

English summary
of Fafo-rapport 2023:19

Organisation of daily life in kindergartens – some ideal types. Interim report 1

Organisation of daily life in kindergartens– some ideal types. Interim report 1

This interim report provides an overview of the different ways of organising daily life in kindergartens. We identify typologies for organisation. The Kindergarten Act and The Framework Plan for the Content and Task of Kindergartens define the framework for how kindergartens can organise their daily activities, the composition of skills/qualifications, and which tasks different staff groups should be assigned. However, within this framework plan, each individual kindergarten will have considerable freedom in terms of organisation, distribution of roles, organisation of responsibilities, and how to put the staff's competence to use.

Development of the sector

After a political agreement on kindergartens was reached in 2003, kindergartens have grown in size, with more children and more staff. The number of kindergartens with fewer than 26 children and small nurseries based in the owner's home has decreased. Municipal kindergartens account for 47 per cent and are slightly larger than private ones on average, with 50 per cent of children attending municipal kindergartens. The proportion of commercial operators has increased, while the proportion of early learning centres operated on a non-profit basis has decreased. Kindergartens employ more than 95.000 people, and 90 per cent of the employees are women. The staff include directors, pedagogical leaders, childcare and youth workers, and assistants. The staffing and educational standard is laid down in the Kindergarten Act and regulations, which set requirements for both the number of employees and their qualifications.

What does the literature say?

The studies we present have been selected because they explicitly examine the structural quality, such as the size and organisation of the kindergarten, and the significance this can have for the quality of daily life in early learning. The studies are highly diverse, ranging from larger representative surveys to qualitative studies of a few kindergartens. Nevertheless, certain dimensions reoccur. The two dominant organisational structures in the studies are 'departmental' and 'base'. Traditionally, Norwegian kindergartens have been organised into departments with a set group of children, staff and room affiliation. Base kindergartens have a more flexible organisation, with a larger number of children and staff associated with one base and larger common areas. Departmental kindergartens are clearly

English summary of Fafo-rapport 2023:19
Organisation of daily life in kindergartens– some ideal types.
Ragnhild Steen Jensen, Jørgen Svalund and Mona Bråten

© Fafo 2023

the most prevalent. Some studies also identify an intermediate or hybrid form, with a partial base and departmental organisation. The organisation also involves building structure and the possibilities inherent therein. Base early kindergartens are typically located in large buildings that allow for diverse spacial structures, with dedicated rooms for things like art and drama.

The studies show that size matters. Large kindergartens are more often organised around the base structure than small ones. Large kindergartens seem to require more leadership and organisation to achieve proximity and an overview, while these are more inherent in small centres. Larger kindergartens find that the framework plan has more of an influence on their work compared to the smallest kindergartens. The studies show that large kindergartens have bigger professional environments than smaller ones. Employees in larger centres generally have more qualifications and more frequently meet the requirements for formal education for directors/managers and pedagogical leaders. The tendency is that pedagogical leaders in larger kindergartens spend less time with the children. When it comes to sickness absence and the use of temporary staff, the studies show slightly different results/findings. Large kindergartens seem to have greater opportunities and flexibility to cover sick leave, resulting in less need for temporary staff. Small kindergartens tend to have less sick leave. The presence of a director/manager seems to contribute to staff stability and lower sickness absence levels.

Organisation, roles and apportionment of responsibility in early learning

The survey sent to all kindergartens in Norway shows that the traditional departmental organisational structure is the dominant type of kindergartens. Base kindergartens were primarily established after 2000. Kindergartens established in the 2000s are larger both in terms of the number of staff and children. There is no strong correlation between the size of the centre and the size of the municipality. In small municipalities, it is somewhat more common to have small kindergartens (1-11 employees), but even in Oslo, by far the largest Norwegian municipality, 12-17 employees are the most common.

Temporary staff are frequently used in kindergartens, especially in municipal ones. Most directors are only in charge of one kindergarten, and 95 per cent of directors confirmed this. About half of those who head up several say they share responsibility for several centres with a management team. The typical occupational groups are preschool teachers, childcare and youth workers and assistants. It is less common to employ other types of specialised educators. The tasks in a kindergarten are to some extent shared between the various occupational groups. It is primarily the kindergarten teachers who plan the pedagogical work. The implementation of the pedagogical work is more evenly distributed

English summary of Fafo-rapport 2023:19
Organisation of daily life in kindergartens- some ideal types.
Ragnhild Steen Jensen, Jørgen Svalund and Mona Bråten

© Fafo 2023

among preschool teachers, childcare and youth workers and assistants. This also applies to daily interaction in the children's group and partly to the follow-up of individual children.

The pedagogical leaders share the educational work with each other across departments/child groups. It appears that this is done slightly more in base kindergartens. The same applies to collaboration across departments/base groups. About half provide guidelines for *when* kindergarten teachers use their planning time. Fewer set guidelines for *what* the planning time is used for. Among those who provide guidelines, planning time is primarily used for pedagogical work and working with families. There is little delegation of tasks from the director.

The kindergartens carry out competence and development work. Over 90 per cent have held at least one seminar on early learning for the entire staff during the past year. When it comes to more formalised further education and training, the childcare and youth workers and assistants participate to a far lesser extent in such activities. With regard to facilitating the sharing of knowledge in kindergartens, this is more common in the base kindergartens than the departmental ones.

Conclusion

The literature review of previous research on the organisation of kindergartens identified three main types: traditional departmental kindergartens, base kindergartens centres and an intermediate or hybrid form, i.e. centres that have both departments and bases. We used this analytical perspective in the analysis of the data material (Chapter 5). We did not find major differences in the organisation of daily life in kindergartens based on the established typology. Overall, our data material gives the impression of a greater degree of uniformity in the sector, across organisational types, than variation. This may be due to more governance and regulation of the sector, resulting in standardisation, which is supported by the literature. However, it may also be because the typology is too general to be able to identify the differences. One possible interpretation is that there are greater differences within departmental and base kindergartens than there are between them. This is important to consider when selecting reference kindergartens for the next phase of the project. Nevertheless, we maintain that it is relevant to examine both departmental kindergartens and base kindergartens, as well as hybrids. Ownership and size are also relevant dimensions for the selection process.