



Quality work in Nordic daycare services

# Insight and Inspiration Across Borders

A collaboration between



DANSK CENTER FOR  
UNDERVISNINGSMILJØ  
Viden til praksis

# Contents

**Foreword** \_\_\_\_\_ page 3

**About the survey** \_\_\_\_\_ page 4

**Survey results** \_\_\_\_\_ page 6

- Interaction and relationships
- The child's perspective, democracy and co-determination
- Steering documents
- Systematisation
- Pedagogical competencies

**Methods and tools** \_\_\_\_\_ page 16

**References** \_\_\_\_\_ page 30



## Foreword

The aim of the Nordic Council of Ministers' joint strategy is that 'the Nordic region must be the best place in the world for children and young people'. However, in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, few surveys have examined how we in the Nordic region are similar or different. And thus what we can learn from each other across national borders. In this publication, we present the results of a joint Nordic survey of what Nordic ECEC managers focus on in their quality development work. What do they do day-to-day to promote quality? And what tools do they recommend others use to ensure quality? In this survey, we were interested in exploring what precisely quality entails in Nordic practice rather than whether that quality is high or low.

This publication summarises that survey and, we hope, can help enhance knowledge sharing and promote dialogue and cooperation between the Nordic countries as they work to assure the quality of ECEC services.

We would like to thank:

- the 841 ECEC managers throughout the Nordic region who have responded to the survey questionnaire.
- the 21 ECEC managers we interviewed in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden.
- Bente Jensen, professor emerita, for contributing her professional expertise to the questionnaire.
- Nordplus Horizontal for supporting the project and enabling all of us to learn about the quality assurance work done in Nordic ECEC facilities.

We wish you pleasant reading!



# About the survey

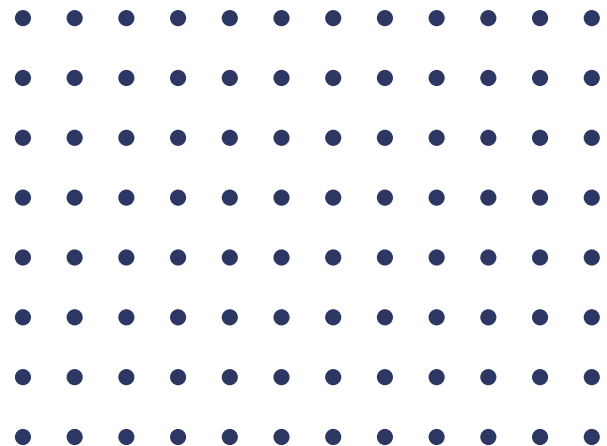
The survey is the result of a collaboration between Nordisk Förskola – a professional network of Nordic pre-school heads; FOBU – a Danish umbrella organisation for independent and private ECEC institutions; and the Danish Centre for Educational Environment (DCUM) – a national knowledge centre that promotes good environments for children and for education.

The survey consists of four parts:

- Desk research into the respective quality agendas of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland.
- Interviews with three ECEC managers in each country about how they perceive quality and which tools they use to enhance the quality of their ECEC service.
- A questionnaire compiled on the basis of the interview responses and the national quality agendas.
- Six interviews with ECEC managers in which we examine some of the most frequently recommended methods or tools from each country. Six methods and tools were identified, collected from Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Denmark, respectively, which we present at the end of the publication and which can be used as inspiration for quality development work.

The survey shows that the Nordic countries set highly similar priorities when developing the quality of ECEC facilities. The survey uncovered a huge potential for sharing knowledge and providing inspiration throughout the Nordic region – potential that we should exploit for mutual learning and development.

Accordingly, we urge ECEC managers to explore the recommended tools and methods listed at the end of this publication and seek further information via the Nordisk Förskola network, which is engaged in disseminating Nordic experience on ECEC facility management.



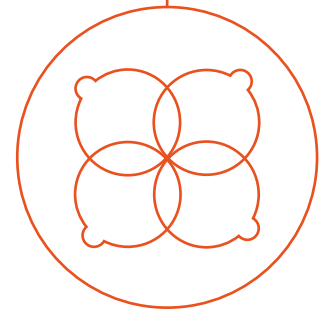


# Survey results

## Well-being, learning and development

Our survey showed that all the Nordic countries generally see learning and development as the primary task of ECEC facilities. They also have a common understanding that children cannot learn and develop unless they feel safe and happy. Children's well-being thus plays a central part and as such is a natural focus of particular attention in Nordic ECEC facilities.

To successfully foster children's well-being, learning and development, Nordic ECEC managers also agree that pedagogical practice should prioritise five key themes. These themes relate to both organisational structure and the inherent pedagogy.



## 5 key themes

### 1. Interaction and relationships

Safe child-child, child-adult and adult-adult relationships.

### 2. The child's perspective, democracy and co-determination

Children's perception of being seen and heard at daycare and being involved in deciding the day's activities.

### 3. Steering documents

National steering documents are fundamental to the work of ECEC facilities.

### 4. Systematisation

Evaluating and reflecting on the facility's own practice as well as translating evaluation results into new practice.

### 5. Pedagogical competencies

Professional level, accessible staff and the opportunity to reflect on one's own practice together.

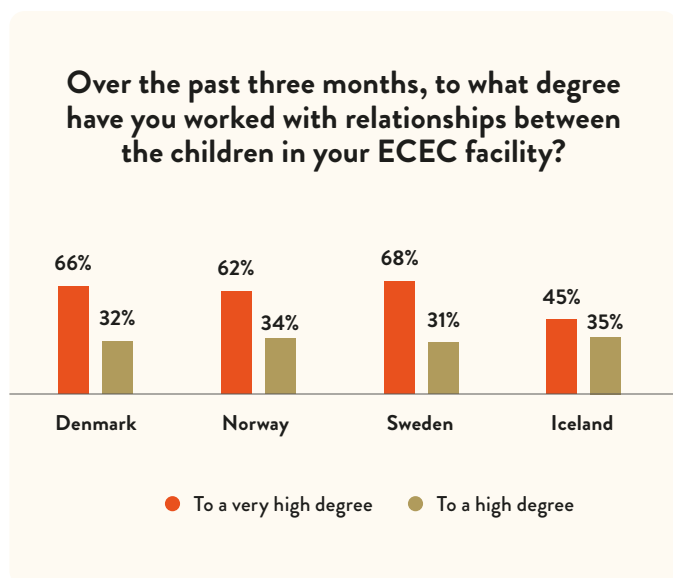
# 1. Interaction and relationships

ECEC managers across the Nordic countries consider relational work to be particularly important for children’s learning and development in daycare. This applies equally to relationships between children and to relationships between children and adults.

Overall, the survey shows that interaction and relationships are a high priority in the Nordic countries, and that this thus holds potential for sharing knowledge and inspiration across the Nordic region.

## Child-child relationships

The survey shows that more than 96% of ECEC managers in Sweden, Denmark and Norway believe they work with relationships between children to a high or very high degree. In Iceland the figure is 80%.



*”Working with relationships is the most important thing we do in the day nursery”*

— ECEC manager from Norway

*”We train children’s ability to “find their place” among other people, plus the sense of belonging to a group”*

— ECEC manager from Iceland

## Child-adult and adult-adult relationships

Work also focuses sharply on child-adult relationships. On this point, the results show that 95% of ECEC managers in Denmark and 96% in Norway responded that they work to a high degree or very high degree with relationships between child and adult, while the corresponding figures for Sweden and Iceland are 87% and 88%, respectively.

Relationships between members of staff are another high priority. In Iceland, nine out of ten ECEC managers reported having worked with relationships between staff to a high or very high degree in the past three months. The figures are slightly lower for Denmark, Sweden and Norway: about four out of ten. In this connection, it should be mentioned that ECEC managers in Iceland had performance appraisals during the survey period, which may have affected the result.

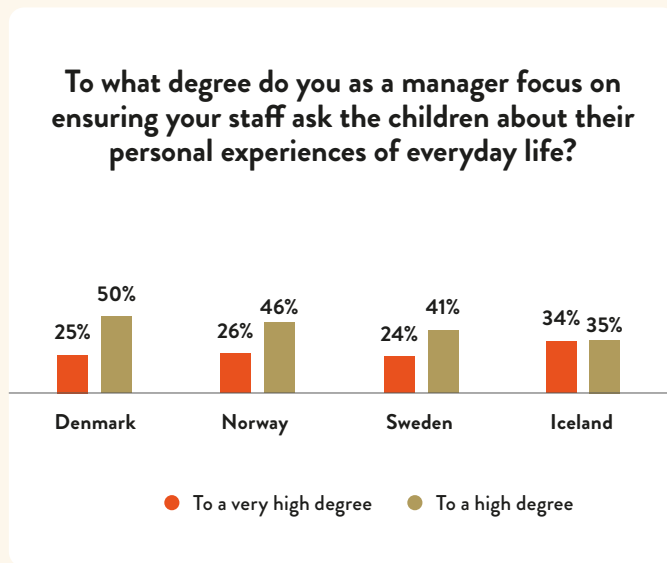


### On the basis of the results we recommend ...

That we continue to maintain our focus on relational work in Nordic ECEC facilities, but that we also draw inspiration from each other’s practices in order to further develop our own.

## 2. The child's perspective, democracy and co-determination

The child's perspective is a high priority in Nordic ECEC facilities, with three out of four Danish ECEC managers responding that they focus to a high or very high degree on ensuring that staff ask the children about their personal experiences of everyday life at daycare. In Iceland the figure is 69% and in Norway 68%, while in Sweden it is 65%.



As regards the child's perspective, democracy and co-determination, in the Nordic countries we emphasise children's democratic education, for example, through exercises in speaking and listening during a democratic conversation. The survey shows that more than nine in ten ECEC managers in each country focus on reinforcing children's ability to participate in a conversation and listen. This is the response of 92% of ECEC managers in Denmark, 94% in Norway, 93% in Sweden and 100% in Iceland.

As regards the task of cultivating democratic citizens, Nordic ECEC managers also engage in helping their staff to create equal opportunities for all children in daycare. On this point, between 85% and 99% of ECEC managers in Denmark, Norway and Iceland believe they do so to a very high or high degree, while in Sweden the corresponding figure is 61%.

The survey also shows that children have widely differing degrees of co-determination in different situations. Free-play situations are those where children have the greatest opportunity to influence activities, with 97%-98% of Nordic ECEC managers expressing that they give children a high degree of decision-making participation. During pedagogical activities such as planned

trips and activities, the figures range between 51% and 69%. In routine everyday situations such as getting dressed, lavatory visits and eating, the figure is only between 40% and 66%.

### Focus on children's perspectives and co-determination throughout the day

The survey thus reveals the potential to develop a stronger focus on the child's perspective and co-determination during pedagogical activities and routine everyday situations like meals and lavatory visits. We therefore recommend focusing more sharply on how you can increase children's involvement in decision-making throughout the day at your ECEC facility.

*“For me, quality is when the ECEC teachers can decode children's body language, gestures and verbal language. Then there's scope to interpret what the child wants to achieve and what the ECEC teacher can support.”*

— ECEC manager from Sweden

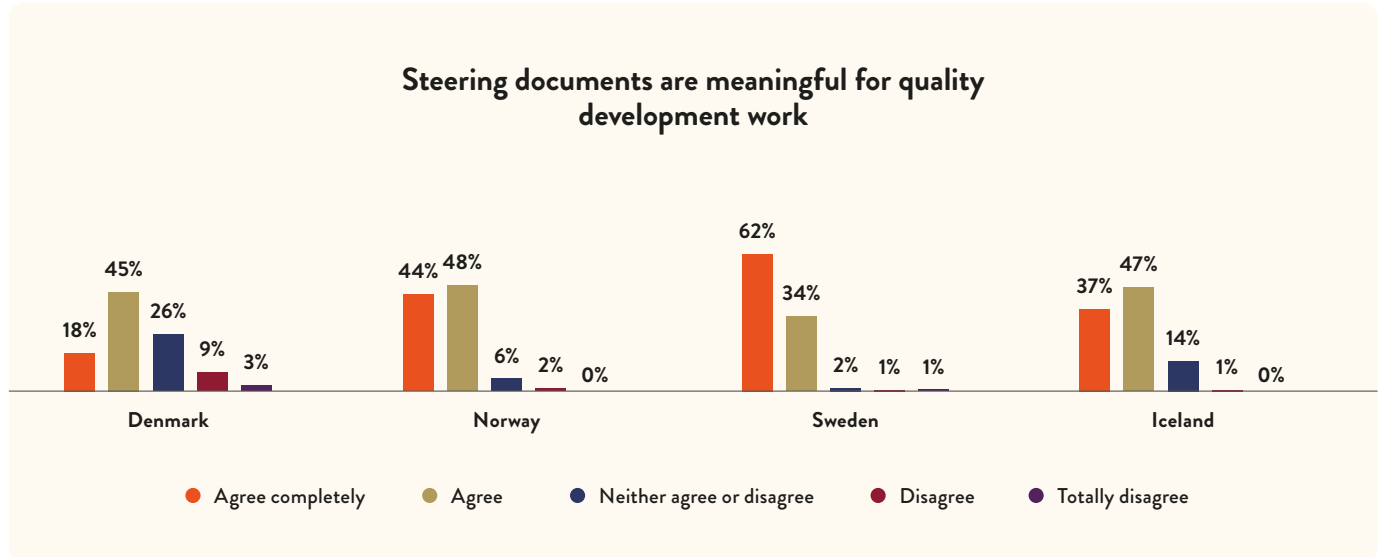
### On the basis of the results we recommend ...

Focusing on children's perspectives and decision-making involvement throughout the day. Think about how you can bolster children's involvement in decision-making and pedagogical activities as well as in routine everyday situations.



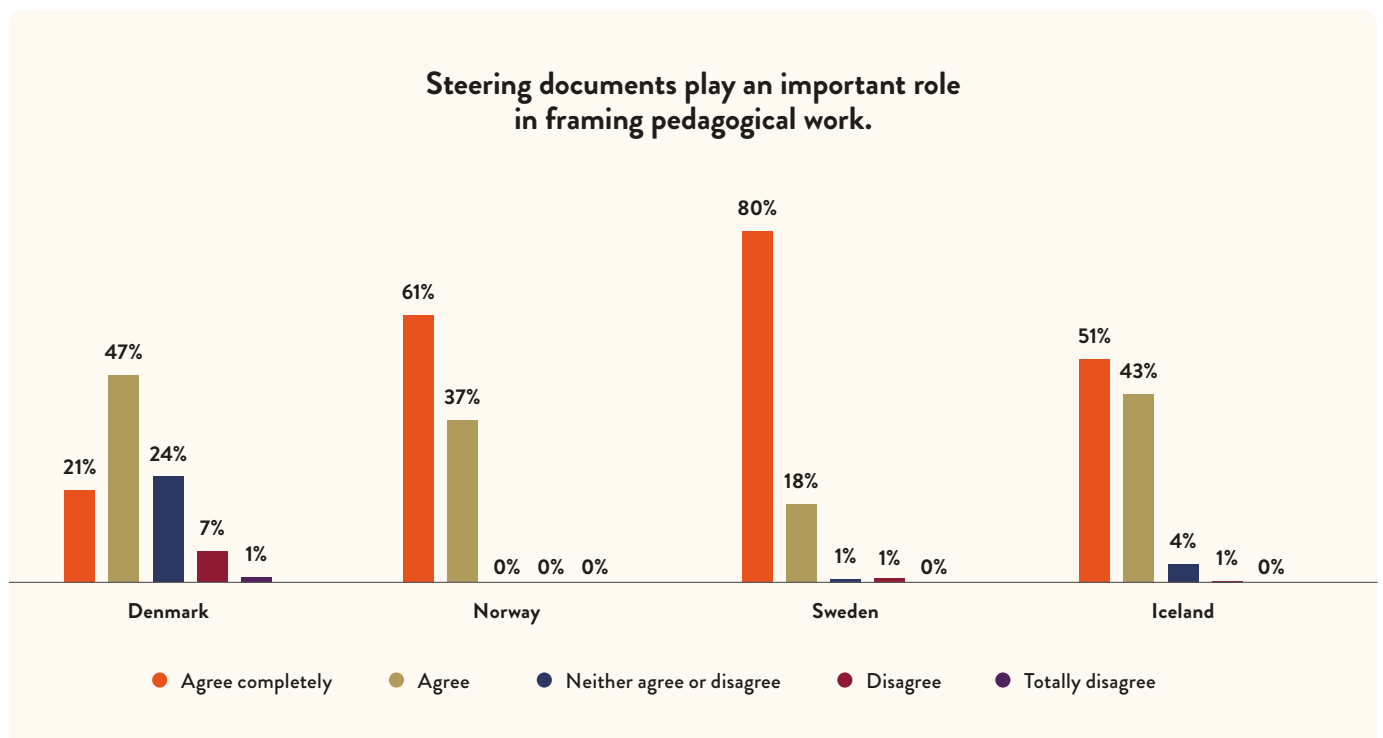


### 3. Steering documents



Across the Nordic region, steering documents are considered an essential platform for quality development in ECEC institutions. These documents provide thematic focus points as well as pedagogical and research-based reasons for a given pedagogical practice. However, ECEC managers differ significantly in the way they use steering documents, as do ECEC facilities when organising themselves to comply with applicable national legislation.

Nine out of ten ECEC managers in Norway, Iceland, and especially Sweden, believe that steering documents are essential frameworks for pedagogical work. In Denmark, the share of managers who find steering documents meaningful and a framework for their work is considerably lower.





We also see that ECEC managers in Norway, Iceland and Sweden draw on their steering documents more frequently when planning day-to-day work than their Danish counterparts. All told, 49% of Danish, 84% of Norwegian, 93% of Swedish and 83% of Icelandic ECEC managers ‘agree’ or ‘agree completely’ that they frequently use steering documents to plan day-to-day work.

Norway, Iceland and, in particular, Sweden, thus focus on making steering documents explicitly practicable for day-to-day work purposes. Denmark has more development potential than the other Nordic countries, for which reason determining why the other countries find steering documents more meaningful could be a useful avenue to pursue.

Almost all ECEC managers in Norway, Sweden and Iceland believe their steering documents play an important role in framing pedagogical work. In Denmark only six out of ten ECEC managers hold this opinion.

*“The reason we started focusing on our steering documents was that we realised our practice was random. [..] Everyone did their best, but when we asked why they did what they did, no one could really explain why.”*

— ECEC manager from Norway



**On the basis of the results we recommend ...**

On the basis of the survey results we recommend that Nordic ECEC facilities continue working to ensure steering documents are meaningful for their daily work, or initiate such efforts.

## 4. Systematisation

Nordic ECEC staff are generally intent on creating space for professional reflection and development as well as on working professionally to evaluate their own practice.

### Evaluation is important

In general, ECEC managers in the survey respond that evaluation is an important means of enhancing ECEC quality. However, 15% of ECEC managers in Denmark respond 'neither-nor' to the question about whether they think evaluation is important. In the other countries this percentage lies between 0 and 1%. ECEC staff across all countries find it challenging to translate evaluation results into practice. In Denmark 16% agree completely or agree that this is difficult, while the figure in Iceland is 21%, in Norway 24% and in Sweden 27%. It might thus be relevant to examine how to extract greater value from the evaluations and how they can be more extensively translated into active practice.

In the survey we enquired about three different types of evaluation used to varying degrees by the various countries.

- Planned evaluations of activities or projects, for example. This type of evaluation is used most often in Sweden and Iceland.

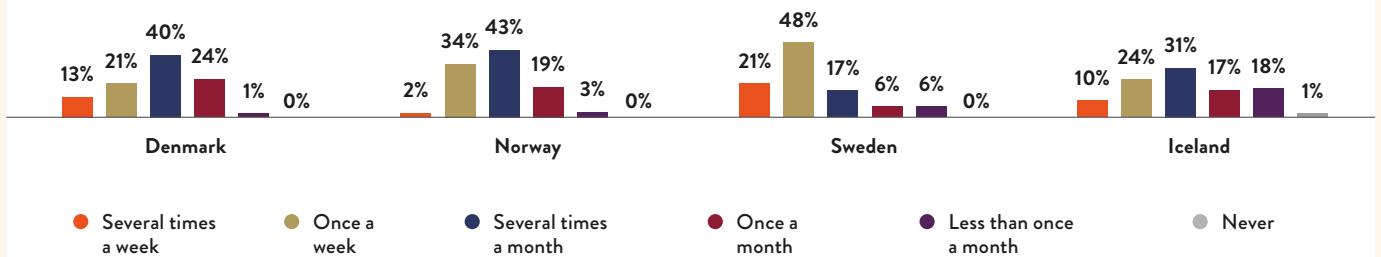
- Daily evaluations, which are ongoing evaluations conducted on an ad hoc basis. This type of evaluation is most frequently used in Denmark and Norway.
- General evaluations of the work done by the ECEC facility (for example, national or local authority quality or satisfaction surveys). This is the type of evaluation used least in all the countries.

*”To achieve high quality, we have to constantly twist and turn our practice, and maybe reject some of what we once believed in, and sometimes we have to change things completely.”*

— ECEC manager from Sweden



### How often do you reflect on your own practice at meetings with pedagogical staff?



### Reflection on own practice

ECEC managers generally highlight the importance of reflecting on one’s own practice, for example, at staff meetings, but the frequency with which this is done varies. In Sweden 69% respond that they reflect on their own practice once or more than once a week. For comparison, in Denmark and Iceland the figure is 34% and 36% for Norway.

During the survey, our attention was drawn to the fact that in Denmark, for example, preparation time for ECEC teachers is not subject to legislative regulation. In Sweden, no specific number of hours is assigned for preparation, but a guideline states that ECEC teachers must have time for preparation and follow-up, while ECEC teachers in Norway have 4 hours of weekly preparation time. In Iceland nursery teachers have 7-10 hours for preparation, depending on their position.

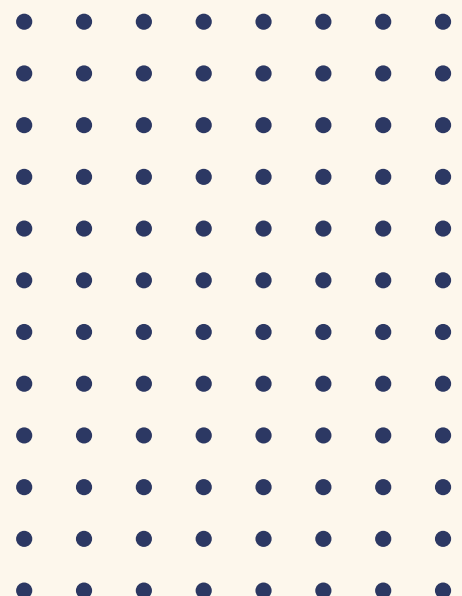


#### On the basis of the results we recommend ...

**Focusing on evaluation.** A systematic approach to evaluation work. For instance, have the staff meeting agenda include a regular item on the evaluations carried out since the last meeting. What did you learn from it? And have you used it in your work going forward?

**Dialogue about staff meetings.** Initiate local dialogue on how staff perceive that the frequency and structure of staff meetings support their opportunities to reflect and have joint professional discussion sessions.

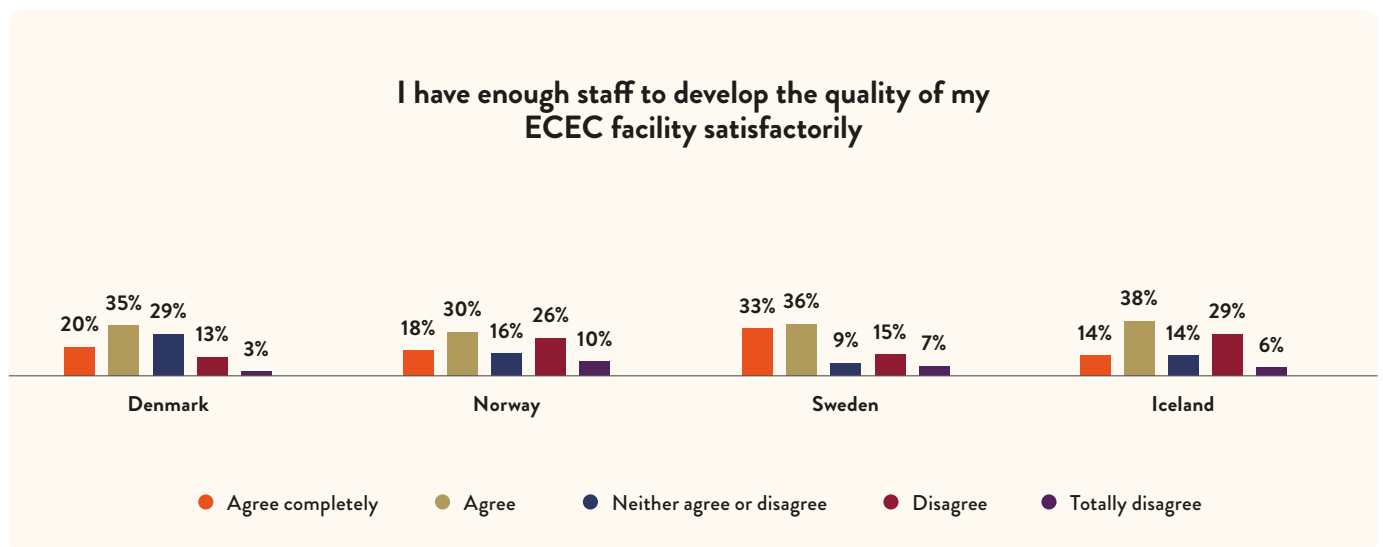
**Dialogue about preparation time.** We recommend that you, as an ECEC manager, initiate dialogue with your staff about how they perceive their options for preparing themselves and use this dialogue to address your local practice.



## 5. Pedagogical competencies

All ECEC managers assess pedagogical competencies as vital for the quality of the service their facility provides. The survey shows that Nordic ECEC managers have difficulty finding sufficient staff to develop the quality of their service, but that the staff they do have possess the right competencies. In

Norway and Iceland, more than one in three managers experience having insufficient staff for quality development, while in Denmark the figure is 16% and in Sweden 22%.



The presence of pedagogical competencies is also affected by the way staff share knowledge about everyday challenges and successes. On this issue, the survey shows that most ECEC managers in the Nordic region make setting aside time for this a priority. In Denmark, 90% of ECEC managers prioritise this to a very high or high degree. The figure for Norway is 84%, for Sweden 88% and for Iceland 89%.

The survey additionally shows that many ECEC managers find that applying a scientific/theoretical work basis is important for the quality of their service. This is particularly evident in Sweden, where the share of managers who completely agree or agree that this is important is 95%, while the figure for Iceland is 84%, for Norway 82% and for Denmark 68%.

Last, ECEC managers pinpoint the importance of upskilling and further training staff.

*”You may well be a pleasant, caring person, but you must also be able to set a framework that gives children a strong children’s community. And I believe professionalism is highly important.”*

— ECEC manager from Denmark

### On the basis of the results we recommend ...

Prioriter tiden. Afsæt tid til og systematisér vidensdeling og sparring i personalegruppen. Deling af hverdagens erfaringer er med til at højne både refleksionsniveau og pædagogiske kompetencer.

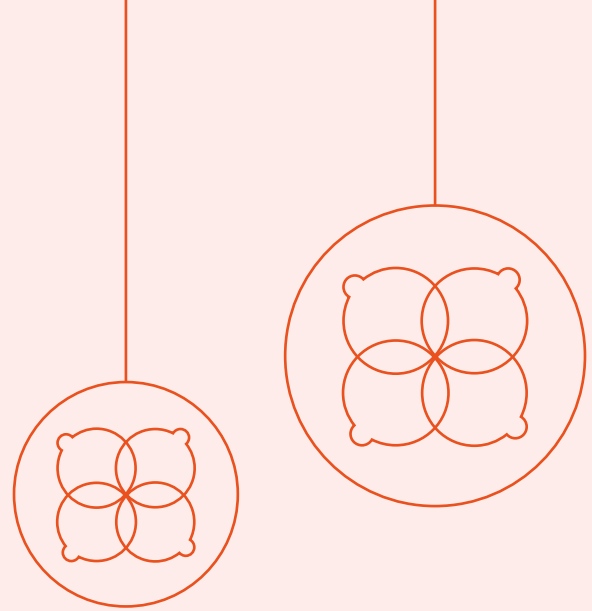


# Methods and tools

Among the survey aims is to inspire pan-Nordic knowledge-sharing. For this reason, we asked ECEC managers in the Nordic region about which tools or methods they would recommend that their counterparts use when working with quality development. We see a huge potential for sharing tools and methods across the Nordic countries, as we resemble each other in many ways and share the same work focus.

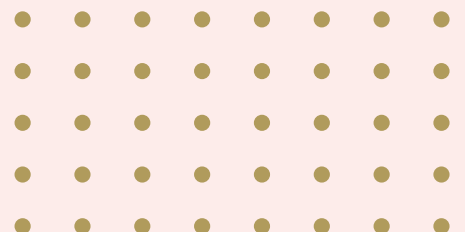
The figure provides a summary of the five tools/methods most recommended by each country.

	Tools/methods	Find out more about the tool/method
Denmark	The SMTTE model	<p>The SMTTE model frames work with the learning environment and specific activities through five fixed phases: context (sammenhæng in Danish), goal (mål), initiative (tiltag), indicators (tegn), and evaluation (evaluering).</p> <p>Find out more about the SMTTE model on <a href="#">page 20</a></p>
	KIDS	<p>KIDS is a tool for evaluating and developing the pedagogical quality of an ECEC facility through observations of the surroundings forming the backdrop for children's well-being, learning and development, and thus the quality of the pedagogical environment.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about KIDS (in Danish)</a></p>
	Hjernen og hjertet	<p>Hjernen og hjertet [<i>Brain and Heart</i>] is a digital platform that offers several tools to help structure quality development work as well as obtain a holistic picture of the child. It includes a module to help identify vulnerable children at an early stage (TOPI), a pedagogical tool to support young children's language development (SprogTrappen) and much more.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about Hjernen og hjertet here (in Danish)</a></p>
	EVA	<p>The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) evaluates the work of enhancing children's well-being, learning and language development. It develops tools and disseminates Scandinavian research to ECEC facilities and administrations.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about EVA</a></p>
	Action learning	<p>Action learning can be used to develop pedagogical practices by means of testing actions in small groups.</p> <p>Find out more about action learning on <a href="#">page 22</a>.</p>
	Activity/Take-action template	<p>The Activity/Take-action template can be used for self-evaluating one's own initiatives and creating a systematic action plan for the ECEC facility.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about Activity/Take-action template</a></p>



	Tools/methods	Find out more about the tool/method
Norway	<b>CLASS</b>	CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) is an observation tool developed to measure the quality of the interaction between staff and children.  <a href="#">Find out more about CLASS (in Norwegian)</a>
	<b>Espira BLIKK</b>	Espira BLIKK can be used for working with new objectives and goals and for developing the quality of an ECEC facility's processes through quality evaluations in seven different areas.  Find out more about Espira BLIKK on <a href="#">page 24</a> .
	<b>Pedagogical analysis</b>	Pedagogical analysis is used here as an umbrella term for a variety of approaches and methods aimed at developing good practice through systematic reflection and evaluation.
	<b>The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training – competence packages</b>	The Directorate's competence packages offer professional training and support for developing competencies and practice in kindergartens, schools, the pedagogical-psychological service, apprenticeships and examination boards. Competence packages are available within a wide range of subjects.  <a href="#">Find out more about the Directorate's competence packages (in Norwegian)</a>
	<b>Alle Med</b>	Alle Med is an observation-based approach that can be used to create a holistic picture of the child and his/her capabilities. The approach has been developed on the basis of the theory about the connection between language and social skills. The observation form covers all six child development areas: language, play, socio-emotional skills, everyday activities, well-being and sensory motor development.  <a href="#">Find out more about Alle Med (in Norwegian)</a>

Tools/methods	Find out more about the tool/method
Sweden	
SKA	<p>The SKA tool can be used to systematically develop the quality of an ECEC facility through analysis, reflection and objectives for the facility's own practice. SKA helps highlight what we do, why we do it and what it leads to.</p> <p>Find out more about SKA on <a href="#">page 26</a>.</p>
UNIKUM	<p>UNIKUM is a digital platform that an ECEC facility can use for its communication, planning and documentation purposes as a whole. The platform is intended to make it easier to plan, execute, follow up on and analyse quality development work.</p> <p>Find out more about UNIKUM on <a href="#">page 28</a>.</p>
Pedagogical documentation	<p>Pedagogical documentation – the Swedish National Agency for Education – is a website where you can find suggestions for documenting the work of ECEC facilities as well as how you can provide clearly targeted documentation.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about pedagogical documentation (in Swedish)</a></p>
The TYRA app	<p>The TYRA app is a mobile digital platform for collating all documentation and systematisation. Its functions include an attendance overview, a blog/image portfolio, contact details, document handling and public news about the ECEC institution.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about the TYRA app tool (in Swedish)</a></p>
Collegial learning	<p>Collegial learning is a collective term for various forms of structured, group work where colleagues develop knowledge together, both by learning from each other's experiences and by drawing on existing knowledge.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more about collegial learning (in Swedish)</a></p>





### Tools/methods

### Find out more about the tool/method

#### Iceland

#### Peer-to-peer management

Peer-to-peer management is a management model in which the specific tasks to be done more extensively define the roles and positions of manager and department head, thus producing a flat rather than a hierarchical organisational structure

#### Staff meetings

Staff meetings can be used to create a structure that allows time for professional reflection within the staff group as part of a daycare facility's quality development.

Find out more about staff meetings as a tool on [page 29](#).

#### Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia is a pedagogical method based on children's skills, knowledge and curiosity. Listening and documentation are particular key elements.

[Find out more about Reggio Emilia \(in Danish\)](#)

#### Evaluation sheet

The evaluation sheet can be used to identify which areas have been worked with and the progress made in a given area. A wide range of evaluation sheets are available, with a number of companies offering to complete them.

# Selected methods and tools

At the end of this summary, we present selected specific tools and methods recommended by ECEC managers in the individual countries.

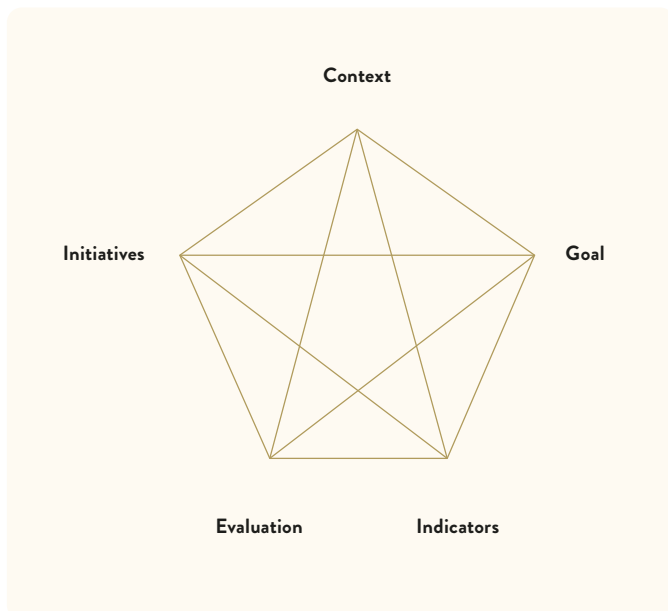
The methods/tools are as follows:

- The SMTTE model (Denmark)
- Action learning (Denmark)
- Espira Blikk (Norway)
- SKA (Sweden)
- UNIKUM (Sweden)
- Staff meetings (Iceland)

## The SMTTE model (Denmark)

### Purpose

The SMTTE model is a didactic tool that can be used to structure and create an overview of an ECEC facility's work with learning environments and initiatives. The SMTTE model is a reflection model that ensures conscious deliberations in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning activities. ECEC facilities can use the tool to obtain knowledge about the desired direction of their day-to-day work as well as how they do this, and whether they achieve their goals.



### Step by step

The SMTTE model comprises five points that the ECEC facility must go through:

#### Context (sammenhæng):

The ECEC facility identifies its challenge and the relevant conditions.

#### Goal (mål):

During this phase, the ECEC facility thinks about what it wants to achieve and describes it.

#### Initiatives (tiltag):

At this stage, the ECEC facility chooses and describes which actions/activities it needs to launch to achieve its goals.

#### Indicators (tegn):

Here, the facility describes the indicators showing that the activities are on track to meet the goal.

#### Evaluation:

At this stage, staff get together to decide whether they have achieved the goal – and why/why not.

*”We use the SMTTE model because it’s easy to grasp and because it makes sense for many ECEC teachers. It also provides structure and an overview of the pedagogical work, which also means our practice gets evaluated.”*

— ECEC manager Helene Rebsdorf

### Recommendation

ECEC manager Helene Rebsdorf from the Stige Friskole kindergarten in Denmark recommends working with the SMTTE model.

Context and goals are discussed at a staff meeting. Who participates in the meeting depends on which areas are to be its focus.

For example, if a meeting concerns an individual child, only the staff who have dealt with the child in question take part. Before the meeting, a pedagogical analysis is made to determine the challenges and the factors maintaining the child in the given situation.

On the other hand, if the topic is the learning environment, the entire staff group may participate. Once the staff group have formulated a goal for their work, they discuss the initiatives they would like to start immediately and which indicators to watch for. Before the next staff meeting, they test the initiative and

keep a lookout for indicators in the group of children. At the meeting staff evaluate the initiative and assess the need for any adjustments.

### Target group

The target group is the pedagogical staff and the ECEC manager who are to discuss and develop their pedagogical practice together. Initiatives are primarily implemented by staff.

### Attention points

- The tool works best in dialogue between the ECEC manager and staff as this brings more perspectives into the work and supports the sense of common purpose.
- It is important that the goals formulated for initiatives are precise and realistic in terms of the timeframe for the learning activity.

### Context

- What do we want to do something about?
- What do we want to know more about?
- Are there any factors we need to take into account, such as motor maturity, age, gender or cognitive abilities?
- What are our frameworks: ECEC teaching hours, finances, time consumption, physical facilities, etc.?

### Goal

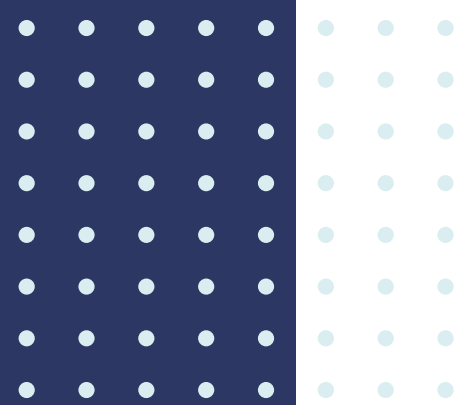
- What do we want the initiative to achieve?

### Indicators

- Indicators are noted through seeing, hearing, sensing, observing and understanding the children, as well as through the ways children express themselves both verbally and non-verbally.

### Evaluation

- What went well and what went less well?
- Did the children show signs of learning?
- Was the initiative suited to achieving the goal of the work?



## Action learning (Denmark)

### Purpose

By using action learning, ECEC staff can jointly learn more about their own practice in a clear and systematic manner.

Action learning entails selecting a focus area and testing small concrete actions within this area. In the light of the tests, staff reflect on their experiences and subsequently adjust their actions. Action learning is well suited to both reflecting on one's own pedagogical practice and fostering development.

### Step by step

Action learning is often a classic four-step process

1. preparation (focus selection)
2. implementation
3. evaluation
4. adjustment.

### Recommendation

ECEC manager Henriette Jensen from Smyrnavej kindergarten recommends action learning

*”Action learning is about making joint agreements and setting directions for staff in their daily work. The method is a gift for staff.”*

— ECEC manager Henriette Jensen

Staff at the Smyrnavej kindergarten work with action learning in the following way. First, staff were given five minutes to think about what was working less well on a normal day, seen from the child's perspective. They made notes about:

- What we know
- What we see
- What is problematic

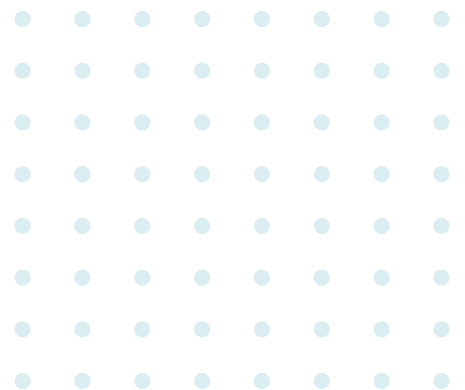
They then went through the staff input and decided to work further on solving problems with unruliness in the cloakroom area. The next step was for staff to ask themselves these questions: What direction do we want to go, what is optimal and what is our ideal scenario? Against the background of these considerations, they decided to send no more than four children at

a time into the cloakroom with an adult to give the adult a better chance of guiding and supporting the children towards greater independence.

During the suggestion's implementation, one or more pedagogical staff members observed the new practice to see whether the action had the desired effect. Staff then used the observations to evaluate the success of the action. What had worked? Where was there still potential for development? In the last phase, they adjusted the action on the basis of their experiences. In this respect, ECEC manager Henriette Jensen stresses the importance of writing down the whole process so that staff can easily refer to it later if the practice needs further revision or new staff are hired.

### Target group

The target group is pedagogical staff, as they have to identify and meet their daily challenges through actions/test activities, and ECEC managers, who have to help facilitate meetings and support staff.





**According to Denmark's learning portal, emu.dk, action learning processes comprise eight attention points.**

1. Let ECEC facility management play a role in the action learning process from the outset.
2. The action must be meaningful for ECEC teachers to ensure they have a genuine wish to change something.
3. To succeed in this endeavour, you should invest time in learning the method and gaining joint insight into the systematic work processes of action learning.
4. As a manager, you must keep sight of the focus and goal of the action.
5. The manager has an important task in ensuring that you agree whom to involve in the action and when.
6. It is a good idea to make written agreements about content, method, materials, organisation, timing and observation points.
7. Setting down observations and reflections in writing, images or sound is valuable.
8. As a manager, you might find it useful to end all action learning meetings by asking: Where have we succeeded? Were there any challenges? Is there anything we need to take into consideration for next time? What agreements should we make in this respect? What was good about this approach

## Espira Blikk (Norway)

### Purpose

Espira Blikk is an observation-based tool for measuring and developing the quality of a kindergarten's processes. Using the tool enables an ECEC facility to assess the overall quality of its processes on the basis of seven selected themes. ECEC staff must use the results to decide what they want to carry on doing and what they want to further develop. Working with the tool gives ECEC managers an overview of the areas where staff need to develop competencies while also giving them development goals to tackle.

### Step by step

The Espira Blikk tool entails using observations to assess one's own quality according to seven different themes. Selected from the Norwegian framework plan (legislation), the seven themes cover:

- Play
- Learning
- Care
- Personal learning and development
- Friendship and community
- Communication
- Language

Each theme has a number of quality characteristics. Examples of 'personal learning and development' include:

- in our kindergarten we meet the child on the basis of what engages him or her.
- in our kindergarten we support relationships between children.
- in our kindergarten we support the child in developing a positive sense of self.
- The activities we plan in our kindergarten must be meaningful for all children.

Overall, there are 24 characteristics for the seven themes.

Espira Blikk is used over a two-year period. During the first year, ECEC staff conduct an internal quality assessment of the facility. On the basis of this assessment, management and staff review the facility's quality, discuss it together and decide on one or more development goals.

During the second year, ECEC staff conduct a new internal quality assessment, and two ECEC teachers from another

Espira kindergarten additionally conduct an external assessment of the ECEC facility. The ECEC facility staff then jointly review the assessments and reflect on the different results: Have they arrived at the same conclusions? Which strong and weak sides can be seen? Finally, staff decide on areas to develop and plan specific initiatives.

In this way, every other year, the ECEC institutions gain an outsider's view of their practice, something they find highly constructive when discussing the quality of the ECEC facility.

### Recommendation

*"Espira Blikk is a good tool for working with ongoing competency development in the kindergarten – and it's important that the ECEC manager can follow up on the need to develop the competencies of kindergarten staff."*

ECEC manager Ruth Vihovde from the Espira Solkroken kindergarten recommends Espira Blikk.

Ruth Vihovde stresses the importance of thoroughly introducing staff to the tool before working with it. They should be introduced to what the 24 different quality characteristics mean and how to apply the seven themes. It is also important to discuss the results of the assessment at a meeting that includes staff in assessing the quality of the ECEC facility and establishing development goals.

Together with the area/regional manager, the ECEC manager assesses the external assessment results and how they align with the internal assessment. Another task for the ECEC manager is to support the development goals through competency development in the staff group.

### Target group

The target group is ECEC staff, who work with their own development, and the ECEC manager, who identifies areas where staff need to develop their competencies.



**Attention point**

ECEC facilities opting to use this tool must be prepared to see the details of their own practice through a critical lens and to discuss their own quality and quality development efforts.

## SKA (Sweden)

### Purpose

SKA is a method for addressing quality development in an ECEC facility. It is a reflection and analytical tool also useful for documentation. SKA is used for working systematically with quality development in pedagogical practice, management practice and the learning environment of an ECEC facility.

The tool can help create a common sense of awareness of and reflection on pedagogical practice within the staff group and of the areas where quality development is desired. The work entails systematically developing competencies and documenting the ECEC facility's practice. This gives pedagogical staff insight into their own and the facility's pedagogical practice as well as the opportunity to reflect on these practices.

### Step by step

Working with the SKA tool is divided into four steps:

#### 1 Where are we?

Step 1 consists of two parts:

- Follow-up on results and goal achievement, whose elements include:
  - Mapping children's language skills, both verbal and written, assessed on the basis of Sweden's mandatory national tests.
  - How the ECEC facility has contributed to the children's learning and development.
  - Results of implemented development initiatives.
- Mapping the ECEC facility's prerequisites for pedagogical work, which consist of:
  - A review of the research on which the ECEC facility bases its work.
  - A review of how the ECEC facility complies with Swedish legislative requirements (Lpfö18 – curriculum for Swedish pre-schools), and a concrete plan of the teaching it provides.
  - How governance, management and the delegation of responsibility are organised.

#### 2 Where are we headed?

On the basis of step 1, the ECEC manager works with the pedagogical staff to analyse which pedagogical practice is needed to best support the children's learning and development. Among other things, this means:

- Identifying which aspects of the ECEC facility's current pedagogical approach and learning environment might affect goal achievement and the children's learning and well-being.
- Analysing which knowledge and competencies children's development should be focused on.

#### 3 How do we do this?

The analysis of pedagogical practice is used as a basis for a plan to achieve the year's desired results. The plan includes:

- A description of the work methods to be used.
- A description of which conditions must be in place to successfully achieve the objective.
- A description of how to monitor developments.

#### 4 How did it turn out?

The final step of the SKA tools is an evaluation of how the pedagogical quality work progressed. The results are assessed relative to the Lpfö18 national goals. Among other things, this entails:

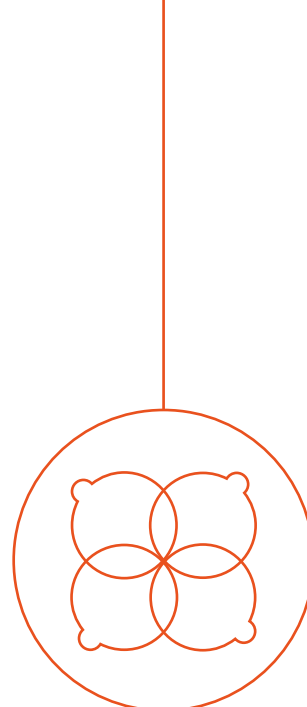
- A review of what was done and its impact relative to the objective.
- A discussion of what needs further development, or whether new points requiring attention have arisen.

### Recommendation

Rita Svensson, ECEC manager of the Kreatören and Bokenäs kindergartens, recommends using the SKA method. She points out that the method helps pedagogical staff to maintain a continual focus on the areas of everyday life at the ECEC facility where they can and must help increase the quality of the facility's work.

*”The regular weekly reflections and our performance dialogues are not simply a form of reporting to me as the manager. They also lead to collegial learning, because we have pedagogical conversations.”*

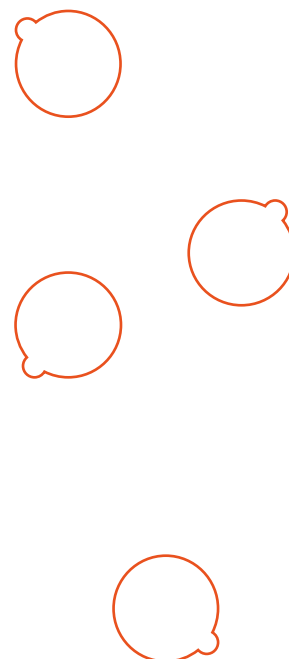
— ECEC manager Rita Svensson



To identify areas for further development, ECEC manager Rita Svensson mentioned the special importance of properly mapping and analysing the ECEC facility’s pedagogical practice and the conditions of the learning environment.

**Target group**

The SKA tool is specially anchored with at least one ECEC teacher in each department who has overall responsibility for ensuring that staff document their actions and act as set out in their SKA analysis. The tool’s target group is all the pedagogical staff of the ECEC facility.



**Attention point**

To be successful, the SKA tool must be thoroughly introduced and anchored in the ECEC facility.

Consider filming pedagogical situations to document practice. In this way, concrete observations will guide the development work. However, this requires having an established learning environment in place where staff are open to feedback and to developing their own practice.

**[Find out more about SKA \(in swedish\)](#)**

## UNIKUM (Sverige)

### Formål

UNIKUM er en digital platform, hvor dagtilbuddets kommunikation, planlægning og dokumentation ligger samlet, og tilgængeligt for alle medarbejdere. Derved får dagtilbuddets personale et fælles overblik over arbejdet med kvalitetsudvikling, diverse pædagogiske aktiviteter og hverdagen i dagtilbuddet.

### Hvad kan UNIKUM?

UNIKUM kan skabe et fælles sprog for kvalitet i daginstitutionen. Derudover kan værktøjet forankre en didaktisk og pædagogisk ramme for kvalitetsarbejdet i dagtilbuddet. Dette indebærer blandt andet:

- Digitale 'logbøger', hvor den enkelte pædagog kan gemme dokumentation for sin egen pædagogiske praksis, børnenes individuelle udvikling og arbejdet med læringsmål.
- Et samlet værktøj til det systematiske kvalitetsarbejde (SKA – værktøjet), hvor ledelse og pædagogisk personale kan planlægge og følge med i opnåelsen af deres udviklingsmål.
- Kommunikation og dokumentation på tværs af dagtilbuddet, og til forældre og værger, omkring børnenes udvikling på både gruppe- og individniveau. Gennem Unikum har forældre og værger også adgang til den dokumentation som vedrører deres barn, hvilket er med til at understøtte samarbejdet mellem dagtilbuddet og forældre/værger.

### Anbefaling

Tobias Fredricson, som er dagtilbudsleder i Västra Ramlösa Förskolor anbefaler Unikum.

*”For me, Unikum is a platform that brings together everything we’ve worked with in our kindergarten, and it works extremely well.”*

### Målgruppe

UNIKUM samler hele dagtilbuddets personale på en fælles kommunikativ platform. Platformen henvender sig både til ledelse, pædagogisk personale og forældre, og andre relevante aktører i og omkring dagtilbuddet.



### Unikum is a subscription-based system

Unikum is an extensive communication and documentation system that requires practice to fully understand.

Subscribers to Unikum can use the editing function in Skolbanken – an online platform anyone can access for inspiration from other institutions’ training programmes

**[You can find out more about UNIKUM \(in Swedish\)](#)**

# Staff meeting with room for reflection (Iceland)

## Purpose

The aim of holding staff meetings that include time for reflection is to systematically create a forum for professional reflection among staff, and thus help advance the quality development of an ECEC facility.

## Step by step

- The ECEC manager arranges and organises regular staff meetings/staff days in a way that enables all pedagogical staff to participate.
- The manager selects a theme on which a presentation is to be held and subsequently discussed by the staff group. The theme is selected from the steering documents, the educational policy in Reykjavík and the ECEC facility’s own curriculum, which describes the areas on which the facility wants to focus.
- The manager facilitates the staff meeting for all staff.

## Recommendation

ECEC manager Inga Sigurdardottir from the Hulduheimar Reykjavík kindergarten recommends physical staff meetings that include the time and scope for reflection in the staff group.

*”The main purpose of spending time on collective reflection is that everyone gets to voice their opinions. It’s very important to get staff’s views on and reaction to either their personal work approach – the department’s work – the group’s work approach”*

## Target group

ECEC manager and staff.

## Sample staff day agenda

- 8.00 – 9.30am Drøftelse af:
  - How is the outdoor playground used?
  - What sorts of toys are used most?
  - Should we have a toy-less day?
  - Miscellaneous
- 9.30 – 9.55am Coffee break
- 10.00 – noon Talk on ‘Sexual violence against children’ by Save the Children
- 12.10 – 1.00pm Lunch
- 1.00 – 2.00pm Talk on ‘Freedom of Thought’
- 2.00 – 2.15pm Coffee break
- 2.15 – 4.00pm Summary and evaluation of the morning meeting and talks.



### Be mindful that

- Everyone has a chance to voice their opinion
- Everyone has understood what has been agreed. This is particularly important if staff members have different mother tongues.

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Quality works in Nordic daycare services

# Insight and Inspiration Across Borders

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**Text and content**

Annemette Nyvang Wahlsted  
Frederik Papke  
Helene Borgholm

**Editorial office**

Christian Rudbeck

**Graphic design**

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