

Children's right to participation- opportunities and obstacles in everyday interactions



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Focus

- ▶ 1. Foundations - in national and international documents
- ▶ 2. Factors in the field which create premises for children's participation
- ▶ 3. Some ideas regarding regarding future work.

§ 3 - Kindergarten Act

- ▶ «Section 3. *Children's right to participate*
- ▶ Children in kindergartens shall have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten.
- ▶ Children shall regularly be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten.
- ▶ The children's views shall be given due weight according to their age and maturity.»
- ▶

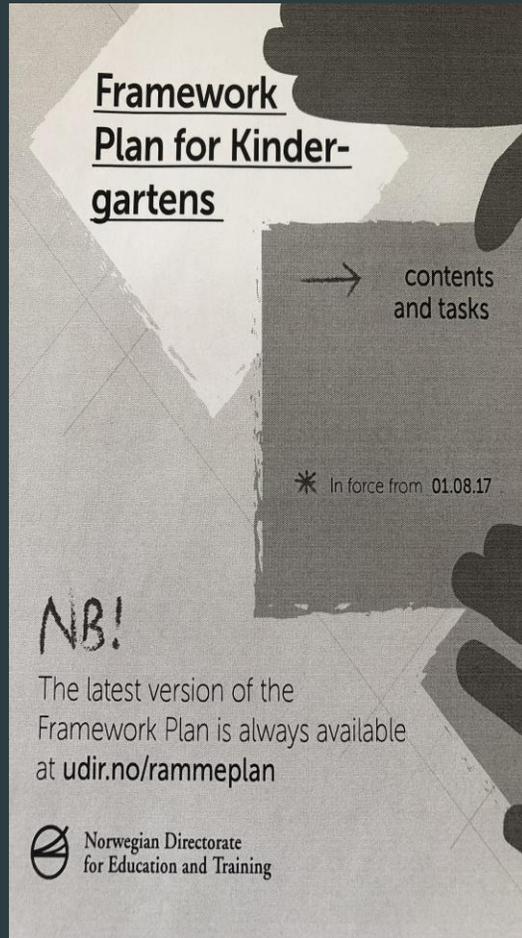


From The Constitution of Norway- § 104

- ▶ « Children have the right to respect for their human dignity. They have the right to be heard in questions that concern them, and due weight shall be attached to their views in accordance with their age and development.
- ▶ For actions and decisions that affect children, the best interest of the child shall be a fundamental consideration.»



Participation - formation to democracy



- ▶ “All children shall be able to experience democratic participation by contributing to and taking part in kindergarten activities regardless of their communication and language skills” (p 9).
- ▶ « All children shall find themselves having a say in what is happening in the kindergarten (p. 27)
- ▶ “The youngest children and children who communicate by means other than speech are also entitled to express their views on their own terms” (p 27) .

General comments from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

- ▶ Thorough and authoritative guidelines,
- ▶ no7 (2005)
- ▶ no12 (2009),
- ▶ no17 (2013)

UNITED NATIONS	CRC	COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD Fifty-first session Geneva, 25 May-12 June 2009
	Convention on the Rights of the Child	Distr. GENERAL
	CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 20 September 2006	GENERAL COMMENT NO. 12 (2009)
	Original: ENGLISH	The right of the child to be heard
<hr/> COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD Fortieth Session Geneva, 12-30 September 2005		<hr/> Committee on the Rights of the Child
GENERAL COMMENT No. 7 (2005)		General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)-
Implementing child rights in early childhood		

Respect for various forms of expressions- including play

- ▶ From the UN Committee
- ▶ . *“Consequently, full implementation of article 12 requires recognition of, and respect for, non-verbal forms of communication including play, (my emphasis) body language, facial expressions, and drawing and painting, through which very young children demonstrate understanding, choices and preferences.”* (p 9, CRC/GC/ 12 , 2009)

Attention also to the youngest

- ▶ :«*The Convention requires that children, including the very youngest children, be respected as persons in their own right*»
- ▶ «**Babies and very young children have the same rights as all children to have their best interests assessed, even if they cannot express their views or represent themselves in the same way as older children** « CRC/GC/14, s. 11



Factors creating premises for children's participation

- ▶ Quality of interactions/relationships
- ▶ The physical-material environment
- ▶ Opportunities for play

Some structural factors influencing interaction qualities

▶ Promote interaction quality:

- ▶ Well qualified teachers and staff
- ▶ Available in different situations throughout the day
- ▶ Small stable groups

▶ Interaction quality at risk:

- ▶ Shortage of staff
- ▶ Staff not available throughout the day
- ▶ Large, flexible groups

Process qualities of interactions

▶ Promote participation:

- ▶ - a focussed presence
- ▶ - attention to children's initiatives and expressions
- ▶ - emotional sensitivity and expressivity
- ▶ - able to change perspective
- ▶ - a playful attitude

▶ Restrain participation

- ▶ - narrow understanding av participation :focus on individual choice
- ▶ - distant, controlling communication
- ▶ - preoccupied with own didactic intentions, documentation and programs
- ▶ - lack of humour

Physical and material environment

▶ Opportunities :

- ▶ stimulating rooms and corners
- ▶ afford opportunities for concentrated play
- ▶ materials within reach which stimulate spontaneous initiatives
- ▶ environments and grounds outside which appeal to various senses and exciting play and exploration

▶ Obstacles:

- ▶ - complicated logistics regarding use of rooms, tight time schedule
- ▶ - interruptions of children's play
- ▶ rooms with toys and materials are out of reach - locked in cupboards or stacked on shelves high up - difficult for children to use them on their own initiative

Children's participation through play

- ▶ From the Norwegian framework plan:
 - ▶ “Play shall be a **key focus** in kindergarten, and the **inherent value of play shall be acknowledged**. Kindergartens shall make good provision for play, friendship and the children's own culture.”
- ▶ From UN Comment no 17
 - ▶ «They (play and recreation,) are a form of participation in everyday life, and are of **intrinsic value to the child**, purely in terms of the enjoyment and pleasure they afford.» (CRC/C/GC/17, s. 4).

From General Comment no 17(2013) *On the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities and the arts* (CRC/C/GC/17.).

- ▶ «Children are entitled to time that is not determined or controlled by adults, as well as time in which they are free from demands - basically doing «nothing», if they so desire.» (CRC/GC/17, s.13).

Discrepancies or gaps ?

- ▶ In Nordic curricular documents and legal provisions children's right to participation and expressing their views are clearly stated.
- ▶ Important values and intentions are in accord with UN recommendations regarding respect for children as human beings entitled to a good childhood
- ▶ Conditions in the field
- ▶ associated with staff conditions, group size and organization, and material affordances and environments
- ▶ may limit opportunities or make it difficult to realize legal and curricular intentions regarding children's participatory rights

A few ideas regarding future work

- ▶ for politicians and governments on a national level
- ▶ for owners on a local level
- ▶ for researchers
- ▶ for teacher-education institutions
- ▶ for teacher organizations

Thank you for your attention



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- ▶ *Framework plan for Kindergartens- contents and tasks* (2017). Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, Oslo (udir.no/rammeplanen)
- ▶ <https://goban.no>

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