures, as well as grants to special target areas, such as *barnehager*. The reasons for keeping the grants for *barnehager* excluded from the general grants scheme, are both to secure state grants to the private sector and to use the grant system to motivate both local authorities and private owners to increase access to the *barnehager*.

Other municipal incomes are taxes and municipal fees.

State grants for *barnehager*

Barnehager are financed jointly by the central government, the municipalities and the parents. All approved *barnehager*, public or private, receive operating subsidies from the central government. These subsidies are determined on the basis of the number of children, their ages and the amount of time they spend in the *barnehage* each week. They are the same for public and private *barnehager*. The subsidies are not prescribed by law, they are determined yearly by the Storting when dealing with the government budget.

Before the *barnehage* Act of 1975 the state only gave grants to *barnehager* with 20 or more weekly opening hours. Most of the existing *barnehager* were in the towns. A new state grant system entered into force together with the Act in 1975. This system was intended to act as a stimulus to establish *barnehager* also in rural areas. The system had, as today, different

amounts for subsidies according to the children's attendance hours and age. The state gave grants for six attendance hours a week and more. The state has used this system to direct the pattern of expansion of *barnehager*. For many years the grant system was directed to improve the establishment of full day *barnehager* for children 3 – 6 years. In order to direct the *barnehage* field to give the families the attendance hours they want and need, the direction of the system has been changed in various ways within the same frames. In the last few years the state grants for children 0 – 3 years have increased more than for older children.

During the past eight years several investment subsidies have been granted, in addition to the regular state grants. The purpose has been to try to expand access for 0 – 3 year-olds as fast as possible. This has been an effective method and access has increased faster than in the years without these special funds. There are no such subsidies for 1998.

The state grant system also has money earmarked for disabled children in *barnehager* and there are grants for bilingual assistants and Saami *barnehager*. To receive state grants, every *barnehage* once a year must fill in a form which give information about the number of children, attendance hours and age etc. This form is also used for statistics. The completed form must be sent to the municipality, who make an application for the total state grants for all the *barnehager* in the municipality to the county governor. The county governor pays the state grants to the municipalities, who have to forward the state grants to each *barnehage* which is not owned by the municipality itself.

The state subsidies for running costs have increased from about 12 million NOK in 1972 to more than 4 billion NOK in 1998. This increase is both due to the increased number of places in *barnehager* and to the fact that the central government has increased its part of the total running costs. Subsidies in 1996 were more than twice the amount allocated in 1990.

The table below shows central governmental subsidies for *barnehager* in the years 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 1999 (in 1 000 NOK)

1990: 1 921 000
1992: 3 041 000
1994: 3 698 000
1996: 4 266 000
1998: 4 280 000 (estimated)
1999: 4 586 900 (proposal)

³²Ministry of Local Government and Labour 1993

Challenge III B 1:

The state grant system is from 1976. The challenge is to evaluate whether the system is still suitable, or if it is time to propose an alternative way of financing.

Municipal supports to the *barnehage* sector (1996)

The basis of calculation of the municipal support to the *barnehage* sector is the accounts for municipal and private *barnehager* for 1996³¹. The accounts for *barnehager* run by the state and county municipalities (totally almost 100 *barnehager*, e.g. at hospitals) are not taken into account in this case. This means that there is some uncertainty concerning the figures presented.

The total municipal support to the *barnehage* sector was about 2,3 billion NOK. Of these the municipal *barnehager* got about 1,9 billion NOK, and the private ones about 0,4 billion NOK.

Total running costs/sharing of costs

Table 7. Annual average total expenditure for a place in a *barnehage* 1996 (rounded off)

Age	Private <i>barnehager</i>	Public <i>barnehager</i>
0 – 2 years	90 000 NOK	100 000 NOK
3 – 5 years	45 000 NOK	50 000 NOK

The expenditure figures are culled from municipal account and from accounts statistics for private *barnehager*. (Statistics Norway)

The total average expenditure for one hour's attendance in *barnehage* for children over the age of three is about 23 NOK in municipal *barnehager* and about 20 NOK in private *barnehager*. In private *familiebarnehager* the total average expenditure per hour is about NOK 30 for children 0-2 years, NOK 22 for 3-year-olds and 15 NOK for 4-6 year-olds. Figures for public *familiebarnehager* do not exist.

The difference in expenditures between private and public *barnehager* is due to the fact that private *barnehager* to a lesser extent than the municipal ones have children with disabilities and children who for other reasons are in need of special help. For this reason the private *barnehager* have a better use of staff resources than the public ones. It is also a question

whether the private *barnehager* make more use of unpaid work, for instance by parents. There may also be differences in wages and pension schemes between the public and private *barnehager*. The annual average expenditure was the same in 1995. Because of the annual wage negotiations for 1998 the wages of staff in *barnehager* have risen to such an extent that the average expenditure will be higher in 1998.

The parents' fees vary from municipality to municipality. In some municipalities the fees are the same for all children, in other municipalities they vary with the parents' income. If the municipality gives private *barnehager* municipal support, it may decide to lay down rules on the parents' fees. An investigation made by the Association of Local and Regional Authorities shows a tendency towards more fixed prices. The tax benefits are mentioned in Section III E.

Table 8. Reduced parents' fees for brothers and sisters in municipal and private *barnehager* 1997 (Association of Local and Regional Authorities)

	Yes	No
Municipal	98%	2%
Private with municipal support	72%	28%
Private without municipal support	55%	48%

Almost all municipalities have reduced parents' fees for families with more than one child in *barnehage*. The reduction varies between 20, 30, 40 and 50%.

Challenge III B 2:

It is a challenge to meet the families' demands at a price which do not exclude children because of their families' economic situation. There should be better monitoring of the consequences of public expenditure.

Challenge III B 3:

It is a challenge to create a more impartial *barnehage* funding. The parental part of the funding must become more acceptable. The local authorities should be more responsible for supporting both public and private institutions more equally.

Challenge III B 4:

It is a challenge to aim for equality in quality and price between public and private *barnehager*.

³¹ Statistics Norway

Table 9. Distribution in per cent of total expenditures for all barnehager, by parents, the state, municipalities and others 1996 (weighted) (Statistics Norway)

	Parents' payment	State subsidies	Municipal subsidies	Income from other sources*
Private barnehager	45,5	39,3	8,2	7,0
Municipal barnehager	28,9	36,2	27,9	7,0

* Income from other sources consists of wages refunded by the National Insurance Scheme, and contributions from employers, associations, institutions and others.

When dealing with a white paper from the government to the Storting in 1988²⁴, the Storting agreed that the sharing of the running costs between the central government, the municipalities and the parents should be 40/30/30%, whether the *barnehager* were private or public. Table 9 shows that the parents' pay is higher in the private sector, and that the municipalities do not fulfil the Storting's intention. Even the central government pays too low subsidies according to this political goal.

The *Association of Privately Owned Kindergartens* points out that the share of costs in the private sector is not according to the Storting's intention that 30% of the running costs should be paid by the municipalities. The differences in municipal grants vary both from municipality to municipality and within each municipality. This fact means that the frames for the privately owned *barnehager* are insecure. There are few municipalities with long range policies in this field.

Commissioned by the Ministry, Statistics Norway make a survey every half year of the parents' fees in *barnehager* operated by the municipalities and in *barnehager* with municipal economic support.

Table 10. Annual average parents' fee for one child in municipal (or private barnehager with municipal support) by three levels of family income. The figures are non-weighted averages.

Family income	January 98	Increase Jan. 97/ Jan. 98
NOK 100 000	NOK 19 530	4,5 per cent
NOK 250 000	NOK 27 168	2,3 per cent
NOK 375 000	NOK 29 572	3,4 per cent

The table shows an increase in the parents' fees between 2,3 and 4,5% from January 1997 to January

²⁴ Innst. S. nr. 157 (1987-88)

1998. In the same time the consumer price index increased 2%.

Total running costs by full access in the year 2000

When estimating what the total running costs by full access will be, one has to take into account a lot of premises. The choice of premises may have considerable consequences for the result of the estimates. In the estimates given here, it is tried to show how changes in premises will influence on the total costs.

Two conditions will be quite decisive for the total running costs:

- The access for each age group, e.g. how many places is needed to meet the goal *full access*
- The development of the running costs in the *barnehager*

In the estimates the basis is the 1996 costs and different yearly increase in costs for each year until the year 2000.

In the estimates the following premises concerning degrees of access and cost development are taken into account:

Low estimate - 68% access (50% for 1 – 2 year-olds and 80% for 3 – 5 year-olds).

High estimate - 75% access (60% for 1 – 2-year-olds and 85% for 3-5 year-olds).

To reach the access of respectively 68% and 75%, there has to be established places for respectively 20 000 and 40 000 children when one year class is 60 000 children.

Underneath are three alternatives for the development in costs:

Alt. 1 – Same costs per place as in 1996

Alt. 2 – 3% yearly increase in costs for the years 1997, 1998 and 1999

Alt. 3 - 5% yearly increase in costs for the years 1997, 1998 and 1999

Table 11. The total running costs (state, municipalities, parents) by alternative combinations of premises. The figures in brackets give the costs for the state if the state should cover 40% of the total costs. All figures are in billion NOK.

Year group 1-5 years	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3
Low estimate	11,1 (4,4)	12,1 (4,8)	12,9 (5,2)
High estimate	12,6 (5,0)	13,7 (5,5)	14,5 (5,8)

The costs for places for 0-year-olds come in addition to the figures in the table. The total yearly costs will be about 140 million NOK for about 2 000 0-year-olds and an average cost of 70 000 NOK per place.

Reducing of costs

One way to reduce the costs is to increase the productivity in the sector. Weekly hours of attendance per man-year worked can be used as an indicator of the productivity in the *barnehager*. There has been a small

increase in the total amount of attendance hours from 1996 to 1997. At the same time there was a decrease in man-year worked, which means that the staff capacity has been used better in recent years. This tendency has been the same through the last eight years. Such a development can not be expected in the future without consequences for the quality in the sector.

Do the *barnehager* help parents to work more outside home?

In Norway parents work outside the home whether they have a place in *barnehage* for their children or not. Many parents have private solutions, e.g. child-minders. The Ministry has no documentation that financing for *barnehager* helps more parents move into the labour force and obtain better paid jobs.

C. Staffing

The owner of the *barnehage* is responsible for seeing that the institution maintains the quality required to ensure that their operation is in conformity with stipulated aims and plans for the activity.

Table 12. The cost estimates divided between the year-groups 1 – 2 years and 3 – 5 years. All figures in billion NOK.

		Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3
1–2 year-olds	50% coverage (low)	5,2	5,7	6,1
	60% coverage (high)	6,3	6,9	7,3
3-5-year-olds	80% coverage (low)	5,9	6,4	6,8
	85% coverage (high)	6,3	6,8	7,2

Conclusion: Depending on the different conditions that are used, the total yearly running costs by full access will vary between 11,1 and 14,5 billion NOK, plus the costs for the 0-year-olds.

Table 13. Persons employed and man-year worked in the Norwegian *barnehager*, by position, December 1997. (Statistics Norway)

Position	Persons employed			Man-years worked
	Total	Public	Private	Total
All positions	51 793	32 250	19 543	39 311
Styrere	6 145	2 997	3 148	4 662
Pedagogiske ledere	9 757	6 476	3 281	8 372
Assistants	27 054	16 553	10 501	22 450
Bilingual assistants	1 164	943	221	563
Other teaching staff	2 679	2 060	619	1 644
Other persons employed	4 994	3 221	1 773	1 620

One of the most important premises for high quality *barnehager* is a well educated staff. According to the Framework Plan, and to the Norwegian *barnehage* tradition, the *barnehage*'s staff constitute a team. In planning and implementation account must be taken of the various resources represented by the staff, and the individual adult's personal experience and special interest must be turned to account. Work should be apportioned taking account of competence, ability and interests.

Pre-school teachers

The *barnehage* Act sections 16 and 17 say that *styrere* and *pedagogiske ledere* must be educated pre-school teachers. Through her/his position and training the *styrer* is responsible for ensuring satisfactory planning, observation, collaboration and evaluation of the work. The *styrer* is also the owner's representative in regulation to the other staff in the *barnehage*. The concrete organisation and arrangement of the work must be done jointly by all adults in the institution.

The *styrer* is also responsible for guidance of all staff. According to the *barnehage* Act the *styrer* is responsible for "the day-to-day management of the institution". This means both administrative and educational management. The *styrer*'s tasks may vary according to the size of the *barnehage* as well as to the division of administrative tasks between the *styrer* and the owner. The greater the *barnehage*, the more time has to be spent on administrative tasks. The owner may delegate tasks to the *styrer*, for instance accounts, budgets and intake of children.

The most important task for the *styrer* is to be responsible for the *barnehage*'s content. He/she has the responsibility for leading the planning and evaluation process in the *barnehage*. He/she is also responsible for the collaboration with parents and important authorities in the local environment: collaboration at the municipal level with the educational/psychological service, and when necessary the social security office and the children's toy and game lending centres as regards children with disabilities and children with special needs and their families, collaboration with the child welfare service, mother and child health stations and with schools.

The *pedagogiske ledere* are responsible for guidance of their immediate associates, in the first instance in cases where the latter lack training for the work they are doing. The *pedagogiske ledere* are responsible for the educational programmes in their groups of children and for day-to-day collaboration with the

children's parents. They organise their work among the staff in their group.

The *styrere* and the *pedagogiske ledere* are by law (section 24) obliged to provide guidance to students undergoing practice teaching during their pre-school teacher training.

Pre-school teacher education

The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs is responsible for the education of teachers. Teacher education is offered at state colleges and universities. Today, 20 of the 26 state colleges offer general teacher education. Higher education institutions with programmes in teacher education provide initial education and training, in-service training, as well as continuing education for teachers.

As a consequence of recent reforms in primary and secondary education (Reform '97 for primary and lower secondary education and Reform '94 for higher secondary education), the structure, content and organisation of teacher training has recently been revised. The revision concerned general teacher education, the programmes for vocational and specialised subject teachers, as well as the one-year programmes in educational theory for university and college graduates. A white paper regarding the foreseen changes was presented to the Storting in 1997. The new framework plans will be applicable for students admitted to general teacher education in the autumn 1998, for specialised subject teachers in 1999 and for vocational teachers in 2000.

The pre-school teacher education is given at 17 state colleges and at the one private college – Queen Maud's Memorial College of Early Childhood Education. There is also a Saami College in Finnmark, the most northern county. Admission to pre-school teacher education normally requires the completion of a three year study in general subjects (Norwegian and English language, mathematics, history, social studies and natural science) at the upper secondary level. In order to qualify as a pre-school teacher, it is necessary to successfully complete a three-year programme. The programme is focused on the various tasks for working in *barnehager*, in primary school grade 1, in the school's organised after-school activities and in other institutions with children at equivalent developmental stage. The education is free of charge, and the students may receive loans from the State Educational Loan Fund for their living expenses during their studies.

The first national Framework Plan for pre-school teacher education was introduced in 1980. At the same time the study period required was extended from two to three years. The plan was replaced by the current framework plan in 1995 (maintaining three years of study) which will be revised/changed in 1999. The overall aim of the Framework Plan is to ensure a common profile of all pre-school teacher education programmes in Norway.

The pre-school teacher education is a 60 credits education. 20 Norwegian credits correspond to one year of full-time studies. The education comprises of:

- Practical and didactic training (15 credits)
- Relevant subjects (35 credits) including drama, arts and crafts, music, natural science, Norwegian or Saami language, religion and ethics and social studies
- An in-depth study of at least one subject/area of work chosen among those mentioned above (10 credits), normally in the third year.

20 weeks are allocated to supervised practice of which 18 weeks primarily in *barnehager*. Additionally, practice periods in primary school grade 1, organised after-school activities and primary school grades 2 – 4 are mandatory.

In the pre-school teacher training the methodology chosen should reflect the aim of providing the students with the competencies, skills and knowledge required for teachers working with children of 0 – 7 years of age. Through inter- and multi-disciplinary co-operation the study programme is given a sense of unity. The study of education, in particular both theoretical and practical, should function as a means of linking the various disciplines together. Furthermore, it is emphasised that topics on special education are integrated in all subjects, especially in the practical and didactic training. Each college is free to organise its own teaching. Active participation by the students in creating a sound basis for life-long learning, is an absolute prerequisite.

The teacher training of pre-school teachers is organised as individual studies, group activities, and project work including research and development work depending on the subject as well as the topic. One of the overall aims is to develop the student's ability to reflect independently on educational, academic and didactic questions.

The main directly work-related training in the initial education takes place during the 20 weeks of supervised practice that are mandatory during the three

years of pre-school teacher education. There is no mandatory organised supervision of teachers after the completion of teacher education, and there is no period of probation for teachers.

Decentralised pre-school teacher education is organised at several locations in order to meet the growing demand for pre-school teachers as a result of the increased number of *barnehager* and the shortage of qualified pre-school teachers. The intention is to qualify non-professionals already employed in *barnehager* as *pedagogiske ledere* with dispensation from educational requirements or assistants. Decentralised pre-school teacher education has existed for about 20 years in Norway. Nowadays the education is usually organised over four years. The students are often grown-up women with families. This kind of education gives them an opportunity to be educated where they live. Many of the students work or have worked in *barnehager*. Decentralised education has also been a good way to recruit qualified pre-school teachers in rural areas.

Challenge III C 1:

It is a challenge for the colleges both to establish their education plans in harmony with the National Curriculum for the pre-school teacher training and to ensure that the changes in the *barnehage* field are taken into account.

Educated pre-school teachers may continue their education to receive lower and higher education degrees. In one state college (Oslo College) and at Queen Maud's Memorial College there are vocationally-oriented programmes which can lead to the specific college degree *høgskolekandidat i barnehagepedagogikk* (college graduate in pre-school education), normally obtained after six years of full-time study. All the state colleges may also confer the *cand.mag.* degree on the basis of four years of study. The pre-school teachers may also attend the social studies courses at the universities. They may obtain the lower university degree *cand. mag.* or the higher degree *cand. polit.* The higher degree studies include the writing of a thesis. These studies do not give better salaries if the students continue their work in the *barnehage*. In a way one may say that they *educate themselves out of the barnehage*. On the other hand, it is a great advantage to have well educated pre-school teachers in e.g. pre-school teacher education and in local, regional and national administration.

For many years there has been a lack of pre-school teachers. In 1997 19% of the persons employed as *styrere* and *pedagogiske ledere* worked with dispen-

Table 14 . Pre-school teacher education, applicants' 1st priority , admission and graduates 1992 - 1998 (Ministry of Education)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Comments
Applicants 1st priority*	12 169	17 001	17 736	16 071	15 501 5 404	14 985 4 298	8 850 2 899	3.37 applicants per student place
Admission	1 891	2 310	2 248	2 710	3 045	3 240	2 623 **	37% increase from 1994 till 1998
Graduates	1 010	1 227	1 198	1 547	1 878	1 807	***	70% increase from 1992 till 1997

* First registered in 1996

** The number of places available has been reduced due to fewer applicants to the higher education institutions concerned

*** Data will be available in May 1999

sation from the educational requirements. In 1994 24% had such a dispensation. The shortage is greater in the private than in the public sector. The municipalities may, after application from the owner of the *barnehage*, grant temporary dispensation from the qualification requirement after the position has been publicly advertised and no qualified applicant has come forward. The Ministry has no recent data on turn-over rates among pre-school teachers.

Table 15. Extract from the profile of professional qualification in the *barnehage* sector. Number of employees, 1995-1997 (Statistics Norway)

	1995	1996	1997
<i>Styrere and pedagogiske ledere</i>	15 730	15 815	15 902
Employees with dispensation from educational requirements	3 440	3 218	2 998

The places in pre-school teacher training in the colleges have more than tripled over a few years, from about 900 first year students in 1987 to about 3000 first year students in 1997. The Storting demanded in 1995 and 1996 a programme for action in order to educate pre-school teachers to meet the goal for *barnehage* for all children whose parents wish it within the year 2000. A white paper was laid down in 1997³⁵. In this white paper the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs concluded that it would be necessary to keep up the high

³⁵St. meld. nr. 52 (1996 - 97)

capacity in study places for some more years. In 1998, however, all the study places were not filled, due to few applicants. Explanations may be shift of interest in the student population, decreasing student population groups and more unknown factors. The Ministry has to analyse the reasons for this decrease in demand. The Norwegian Union of Teachers is worried about the lack of educated pre-school teachers in the *barnehager*, and demands the authorities to take this problem more seriously.

Challenge III C 2:

It is a challenge for the central authorities to educate enough pre-school teachers. For the employers the challenge is to keep their staff qualified and give them working conditions which will make them stay in their jobs.

Assistants

For assistants there are no special demands for education. They may have different backgrounds. In 1994 a comprehensive reform entered into force in upper secondary education. The county municipalities are responsible for this education. The reform created a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education leading either to a university entrance qualification or to a vocational qualification. The right has to be exercised within four years. The 2 + apprenticeship model normally consists of two years of school and two years of apprenticeship. The apprenticeship may take place in *barnehager*. Within the area "health and social studies" there is a field for child and youth workers. The education aims at work in *barnehager*, schools, organised after school

activities, clubs, volunteer organisations or within municipal services for mentally retarded people. The education contains several components concerning work with children. In 1997 the first 1 374 child and youth workers completed their education, the number in 1998 was 1 774.³⁶

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is of the opinion that the child and youth workers are well educated to work in *barnehager*, and that they will contribute to an increase in the total competence among the *barnehage* staff.

Other teaching staff may be staff to take care of children with disabilities, while "other persons employed" may be cleaning staff etc.

Bilingual assistants

The bilingual assistants may have different backgrounds, some of them are trained teachers from their home countries. Bilingual assistants are especially well equipped to help provide a basis for *barnehager* to provide good facilities for children and parents from linguistic and cultural minorities.

Police certificates for staff

(the *barnehage* Act, section 20)

In order to give the children safe care, persons who are convicted of sexual abuse of children have since 1996 been barred from employment in *barnehager*. Whoever intends to work in a *barnehage* must produce a satisfactory police certificate. This certificate must show whether the person concerned has been accused of, indicted for or convicted of sexual abuse of children.

Further training

The employers are responsible for further training and upgrading courses for their staff. In the municipal sector there is an agreement between the employers and the employees about development and training of staff³⁷. All municipalities must, according to this agreement, have development plans for their staff. In some municipalities the staff in private *barnehager* are enrolled into these plans as a part of the municipal support and supervision.

Plan to seek a more gender-mixed workforce³⁸

The staff consists mostly of females, only 6,6% of the total staff are males³⁹. Among the *styrere* and *pedago-*

giske ledere 5,1% are males. The Ministry has worked out a plan in order to seek a more gender-mixed workforce. The Framework Plan says the following about children's need for both men and women:

"Children need to associate with both men and women in day care. Since the great majority of children in due course are likely to attend day care, it is worrying from a gender-equality perspective that the day care seem set to remain a women's environment. A broad awareness of this is needed, both on the part of staff and authorities."

In 1994 the Ministry arranged a conference for 150 male pre-school teachers. The aim of the conference was to focus on the lack of male staff in the *barnehager*, to get ideas about recruiting and to build up a network of men for further work in this field. The conference ended up with a group of one male pre-school teacher in each county to continue this work.

In 1995 the Ministry set down a group to work out a background document for a programme for action for recruiting men to work in *barnehager*. We also sponsored a video called *"The barnehage - an interesting place to be - for men too"*. This video is used in secondary schools, military services, parents' and staff meetings etc., with the intention to recruit men.

In 1996 there was a new conference with the network and representatives from the county governors. There were also representatives from two state colleges. The main goal for this conference was to establish contact between the network representative and the representative from the county governor to start planning the further work in each county.

In 1997 there was a conference for female *styrere*, with the aim to make them more interested in recruiting men to their *barnehager*.

In 1997 the Ministry laid down a programme for action for recruiting more men to work in *barnehager* *"The barnehaugen - a place to work for both men and women - The Ministry's initiatives 1997-2000"*⁴⁰. The goal in this programme is to have 20% men in the staff when full access in *barnehager* is reached. The plan tells what has been done in the field earlier, and what the further initiatives will be. The programme points out that colleges, local municipalities, private owners and the staff themselves also have to make efforts to recruit more men.

³⁶ The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1998

³⁷ Agreement between the Norwegian Union of Municipal Employees and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities

³⁸ Circular Q-0943 BFD

³⁹ Official Statistics of Norway 1997

⁴⁰ Barne- og familiedepartementet (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs) 1997, circular Q-0943

The county governors and the network have arranged conferences in all counties, there have been discussions with the state colleges on how to “gather the men” during their studies and discussions on how to recruit men. The Ministry has also made a report which gives a summary of available research on the topic *Men in barnehager and male care*⁴¹.

In the autumn 1998 the Ministry arranged a new conference with representatives from different public services, e.g. the labour market service and the upper secondary school sector, as participants. The intention was to discuss what these sectors can do in order to recruit more males to the *barnehager*.

A review of the Gender Equality Act⁴² has recently led to the conclusion that positive action may now be used for the benefit of men. In July 1998 the Ministry laid down a new regulation in pursuance of the Act. Men can now be requested to apply for certain positions within education and care for children. The regulation also opens for moderate quota regulation of men to such positions and education. The Gender Equality Act has until now only provided a legal framework for positive action in favour of women. The purposes for the regulation are to enforce equality between the genders and to underline that it is important for children’s attitudes to gender roles to meet men as educators and caregivers in *barnehage* and school.

In November 1998 the Ministry published the leaflet “*More men in the Norwegian barnehager*” and sent it to all the Norwegian *barnehager*. The aim is to encourage the *styrere* to discuss strategies for recruiting more men.

Challenge III C 3:

It is a challenge to develop strategies to recruit men to all kinds of positions in the *barnehager*. Special efforts have to be made to recruit male students to pre-school teacher education, and to keep them working in the *barnehager*.

Staff wages and working conditions

Salary and working conditions are laid down by negotiations between the employers and the employees. In the public sector the negotiations are between the Association of Local and Regional Authorities and e.g. the Norwegian Union of

Teachers and the Labour Union/Union of Municipal Employees. These wage agreements in the public sector are often followed in the private sector. This is an intentional policy on the part of the Teachers’ Union, because both private and public employees are in the same market when recruiting and keeping qualified pre-school teachers. The Teachers’ Union is of the opinion that different private owners have different ways of solving their tasks as employers, and that some of them do not take their responsibilities seriously enough. The Union’s work on negotiations to secure equality between the public and private sector in wages and working and retirement conditions represent hard work for the Union. Both unions underline problems concerning negotiations on retirement pensions in the private sector.

The system of wages is a framed system which gives possibilities for variations from municipality to municipality. The municipal system is a lowest allowed wages system for different occupational groups. Higher wages may be negotiated locally.

The weekly working hours for all employees in *barnehager* are the same as in the rest of the labour market, 37,5. Within this time pre-school teachers have four hours for planning etc. The *styrere* have a part of their working hours for leadership and administration. All employees in *barnehager* have 37,5 hours a year for planning. The Norwegian Union of Teachers want this planning to be common for the whole staff in the *barnehage*, but this is no longer part of the wage agreement.

The teachers in primary school have working conditions that are quite different from the teachers in primary school: One man-year is divided into 38 working weeks, within these one week is for planning. In lower primary school the teaching load is 25 lectures a week (one lecture = 45 minutes). 5 hours a week are for organised tasks at school. The rest of the year is to be used for planning etc.

The Norwegian Union of Teachers⁴³, which represents about 95% of all pre-school teachers in *barnehager* is of the opinion that pre-school teachers in Norway have a low status. They say they are underappreciated, especially by authorities and owners of *barnehager*. They point out the following conditions:

- level of wages, seen in connection with their responsibility and tasks and their high education
- lack of pre-school teachers
- the central authorities’ proposal for decreasing the number of study places in pre-school teacher education in the future

⁴¹ Bredesen 1997

⁴² Act no 45 of 9 June 1978 on Equality between the Genders

⁴³ letter to the Ministry of 2 September 1998 from the Norwegian Union of Teachers

Table 16. Lowest wages in NOK per year for different occupational groups in the *barnehage* and primary school when they start work and after 10 and 16 years of practice (Norwegian Union of Teachers, Wages agreement May 1998)

Occupational group	0 years	10 years	16 years
Styrer in <i>barnehage</i>	227.300		
Pre-school teacher in <i>barnehage</i>	194.100	220.100	223.700
Child and youth worker	175.100	205.000	208.700
Assistant in <i>barnehage</i>	160.700	184.000	187.300
Pre-school teacher in primary school	191.300		249.000 (28 years)
Teacher in primary school	201.300 (3 years ed.)		249.000
	220.100 (4 years ed.)		269.000
	223.700 (5 years ed.)		278.100

- lack of status has given a dramatic reduction in applicants for pre-school teacher education studies
- the former government's proposal to let primary school teachers be *pedagogiske ledere* in *barnehager* (this proposal was not approved by the Storting)
- the cash benefit scheme equals *barnehage* with childminders
- lack of political priority of the *barnehage* field gives low status
- The users' high satisfaction has not improved the status of the pre-school teachers.

The Union of Municipal Employees⁴⁴, which represents a large proportion of the staff in *barnehager* and primary schools who are not educated pre-school teachers or teachers, interpret the cause of this situation to be the high political status of the *barnehager* as against the lower status of the staff. They have a low turn-over among their members working in *barnehager*.

Working conditions in authorised family day-care

In *familiebarnehager* owned and run by the municipalities, the assistants in the homes are employed by the municipalities, and have their own wage agreement between the Union of Municipal Employees and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

There are several kinds of ownership in privately owned *familiebarnehager*, as well as in ordinary *barnehager*. The providers may either be self-employed service providers, or they may be established private employers. The assistants in *familiebarnehager* may either be the housewives/-fathers themselves or employed persons. Privately owned *familiebarnehager*

⁴⁴ letter to the Ministry of 31 August 1998 from the Norwegian Union of Municipal Employees

must also have educated pre-school teachers for teaching guidance (one educated pre-school teacher per 30 children). Some municipalities organise municipal teaching guidance for privately run *familiebarnehager*. The private owner may either pay for this service, or the municipality may give the service as municipal support.

The *familiebarnehager* may be organised in networks. Some of them have a base where children and staff from different homes may meet. Others may for instance visit each other. The Ministry has no information about the different ways childminding is organised. These are private solutions without any state grants.

Critical voices against the cash benefit scheme are anxious that *familiebarnehager* may be closed and operated as private childminding systems instead. The reason for this is that parents will receive the cash benefit instead of having their children in approved *familiebarnehager* that receive state grants for running. In the last two years there has been a decrease in the number of children in *familiebarnehager*.

D Programme content and implementation

Goals and philosophies

The *barnehager* in Norway are all grounded on the same main philosophies and goals. According to section 1 Purpose in the *barnehage* Act, the *barnehager* are required to provide children with good opportunities and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes. Further they must give the children an upbringing in conformity with Christian values. This means that *barnehager* are required to base their activity on the

fundamental ethics of Christianity which are assumed to enjoy widespread support in the Norwegian populace. The ethical guidance given by *barnehager* must take into consideration the children's age and maturity and their home environment. The ethical values of Christianity are clearly grounded on the Norwegian cultural tradition. Cultural values related to religious traditions, festivals, artistic expressions and fellowship are parts of the cultural heritage that pre-school children should get into contact with.

Traditionally the *barnehager* have had a great degree of freedom to make their own programmes within the frames of the *barnehage* Act and the regulations to the Act. The Norwegian and Nordic *barnehage* tradition and the pre-school teacher education had great influence on the content in the *barnehager*. From 1984 the *barnehage* Act was amended to give the *barnehage's* co-ordinating committee, consisting of staff, parents and owners, the task of working out the *annual plan* for the content of each *barnehage*.

National Curriculum

The Storting said in 1988⁴⁵ (the Ministry's translation):

"The committee has the opinion that time is in to work out a common framework plan for the barnehager. Even if the access still is for a minority of the children, the goal and content for the barnehager are of great interest for our society."

In 1990 the Ministry set down a committee to work out a proposal for a framework plan. The members of the committee were pre-school teachers, teachers from pre-school teacher education, researchers and representatives from local authorities. The committee delivered its proposal in 1992⁴⁶. This proposal was well received, both among the staff in the *barnehager*, by the trade unions and in the municipalities.

In 1992 the Ministry and the Saami Council agreed that a Saami supplement to the proposal should be worked out. Such a supplement was approved by the Saami Assembly in 1993.

In the proposition for the new *barnehage* Act⁴⁷ the Ministry proposed (section 2): *"The Ministry may lay down a framework plan for day care institutions. The framework plan shall provide guidelines for day care institutions' content and tasks"*. The Storting changed the wording from "may" to "shall".

The Framework Plan entered into force in 1996 as a regulation under the *barnehage* Act. The Saami supplement is integrated in the plan. All *barnehager*,

including *familiebarnehager* and open *barnehager*, must ground their annual plans on this plan, which is the Norwegian National Curriculum.

The Framework Plan emphasises that both local cultural values and the national cultural heritage as reflected in the childhood environment must be represented in the activity of the *barnehage*. It is important to see the entire cultural heritage as a whole if children are to gain an understanding of their own identity and a sense of belonging. Cultural values associated with religious traditions, festivals, artistic expression, social interaction, care and consideration are part of the cultural heritage that children in *barnehager* should come into contact with as a matter of course. Children from different religions should be able to feel pride and joy over their religious roots.

The *barnehage* must base the values it imparts on shared values in the community, values on which the majority can agree. This means values such as respect for life, equality, tolerance and respect for persons from other cultures, tolerance and respect for people with disabilities, equality of the genders, altruism and solidarity, justice, truth and honesty, peace and understanding, responsibility for conservation of nature and culture and responsibility for others.

The Framework Plan is rooted in a comprehensive (holistic) view of the child. The child's development is viewed as a dynamic and tightly meshed interplay between its physical and mental being. Interaction with other people - children and adults - is crucially important for the child's development. The child gravitates in its earliest years from close and intimate dependence on its family members towards encounters with new people and new environments.

Childhood is seen as a phase of life with intrinsic value. Infancy does not merely involve acquiring sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to participate in the adult community as rapidly as possible. It entails growth based on children's own premises.

Children learn through all experiences. The Framework Plan builds on a holistic concept of learning. This is in contrast to a view in which education primarily involves structuring and imparting a specific body of knowledge in the course of a limited period of time. Care of the child and interaction

⁴⁵ Innst. S. nr. 157 (1987-88)

⁴⁶ NOU 1992:17 Rammeplan for barnehagen

⁴⁷ Ot. prp. nr. 68 (1993-94)

between the adult and the child in care situations is seen as an important area of development through sensory experiences.

Learning encompasses both formal and informal learning in the Framework Plan. Formal learning features an organised framework where the object of the activity is self-evident. The daily assembly and theme work are pertinent examples.

A new development in this context is the focus on *basic competence* acquired by children as a result of informal learning processes, and the outcome of attending a *barnehage*. Basic competence is defined as the *development of social interaction skills, and the development of language and communication skills* in the broad sense. The most important preconditions for children's acquisition of social interaction skills and the ability to communicate are determined by the *barnehage's* approach to social interaction, play and day-to-day activities, or in other words by the continuous content and the working methods employed. Children's play is important both as content in itself and as a working method.

Objectives are formulated for children's development and learning both for their basic competence and for each of five subject-areas. Each of these subject-areas covers a broad area for learning:

- Society, religion and ethics
- Aesthetic subjects
- Language, text and communication
- Nature, environment and technology
- Physical activity and health.

The greater the age-spread in the institution, the wider the angle of approach must be and the greater the variation in working methods. Many children attend a *barnehage* from the age of 1-2 years up to school age. Hence one of the *barnehage's* greatest challenges in terms of planning will be to foster progression and development in children's encounter with the subject-areas. This requires long-term planning over several years.

In Saami *barnehager* the children encounter material and working methods that facilitate immersion in Saami language and culture. The Framework Plan emphasises that the individual *barnehage* should impart knowledge of the languages and forms of culture that are represented in the local community. Saami history and Saami cultural expressions such as *duodji* (Saami handicrafts) and *yoiking* (Saami song), folk-tales etc. should form part of the *barnehage's*

content, adapted to the children's age and level of development. The Framework Plan and the brief presentation of it are translated into the Saami language.

Chapter 4 in the Framework Plan deals with social interaction, play and day-to-day activities. A section is devoted to disabled children and children from unstable and difficult family conditions. These children may easily be isolated from interaction with other children, either because their disability in itself makes it difficult to get in contact, or because the help needed isolates the child. These children's learning and development must above all be promoted in the context of day-to-day social interaction. The children's problems must be interpreted and solved within the social context and the physical surroundings of their daily lives.

The Framework Plan also emphasises the necessity and importance of collaboration between the *barnehage* and other municipal services for children and families, e.g. the health stations, the child welfare services and the educational/psychological services.

The Framework Plan in itself is not a guarantee of quality, nor of the content the plan requires.

Challenge III D 1:

It is a challenge to create valid and reliable monitoring, assessment and evaluation to ensure that the intentions of the new national Framework Plan are implemented in each *barnehage* nationwide.

The primary school reform

As mentioned in section I, the compulsory school age was lowered from seven to six years in 1997. The teaching during the initial stage is based on the traditions from both the *barnehage* and the school, and will help to ensure an easy transition from *barnehage* to school. The education should nourish children's natural sense of wonder and their desire to explore through play, and emphasis must be placed throughout the initial stage on learning through play and on joint activities for different age groups. Based on the known, the children must gradually move to the unknown.

Large shares of the teaching should be organised into themes. These themes should contain elements from different subjects. Gradually, as the pupil moves up through the grades, the teaching may become more subject-specific. The education at the initial stage demands a more flexible school day than experienced

before the reform. To make this possible, ordinary primary school teachers and pre-school teachers must work together.

E. Family engagement and support

Parent involvement

Parental responsibility for care, upbringing and the children's rights to receive care from their parents are enshrined both in national laws and in international conventions. Both Nordic and international research show that pre-school programmes have the most positive effect when the parents are involved.

The *barnehage* represents a supplementary environment to the home. Collaboration between staff and parents is a natural part of the work of the *barnehage*. It is a precondition for continuity between home and institution and for the institution's ability to base its activity on the children's individual experiences and conditions of life.

To secure the parents' opportunities for involvement and co-operation between the staff and the parents, the Act says that every *barnehage* must have a parents' council and a co-ordinating committee. According to regulations the parents' council must promote the parents' shared interests and contribute to ensuring good collaboration. The parents' council has the right to express an opinion in matters of importance to the parents' relationship to the *barnehage*. The co-ordinating committee should be an advisory, contact-creating and co-ordinating body. The committee should in particular participate in discussions of the *barnehage's* underlying aims and practice and seek to promote contact between the *barnehage* and the local community.

A particular challenge for the *barnehage* is to bring about good co-operation with parents belonging to linguistic and cultural minorities and to lay the basis for these parents to participate in parents' councils and co-ordinating committees.

The Framework Plan is presented in a brief version⁴⁸ in order to let the parents get acquainted with the document. This version is also translated into English in order to reach non-Norwegian-speaking parents.⁴⁹

Recent research on parents' satisfaction with *barnehager* and their possibility of influencing the "*barnehage*" is mentioned in Section II A. Quality, because parents' satisfaction is seen as part of the *barnehage's* quality.

The SIFO report "*Barnehager – Tilbud og brukere – Kindergartens – providers and receivers*"⁵⁰ says that the results on parents' satisfaction may be interpreted as an inclination of that municipal *barnehager* give less foundation for satisfaction than the private ones, and that the results support the hypothesis that private enterprises are more sensitive to the consumers' wishes than public owned, in this case *barnehager*.

From the Ministry's point of view there may be many reasons for different opportunities for parent involvement. When both parents are working full time, they may have little time for involvement. Parent involvement is expected both in *barnehage* and school, and such involvement may take a lot of time. The municipal *barnehage* traditionally has social eligibility criteria, this may be reflected in the parents' involvement. It is also easy to think that a fully private institution will give a higher rating of parents' involvement, because their involvement also may be of financial character, either in the form of unpaid work or in higher parental fees.

As mentioned in Section II A Quality, the parents' first expectation to the *barnehage* is whether the child gets the necessary support and care.

Legislation of parents' rights⁵¹

Equality between the genders is an aim in Norwegian society. In order to achieve this aim, the policy has been to make it possible for both mothers and fathers to work outside the home and take care of their children. The authorities have worked to give both men and women individual rights and possibilities for this task.

Parental and adoption benefits

Parental and adoption benefits are payment that replace wages and salaries during leave of absence. The parental or adoption benefit period is the period during which a person receives parental and/or adoption benefits from the national government. The parental benefit leave is financed by the National Insurance and administered by the local National Insurance Offices. The parental benefit period is either 52 weeks with 80% pay or 42 weeks with 100%

⁴⁸ Pamphlet Q-0915 B/N/S

⁴⁹ Pamphlet Q-0917 E

⁵⁰ Mordal 1997

⁵¹ Act no 12 of 17 June 1966 on National Insurance, Act no 81 of 13 December 1991 on Social Services, Act no 4 of 4 February 1977 on Working Environment, Act no 4 of 26. June 1998 on Cash Benefit and pamphlet Q-0867 E

pay. The equivalent adoption benefit period is 49 or 39 weeks. Parents must choose their preferred alternative before birth or before taking care of the adopted child. The chosen alternative applies for the whole parental or adoption benefit period. Parents may choose to share the period of paid leave between them. However, certain weeks must be used according to specific rules. The mother must take three weeks of the parental benefit period prior to the birth. Six weeks after the birth is reserved for the mother and four weeks for the father (the paternity quota). In order to be entitled to parental benefit, the mother must have been in paid employment for at least six of the last ten months prior to the birth. Periods of sick pay and unemployment benefit are also regarded as equivalent to employment. If the income exceeds NOK 272 220 (1998) parental and adoption benefits do not cover the excess amount. Subject to agreement, full pay may be provided by the employer. Due to the parental benefit period there is little demand for *barnehage* for children under one year.

Time account

The *time account* is also financed by the National Insurance, and administered by the local National Insurance Offices. By using time account, parents may combine parental and adoption benefits with reduced working hours. The period of fulltime leave of absence is reduced, but the size of the parental and adoption benefit remains the same. The benefit period is extended and the parents can combine work with care of the child with no reduction in income. Time account may be used by parents who are entitled to parental or adoption benefit and work more than half time. Both mother and father may use the time account. They may choose to use their time account simultaneously or consecutively. The time account period may be minimum 12 weeks and maximum 104 weeks. During the time account period, the employee may choose to work 50, 60, 75 or 90 % of full time.

Family allowance

In addition to parental and adoption benefits for working parents, there are other financial support schemes and tax rules for families with children. *Family allowance* is the most important financial benefit for families with children. The family allowance scheme entered into force in 1946. This allowance is financed by the state, in the budget of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, and is administered by the local National Insurance Offices. Everyone living in Norway with children under the age of 16 has the right to family allowance. The family

allowance is normally paid to the mother, at specific rates determined by the Storting. In 1998 the annual amounts are as follows:

One child	NOK 11 112
Two children	NOK 22 740
Three children	NOK 35 832
Four children	NOK 49 572
Five children	NOK 63 708

The additional allowance for each child after the fifth is NOK 14 136 per year. For children living in Finnmark and North Troms counties (in Northern Norway), there is an additional supplement of NOK 3 792 per year. There is also a supplement for infants between the ages of one and three, NOK 7 884 per year. Single providers are entitled to an extra supplement. Single providers with children under the age of 16 are also entitled to an allowance for one child more than they actually provide for. The Government has proposed some changes in the family allowance for 1999.

Tax rules

There are also special *tax rules for families with children*. People with dependants are entitled to certain deductions in income tax. Anyone responsible for a child under the age of 19 is entitled to a tax allowance. Providers who do not earn income receive the same amount in cash. In 1998 the provider allowance is NOK 1 820 per year for children under 16. In addition to the provider allowance, parents with children under 12 years are entitled to a parental allowance. This is a deduction in taxable income to cover expenses in connection with the care of children. Parents who can document child care expenses are entitled to a standard allowance of NOK 20 700 for one child and 24 700 for two or more children. Families with two incomes are assessed in tax class 1 while families with one income and single providers are assessed in tax class 2. In 1998, the tax deduction in tax class 1 amounts to NOK 25 000, and single-income families are entitled to a double class deduction of NOK 50 000.

A parental allowance from earned income is also given to single working providers, provided that the provider is responsible for the care of a child aged 11 or younger and/or the provider is responsible for a dependent child aged 12 or older who has a special need for care and attention.

The Cash Benefit Scheme

It is a common understanding in Norway that parents with small children spend too little time with their children. In order to give parents better opportunities

to be with their children, the government intends to give *cash benefit* to all families with one-and two-year-olds. A proposal⁵² from the government to the Storting on this new family reform was approved in spring 1998. The cash benefit will give the parents the means to compensate for lack of salary or reduced salary due to reduction in working hours. The cash benefit scheme is financed by the state, in the budget of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, and administered by the local National Insurance Offices. The cash benefit is linked to the state funding of children attending *barnehage*, due to the idea that all children, whether they attend *barnehage* or not, should have about the same national subsidies. The support will be about the same as the state support for a place in *barnehage* for children under three years, NOK 3 000 per month. It will also be possible to combine a reduced child allowance with parttime *barnehage*. A child not attending any form of *barnehage* will, because of this connection, get the same sum (NOK 3 000) monthly as a *barnehage* gets in state funding for a full time child. The reform entered into force in August 1998 for oneyearolds and from January 1999 for twoyearolds. The political rationale is that parents should be free to choose whether they will stay home with their children themselves, use some other kind of child care, for instance childminders, or a *barnehage* with state funding to take care of their children. Due to this reform there is a likelihood of less demand for *barnehage* for one and twoyearolds in the future.

Care for children who are ill

According to the National Insurance Act, employees who care for a child under the age of 12 are entitled to leave if the child is ill. In such situations, each parent is entitled to leave with sick pay for up to 10 days a year. Parents with more than two children are entitled to 15 days a year. Single providers are entitled to 20 days. If the person responsible for daily care of the child is ill, the parents are entitled to leave according to the same rules. An employee who is responsible for the care of a chronically ill or disabled child under the age of 16 is entitled to up to 20 days' sick pay per year. If the employee is a single provider, he or she is entitled to 40 days' sick pay. This is administered by the local National Insurance Offices.

Reduced working hours and unpaid leave

According to the Working Environment Act, both mother and father are entitled to unpaid reduced working hours if this is necessary for important

welfare reasons. These may, for example, include the desire and need of parents of small children to spend more time with their children. An employee may be exempted from overtime or extra time which affects the care of a child.

The employee has a right to return to the same job as she or he had before the leave period. This also applies at the end of the *time account* period and in the case of leave over and above statutory parental leave related to pregnancy, birth, adoption and taking over the care of foster children. This right is pursuant to collective agreement between employers' and employees' organisations.

Employees in public enterprises have a right to unpaid leave of absence for three years to take care of their children themselves. These three years are in addition to parental leave in connection with birth and adoption.

The Parent Support Programme

The national government has in recent years given high priority to safeguarding children and young people and their families, securing a healthy and stimulating environment during their growing up. A national programme to support parents in raising their children, started out as a project in 1994 involving The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

The Parent Support Programme was based on various developmental programmes that have sought to provide health at the right time for the benefit of the child's psychological development and to prevent mental problems among the younger generation. The programme was designed to make it possible to reach all parents (if they want) in the municipalities, including vulnerable families in need of special support and guidance. An important goal was to strengthen parental function by using an approach that emphasised the parents' resources and their way of mastering their parental skills in raising their children. The Parent Support Programme was based on establishing a dialogue between the parents and supporters within the different services which it is natural for the parents to come in contact with. The questions from the parents formed the content basis of the counselling. Within the programme, a special effort was made to involve fathers in the daily routine of raising their children. Group sessions were established, organised and led by the fathers them-

⁵² Ot. prp. nr. 56 (1997-98)

selves. The aim was to strengthen relations between the father and the child in combination with a strengthening of male parenthood more generally.

The county governors had the responsibility for organising the educational programme to train public health nurses, social and child protection workers, pre-school and primary school teachers and other persons employed in the field around child development and upbringing. At the municipal level various services worked together, for example professionals from the child welfare system, the family guidance offices, the mother and child health stations, the educational-psychological services for *barnehager* and schools and the volunteers. The idea is also to stimulate inter-agency co-operation.

The ministries involved have organised and funded the development of educational material such as handbooks, videotapes and manuals for professionals who are guides and supporters for parents. Publications for parents concerning child development and booklets about different themes have also been created for this purpose. A great deal of this material has been translated into languages frequently used by immigrants and the Saami population.

The Parent Support Programme is no longer a project, but a permanent offer to the parent population who want to have easy access to services that can meet their requirements in child-rearing questions. The municipalities are now responsible for the financing, based on their own income, to carry on the Parent Support Programme among other services to the population, e.g. *barnehager*.

Mother and Child Health Stations

The Municipal Health Act⁵³ is the legal basis for the health station and also for the school health services.

The strategies to promote healthy child development are built upon the national strategies for health promotion. The primary health services in the municipalities ensure that the child receives necessary medical assistance and health care, also with regard to the diagnosis of ailments that require hospital treatment.

The mother and child health stations offer programmes which are voluntary and free, including a screening programme for evaluation of the child's development up to the age of six.

The objective of the activity of the health stations is to prevent disease, including dental disease, and injuries among children. Doctors are responsible for somatic examinations. Public health nurses and doctors cooperate in connection with tasks which involve evaluation and advice in relation to the child's health, such as nutrition, breast-feeding, development through play and stimulation, sensory-motor development, mental hygiene, cleanliness, sleep, accident prevention and vaccines.

Health stations are easily accessible for users in municipalities, and their programmes are utilised by almost a hundred per cent of those eligible. Health stations are responsible for co-ordinating measures for disabled children and pre-school children who have need for special services, for example psychological services. Both the mother and child health stations and the school health services co-operate with other services, such as the social security services, the child welfare services, the educational-psychological services, the *barnehage* staff, people working with children in leisure activities and recreation clubs, the police etc.

The mother and child health stations in the municipalities are of great importance with regard to ensuring suitable prenatal and postnatal health care for mothers and thus reducing the infant mortality rate. They are an important part of the primary health services and play a key role with regard to providing people with information on child health and nutrition and to the development of preventive health care and parental guidance. From 1995 the midwife services are obligatory in the municipalities, to strengthen pregnancy care.

On the national level *The Action Programme of Children and Health 1995 – 99*, focuses on the main national objectives of health promotion and prevention. The main goal is to stimulate the municipal government to work with these tasks across the different disciplines, services and also to try to involve voluntary organisations in the work.

Child Welfare

According to the Child Welfare Act⁵⁴ the municipal child welfare service should intervene when children are not properly cared and provided by their parents. Intervention may also be necessary when the child is seriously maladjusted to society, i.e. when the child is delinquent or in other ways behaves deviant. Finally

⁵³ Act no 66 of 19 November 1982 on Municipal Health Services

⁵⁴ Act no 100 of 17 July 1992 on Child Welfare Services

the child welfare service can intervene when handicapped children do not get the care and treatment they need at home.

When the child welfare service gets reports that a child is in a difficult situation, an investigation is carried out. The social workers talk to parents and children in order to find out what is causing the problems and what can be done to solve them. Various preventive measures may be effectuated. The child welfare service may i.e. place the home under supervision by appointing a supervisor for the child. A place in *barnehage* is commonly used as a voluntary measure in the child welfare services. If this does not solve the problems, the children are taken in care, i.e. placed in a foster home or children's institution.

Section IV. Evaluation and research

This section seeks to identify the processes and information sources that are used to evaluate the impact of policies and monitor changing conditions of policy.

The Ministry initiates research and evaluation on topics concerning different questions in the *barnehage* field. The main purpose of this research is to gather funded knowledge for policy-making, or for evaluation of ministerial initiatives of different kinds in the field. The yearly grants for these purposes are rather low. In 1998 the state grants for evaluation, research, developmental work and information is 12,2 millions NOK. This sum had decreased during the last ten years.

The Ministry also give some grants to the Norwegian Research Council, who are in charge of different research programmes.

Yearly statistics on *barnehager*

Statistics Norway is responsible for the *Official Statistics of Norway*. The series consists mainly of primary statistics, statistics from the statistical accounting system and results of special censuses and surveys, for reference and documentation purposes. In this series Statistics Norway present the publication *Child Care Institutions*. This publication presents statistics on 15. December each year. This work is part of the state commission to Statistics Norway, and is financed by the central governmental budget, not by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

The information for the *barnehage* statistics is a yearly completed form from each *barnehage*. This form is put together in co-operation between the Ministry and Statistics Norway. In addition to being used for statistics, the calculation of the state grants to each *barnehage* is based on this form.

The statistics are primarily used to follow the development within

- the number of children using *barnehage*, hereunder the distribution among age groups and attendance hours
- the ownership of the *barnehager*, private or public and the amount of private *barnehager* with municipal economic support

- the composition of the staff
- the number of children with special needs, e.g. children with disabilities or children who attend groups with bilingual assistants.

On commission from the Ministry of Government Administration and Labour, *Statskonsult* (the Directorate for Administration Development) has finished a pilot project on reporting on data on municipal economy and public services to the state (*Kommune-stat-rapportering*, KOSTRA). The results of this project will influence how this kind of statistics will develop in the future.

Surveys of parents' fees

Commissioned by the Ministry, Statistics Norway make a survey every half year of the parents' fees in *barnehager* operated by the municipalities and in *barnehager* with municipal economic supports. The survey is made in a selection from 109 municipalities. The survey is financed by the Ministry.

Annual financial statements of accounts in private and public *barnehager*

All private *barnehager* are obliged to fill in an annual financial statement report made by the Ministry. Statistics Norway make a report of these statements. These statements are the basis of calculation of the average running costs and the share of these costs between the state, municipalities and parents. In the same way municipal annual financial statements are gathered to make the same calculations for the municipal *barnehager*. These data are of much use concerning the work on the central governmental budget and the control of the share of costs between the three parts. The Storting pay a lot of interest in these figures, besides the total number of children attending *barnehage*.

Research on quality

The Ministry has initiated projects concerning quality. The National Institute of Public Health has had the responsibility for two projects in this field. The summary and conclusions in the report from the project "*Quality in Day Care institutions*"²⁶ say that quality is related both to hard facts, called structure,

²⁶ Borge 1995

and soft values. Structural definitions of quality are in lack of criteria that are directly related to children's development and health, staff job satisfaction, their educational ideas and the parents' satisfaction with the quality. The challenge in quality of the Norwegian *barnehage* is to keep and develop the well established *barnehage* tradition. To manage this, the staff must identify with all aspects of the quality in their local *barnehage* in close collaboration with the parents and authorities. A broad involvement and discussion about quality in *barnehager* is an important premise.

The report "*The child's value and the values of the barnehage - An analysis of knowledge*"⁵⁶ focuses on different fields of research concerning children and *barnehager*. The report emphasises that international research indicates that both the parents' and the *barnehage's* care are enormous potentials for small children's sound development. A sound development is connected with the quality of the care, not where the care takes place. The high quality in the Norwegian *barnehager* is of good help to Norwegian parents, and makes parenthood a positive experience.

The report concludes that Norway has good statistics and research on living conditions for families with small children, good knowledge about the pre-school teacher profession's development and their professional experience of today, that research on child welfare has been highlighted, and that we have good knowledge about children's language development and special educational work for small children. The further conclusions are that there is little knowledge about small children's mental, somatic and "social" health. There is little knowledge about the effect of different kinds of early intervention, and there is need for more knowledge about relations within families and between families and *barnehager*. The researcher proposes to establish a centre for *barnehage* research, and to introduce a yearly prize for the best lecture about children. The report emphasises that Norwegian research in the field seldom is published outside the Nordic countries.

Research concerning immigrant children

The Ministry initiated in 1995 two projects⁵⁷ on the basis of the state grants for bilingual assistants. The conclusions here were that most immigrant children who had bilingual assistants in their *barnehage*, had good opportunities to develop their language competence. The municipalities with the best experience with children with minority languages were those

⁵⁶ Borge 1998

⁵⁷ Tefre 1996, Asplan Viak Trondheim 1997

who were able to see all public services for refugees and immigrants in connection with each other.

Research in connection with the introduction of the cash benefit scheme

The Ministry will evaluate different aspects in connection with the introduction of the Cash Benefit Scheme. The Ministry particularly will emphasise which groups of parents and children will apply for this supply, and what will happen to children with disabilities and children-at-risk. Statistics Norway, on the commission of the Ministry, has made a base-line investigation⁵⁸ in the autumn 1997. The sample was 3500 mothers with children under school age. The report "*Care arrangements for children in families with small children, occupational status and economy before the introduction of the cash benefit scheme*" concludes as follows:

- Mother/father and *barnehage* are the most common arrangements for care - and are the arrangements mothers prefer
- Half of the mothers have a place in *barnehage* for their youngest child, and more than half of them for the older ones
- 59% of the mothers who are entitled to cash benefit, say that they will make use of it, 17% will not, and 24% do not know yet. The reason for choosing the cash benefit is to get more time together with their children
- Mothers or childminders will take care of the «cash benefit children»
- 37% of the "cash benefit children" who have a place in *barnehage* will possibly have other care arrangements when the cash benefit scheme enters into force
- 82% of the mothers believe that the cash benefit will lead to reduced working hours for women, and 80% believe that the parents of small children will have greater freedom of choice
- 88% of the mothers have the opinion that *barnehage* for all who wish it is a good initiative
- mothers are usually content with their working hours outside home.

Family day care

On commission of the Ministry, the College of Stavanger has carried out a project on "*Roles and relations in familiebarnehager*". The report⁵⁹ is from a 2,5 year study in private and public *familiebarnehager* in seven municipalities in the county of Rogaland. The report concludes that the most important keys to a good *familiebarnehage* are the abilities of the assis-

⁵⁸ Rønning, Statistics Norway 1998

⁵⁹ Abrahamsen and Mørkeseth 1998

tants and the quality of the teaching guidance. The report shows further that the assistants often do not get the necessary guidance. The researchers also say that the teaching guides base their guidance to too great an extent on their knowledge of ordinary *barnehager* and pay little attention to the *familiebarnehage's* distinctive character: small groups with home-like qualities. They say that the pre-school teacher education gives the students little knowledge and competence related to this kind of *barnehage*. Many municipalities also have little knowledge about *familiebarnehager*.

Children with disabilities in barnehager

The report "*Of course they should be given priority admission*"⁶⁰ concludes that children with disabilities are given priority to the extent that suitable measures are available, even if there are exceptions. Being admitted to a *barnehage* may imply simply permission to attend accompanied by a special aid without much contact with the other children, or it may imply belonging to a group of children in which every child participates and contributes according to his/her own ability. Adaptation could be improved if better use were made of the cross-professional expertise available in the municipalities. The choice of the special aid, the way the other personnel is used and how the work in the *barnehage* is organised are all of vital importance to the child's integration possibilities. It is also of great importance that special educational measures are taken to supplement the *barnehage's* ordinary activities.

The report "*The children who are not here, are not disabled*"⁶¹ concludes that there are no findings - neither in the quantitative data nor in the interviews - to indicate that disabled children are not granted places in *barnehager* on application. The disabled children are indeed admitted, and the local authorities show great loyalty to the law and the accompanying guidelines. This even though many *barnehager* are not physically well-suited for receiving disabled children dependant on considerable amounts of special equipment. This indicates that the *barnehage* Act's demand has an important function and is central to disabled children and their families.

Research projects under the auspices of the Research Council of Norway⁶²

The Research Council has four projects that focus on children in *barnehager*.

In connection with epidemic-clinical research on indoor climate the National Institute of Public Health is responsible for the project "*Day-care Environment*

and Children's Health". The project explains the significance of the indoor environment in home and *barnehage* in regard to children's health. The project may form the basis of the development of indicators that may be taken as standards.

The programme "*The development of Knowledge and Initiative in Special Education*" was established in 1993. The programme will ensure that initiatives are taken to carry out projects that can help bolster knowledge regarding the measures and service needed to give children, young people and adults with special needs quality educational services in their local communities, primarily in local *barnehager* and schools. Furthermore, this research programme is to be relevant to practical needs and must be used to improve the situation of the disabled. This research programme will give the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs and the school sector as a whole a basis for decision-making and development of the field. There are three projects concerning *barnehager* and children in pre-school age in this programme: 1) "*Social competence in barnehager*". This project is concerned with how pre-school teachers manage to plan and set out the situation in the *barnehage* in a way that can contribute to strengthen children's social competence. 2) "*Institutionalisation while growing up – empowerment or dropout*". The project analyses whether the educational programmes for the 5 – 7-year-olds form the basis of empowerment, belonging and self management. 3) "*Everyday life's segregation in integrating institutions – barnehager*". The project aims to understand why the integration of disabled and/or different persons is difficult, even in institutions that have had integration as a goal for several years.

The Norwegian Research Council appraises the Norwegian research contribution concerning the age group 0 – 6 years as low. They state that there is a need for research into this age group with the aim of gathering knowledge which can put children's growth and development into a more holistic context. There are few, if any, research environments that have built up special competence in *barnehage* research. Concerning this question the Research Council is of the same opinion as the researcher Anne Inger Helmen Borge.

⁶⁰ Madsen 1993

⁶¹ Lorenzen 1994

⁶² Letter of 26. August 1998 to the Ministry from the Norwegian Research Council

Challenge IV 1:

It is a challenge to inspire Norwegian researchers to do longitudinal studies on the *barnehage*'s effect on children's development in order to improve programmes and quality.

Evaluation and research projects under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs⁴³

The Centre for Research on Health preventive work, Environment and Life style (the HEMIL Centre) at the University of Bergen gave in 1997 a report concerning preventive work among children and young people. The report focuses on which resources and themes the preventive services have at their disposal, what the most challenging questions are, co-operation between different actors in preventive work and how the municipalities evaluate measures from the state.

The National Board of Health and the county municipal doctors have made a survey of the school health services in 1996. Commissioned of The National Board of Health, the HEMIL Centre looked over literature concerning the mother and child health stations in 1996.

Research on mother and child health stations is part of the programme concerning preventive health work under the auspices of the Norwegian Research Council.

The HEMIL Centre is evaluating The Action Programme of Children and Health.

⁴³ Letter of 8. September 1998 from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Section V. Concluding comments

This report has tried to guide the reader through different aspects of the history and to present the situation of the *barnehage* field in Norway. The Ministry has also tried to give some background information about other public issues concerning families and small children.

The main change in the last ten years is that state funding to families with small children has increased enormously, partly because of an increase in already existing means and partly because different governments have established new ways of supporting the families. The latest reform is the cash benefit support to families with one- and two year olds.

As regards ECEC, access has grown to the extent that the majority of pre-school children attend a *barnehage* for a shorter or longer period before they start school. However, there are still quite a few on the waiting lists, especially children below three years of age.

Apart from the growth in access, there has been a series of innovative programmes, both national and local. The aim for the programmes has mainly been to try to meet the families' needs for access and flexible opening hours in order to be able to keep up attendance regardless of the parents working hours, each day or some days a week. The quality of the *barnehager* also seems to meet parents' expectations that parents without paid work also ask for access for their children. Because of the lowering of the school age to six years, the *barnehager* were able to offer attendance to more children below three years of age.

As more children get access to *barnehager* public expenditure increases to the extent that it is time to ask if it is possible to lower the cost per child. In order to do this one has to look closely on the child : staff ratio and other quality standards. This is a difficult question because of the balance between the staff and families who already have access and want to maintain the present standards and the children and families waiting to get access. The question of whether the municipalities ought to take a higher financial responsibility or if the state should carry the burden alone also raises several conflicts of interests.

As mentioned in the report, the Government plans to put forward a white paper in 1999. The aim is to make proposals for how to meet the main challenges. Through this report the Ministry has tried to state several of these. The report closes this final comment by listing all the future challenges where it is necessary have to find some answers:

- It is a national responsibility to start the discussion and initiate the development of new quality standards for the Norwegian *barnehage* and discuss whether they should be regulated nationally or locally based. (II A 1)
- It is a challenge to reach the political goal of giving access to ECEC, full time or part time, to all children whose parents wish so in the year 2000. (II B 1)
- It is a challenge to ensure that all municipalities should feel responsible for meeting the demand for access in order to give families equal services regardless of in which part of the country they live. (II B 2)
- It is a challenge for the owners of *barnehager* and staff to make efforts to offer a variety of opening hours and programmes in order to meet the needs of both children and parents. (II B 3)
- It is a challenge for the municipalities and the *barnehage's* staff to give all children with special needs good care and understanding in the *barnehage*, and to establish good contact and co-operation with the parents of these children. (II B 4)
- It is a challenge to ensure that children from language minorities have a good understanding of the Norwegian language before they start school. (II B 5)
- The state grant system is from 1976. The challenge is to evaluate whether the system is still suitable or if it is time to propose an alternative way of financing. (III B 1)

- It is a challenge to meet the families' demands at a price which do not exclude children because of their families' economic situation. There should be better monitoring of the consequences of public expenditure. (III B 2)
- It is a challenge to create a more impartial *barnehage* funding. The parental part of the funding must become more acceptable. The local authorities should be more responsible for equal support of private and public institutions. (III B 3)
- It is a challenge to aim towards equality in quality and price between public and private *barnehager*. (III B 4)
- It is a challenge for the colleges both to establish their educational plans in harmony with the National Curriculum for the pre-school teacher training and to ensure that the changes in the *barnehage* field are taken into account. (III C 1)
- It is a challenge for the central authorities to educate enough pre-school teachers. For the employers the challenge is to keep their staff qualified and give them working conditions which will make them stay in their jobs. (III C 2)
- It is a challenge to develop strategies to recruit men to all kind of positions in the *barnehager*. Special efforts have to be made to recruit male students to pre-school teacher education, and to keep them working in the *barnehager*. (III C 3)
- It is a challenge to create valid and reliable monitoring, assessment and evaluation to ensure that the intentions of the new national Framework Plan are implemented in each *barnehage* nation-wide. (III D 1)
- It is a challenge to inspire Norwegian researchers to do longitudinal studies on the *barnehager's* effect on children's development in order to improve programmes and quality. (IV 1)

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