

Togetherness in Play and Learning

Special Needs Education in Mainstream Settings



Adaptation for
participation and learning **1.2**



Adaptation for participation and learning

The objective is for all children and young people who require special adaptation in kindergartens and schools to receive the support they need in order to take part in the learning community. An important premise for this work is the child's right to be heard. Inclusive communities are contingent on structures, cooperative relations and professionals in kindergartens and schools who are able to safeguard the child's physical, academic, social and psychological needs. The following four chapters demonstrate in different ways how adaptation for participation and learning can occur in practice.

Beate Heide and Margrethe Sylthe:

The convention of the rights of the child, applied in the work of expert assessment

Beate and Margrethe use a practical case study to highlight how Article 3 on the best interests of the child and Article 12 on the right to be heard in the Convention on the Rights of the Child can form the basis for work on expert evaluations.

The convention of the rights of the child, applied in the work of expert assessment

Children have rights, by virtue of the fact that the nation of Norway has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Norway has thereby pledged to comply with this. In 2019, the Convention on the Rights of the Child celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Beate Heide and Margrethe Sylthe

The Convention on the Rights of the Child belongs in the field of law and is couched in distinctive and rather inaccessible language. It was incorporated into the Norwegian Constitution in 2004.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on four main principles:

- Article 3.1 – the principle of the best interests of the child
- Article 2 – the principle of no discrimination
- Article 6 – the right to survival and development
- Article 12 – the principle of the child's right to be heard on any matters affecting them

(Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 1989)

In this article, we will touch on two of the four main principles: Article 3, the principle of the best interests of the child, and Article 12, the right to be heard. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not currently have a visible presence in kindergartens and schools. In order to demonstrate how the Convention on the Rights of the Child can be applied, we therefore believe that we need

specific examples. This will make it easier to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child into pedagogical practices. Our objective in this chapter is to show where the Convention on the Rights of the Child fits into the work of expert assessment.

We will follow an imaginary pupil – Siv – from the concerns of the parents and school to the Educational Psychological Service's (PPT) report and measures. Siv's teacher, Mari, and educational psychology counsellor (PPT counsellor), Mette, play significant roles in the process and are therefore central figures in this chapter. Using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis, we show how Mari and Mette safeguard Siv's right to be heard in their assessment of the best interests of the child. Current theories help to justify our choices.

There is little available literature on research into the use of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our contribution highlights two of the articles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3 on the best interests of the child and Article 12 on the right to be heard, and illustrates how they can be used as arguments in special education practice.

Expert assessment by the Educational Psychological Service (PPT) generates documentation that is used as a basis for making decisions regarding special education (Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (2019), Section 5-3).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child as an argument

Using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as an argument in an expert assessment will highlight the perspective of children's rights. Recognising that children and young people have certain rights means respecting and protecting the dignity and integrity of children and young people. These can easily become mere words in after-dinner speeches if they do not find their way into pedagogical practice and illustrate how and why children can achieve their human rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is about human rights for children, and any breach of this is thereby also a breach of human rights (Skarstad, 2019).

A total of 195 countries have pledged to work to highlight children's rights, and all of these countries are involved in the consultations held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years. Norway's work with the Convention on the Rights of the Child is therefore part of efforts in an international context (Köhler-Olsen, 2019). In 2018, Norway was recommended to establish clear guidelines on performing assessments of the best interests of the child, to be used by all public officials making decisions that affect children (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 2018). In the official study for the new Education Act (NOU 2019:23), the committee made an exemplary effort to include children in work on the new text of the Act and to allow children's voices to be heard clearly throughout the study. The committee itself says that working with children has prompted them to add a new

chapter to the Act, in which the best interests of the child is a guiding principle. If the bill is passed, it is a major step towards fulfilling the main principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The ordinary course of education

Schools are essentially designed to suit the average pupil in terms of curricula, regulations and legislation, syllabus, educational resources and teaching plans, and in practical arrangements in the classroom. The ordinary course of education suits most pupils and imparts skills that are described in competence objectives and graded using assessments and marks. With adaptation, many pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities follow a similar course in the same schools as the average pupil (Heide & Holiman, 2019).

NOU 2019:23 uses the term *universal education*. This principle is defined as follows in Section 10-1 of the bill:

The municipality and county authority shall provide universal education, which means that education must be satisfactory for as many pupils as possible without individual adaptation (NOU 2019:23, p. 31).

This means that they envisage education in which more people will be able to participate without extra adaptation, if the act is passed in its current form.

When a pupil needs more

Even if a school makes every endeavour to accommodate everyone, some pupils will still need something extra in order to achieve a satisfactory benefit from their education. The right to special education in schools is triggered by the PPT through an expert assessment (Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training). Taking the children's constitution as our basis

– the Convention on the Rights of the Child – we will illustrate how schools can incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into their work with these same pupils. In particular, we will emphasise that the need for an assessment of what is in the best interests of the child, in which the child is heard by an expert in this assessment, increases in proportion to the difference from a school’s ordinary course of education. The greater the difference from the methods or content of the ordinary course of education, the more important it is to work on the basis of knowledge. Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the right to assess the best interests of the child, rests heavily on Article 12, on the child’s right to be heard on matters that concern them. However, the Ombudsperson for Children 2017 report *Uten mål og mening* [“Without goals and meaning”] shows that children receiving special education are not being heard in matters when their educational provision is being assessed and planned (Ombudsperson for Children, 2017).

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has prepared a guide to the use of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in case processing. This is intended to act as a support to the county governors in terms of *consulting the child and assessing the child’s best interests* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

The guide points out that when a case is processed, every agency, including the school, shall assess the specific best interests of each child individually, based on the child’s situation and needs, irrespective of finances. The guide states that the best interests of the child constitute a *rule of case processing*. For example, long case processing times can conflict with the best interests of the child.

Finding out what the child thinks about an issue is an essential element of assessing the best interests of the child.

Since the best interests of the child are self-executing, this means that a case has not been processed correctly if the best interests of the child have not been assessed (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). The phrase ‘self-executing’ is described as follows:

A convention or other article is self-executing when its content makes it suitable to be employed as an independent legal basis in disputes before courts or other authorities. (Smith, 2008)

In practice, this means that if we do not assess the best interests of the child, the parents would win an appeal case.

The assessment must take into account the fact that the best interests of the child are flexible, which makes it possible to adapt the content to the individual child’s situation and to the community around the child.

It is also a requirement for the assessment of the best interests of the child to be based on knowledge and to be performed by multiple experts. Based on knowledge means that it is based on knowledge-based practice. This means: “(...) *making expert decisions based on systematically obtained, research-based knowledge, experience-based knowledge and the user’s wishes and needs in a given situation*” (Norwegian Electronic Health Library, 2020). In some cases, there is no research on the specific subject that an expert wishes to illustrate. Common practice in such situations is to refer to related research fields in order to have something to lean on in the work of achieving the best interests of the child (UN general comments no. 14).

At present, it is difficult to pick out assessments of the best interests of the child in reports and expert assessments (Ombudsperson for Children, 2017).

Article 12 gives children the right to express themselves on all matters that concern them (Pedersen, 2019).

When a case is processed, the child’s view must be examined, and their viewpoints given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The child does not necessarily need to have opinions about a solution for the case in order to express themselves. It is enough for the child to have an opinion about some aspects of a case. The Convention on the Rights of the Child also states that the child has a right to be heard, but not an obligation. We can encourage children to allow themselves to be heard, but we must also respect their desire not to use this right.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a case shall be processed in an efficient, child-friendly, and accessible way. It points out that children do not have an obligation to express themselves, but that they must be given an opportunity to express themselves. Arrangements must

ensure that the consultation is not perceived as a burden. The child must therefore receive the information they need in order to make a decision on whether or not they wish to be heard, what the matter is about, and why and how the consultation will take place (Sandberg, 2016).

Case

This case will be about how we can more specifically assess the best interests of the child by listening to the child’s voice. This is illustrated through examples in a case and through relevant theory

1. in the dialogue between the pupil in question, their parents and teacher prior to the meeting with the PPT, and
2. in the PPT’s partnership with the child in its work of designing an expert assessment.

First of all, however, we will introduce Siv, her teacher Mari and PPT counsellor Mette.

Siv, 10 years old

Siv is in the fifth grade. She is not progressing as expected in her subjects. Her parents and the school have therefore been concerned for some time, and the situation is regularly on the agenda in the home-school relationship and contact. Siv finds the subjects of mathematics and Norwegian particularly difficult (both reading and writing). At playtime, Siv tends to play with children from lower year groups (from year two). Siv is good at making up and telling stories orally, and she enjoys art and crafts. Her favourite subject is gymnastics, and she is particularly interested in and good at playing football. After being advised by the school, the parents have consulted an ophthalmologist and optician, and the public health nurse has arranged an extra hearing test. Everything turns out to be normal in terms of vision and hearing.

Mari, teacher

Teacher Mari thinks that children are not able to see the whole picture in a situation, and therefore rely on having good, sensible adults around them. At the same time, adults can easily overlook the child’s perspective in conversations. Mari has studied the Convention on the Rights of the Child at college. It is very important for her to build good relationships with her pupils. Establishing close contact with her pupils enables her to gain insight into the pupil perspective. This gives her a basis for implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in her work.

Educational psychology counsellor (PPT counsellor) Mette

Mette is a PPT counsellor with many years of experience. This, on top of her qualifications, gives her a solid foundation for the work of performing expert assessments in the office. Like teacher Mari, Mette has studied the Convention on the Rights of the Child at college. Counsellor Mette feels that this education has added a dimension to her work which had been lacking, namely a clearer pupil perspective.

In current practice, adults have a tendency to adopt an expert role without listening to the child (Strandkleiv, 2017). This also applies in schools and in expert assessments by the PPT. The child's perspective thereby disappears in the child-adult relationship. Realistically, if children are to be heard, adults need to change their attitudes, and children's voices must be given more space (Gamst, 2017). However, we would like to emphasise that the fact that children should be heard does not mean that they should make the decisions.

It means that their voices must be given space when a decision is to be made (Heide & Nicolaisen, 2019).

Mari and counsellor Mette are both concerned with what is in the best interests of the child, and want the child to be heard in this process. Now we see a little more about what happened before the PPT was contacted.

Work prior to the application

Before sending a referral to the PPT, the work tends to start with a meeting.

Application meeting

There has been plenty of contact and communication between Siv, her parents and teacher Mari. They have already had discussions about the situation and have now agreed to apply to the PPT for its services. The aim is to clarify what Siv's difficulties are, in order to find out how they can better address her needs.

Siv is present at the preparatory meeting and tells them which subjects she likes best and how she feels socially at school. Teacher Mari explains about the application to the PPT and what they could help with. "We would like you to learn even more at school, especially in Norwegian, English and mathematics," concludes teacher Mari. Siv says that she has understood what they are talking about and that she would like to meet someone from the PPT. The parents sign the application and then teacher Mari reads out what they have written.

The children's rights perspective

Having studied the Convention on the Rights of the Child at college, teacher Mari is in a special position in terms of using what she hears from the pupils as a basis for assessing what is in the best interests of the pupils. Since she qualified, she has given lectures to her colleagues, which means that everyone at her school is familiar with children's rights. The children's rights perspective can be overlooked and not taken seriously if the adults do not understand that the child's rights are an obligation applying to their education and teaching (Skarstad, 2019). Working in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives schools the opportunity to teach pupils about 'democracy and citizenship', and this is a topic that will be included in the new curricula that will be implemented from autumn 2020 onward (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). Alongside the topics of 'public health and life skills' and 'sustainable development', the aim is for these three topics to be integrated into every subject at every age level, and to be topics with which the school will work throughout the course of education (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). In addition, the school as an organisation is aware that providing good education is a complex matter, and that many factors and types of skills need to come together in order to achieve what is in the best interest of the child – such as how teachers view children and learning, and didactic relationship skills. The staff are familiar with such reflections because they are aware of the pedagogic opportunities presented by working towards common goals. They have therefore developed their own pedagogic platform. The head-teacher actively participates in the work, fully aware that a managerial connection with development work is a critical success factor.

Teacher Mari is up to date on the new guidelines for new programme descriptions, so she and her colleagues have started looking at the proposals that have been made regarding the curricular planning work. The school has therefore put the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the agenda for this academic year. She will prepare pupils for what is to come. Every day, teacher Mari practices the principle of Article 12 with her class, that children shall be heard. She thinks that the pupils have a lot of clever ideas about teaching, which they try out together. When she got a copy of the proposal for the new Education Act, she drew a heart in the margin in Chapter 2 (NOU 2019:23, page 24). Finally, she thinks, there is a place for her school's ideas about participation. Pupil democracy and school rules are also a topic in this chapter.

New Education Act

In her teaching team, teacher Mari initiates discussions about pupils, and the team have productive discussions about the best interests of the individual child in relation to the best interests of the entire class. Teacher Mari is happy that she is conversant with specialist articles about the subject, and that she can act as a resource for the other teachers, who continually have ideas and reflections on how they could be working. Kipperberg (2019) problematizes how the best interests of the individual child must be seen in relation to the best interests of the entire group of children. Sandberg (2016) also does this. She says that in some cases, the best interests of one child can be in opposition to the best interests of the class, and that schools should avoid getting into dilemmas in which interests are pitted against each other but should focus on finding other solutions.

Children's sense of fairness

We would like to point out that UNICEF has set up schools all over the world in which work is performed in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and where children sit on a Rights Respecting School Council. The results in the two schools of this kind that have been set up in Norway show that when children are allowed to make decisions, they look at the rights of all the children in the school. At one of the schools, they discussed a desire for all the children to learn sign language, so that they could communicate with the pupils in the sign language class. At the other school, the pupils wanted a ramp, so that pupils in

wheelchairs would be able to use the same entrance to the sports centre as the other pupils (Sandøe, 2019).

Examples like this warm our hearts and show that children have a much stronger sense of fairness than we realise, and that they tend to go further than adults do. It also tells us something about how the child's perspective could develop schools and kindergartens in different directions than if only adults contribute with their perspectives. The child's perspective challenges and enriches us. But that is enough theory for now. How was Siv's first meeting with the PPT?

PPT assessment

After a few weeks, PPT counsellor Mette arrives. Siv and teacher Mari meet her together. First, they go through the application. Then teacher Mari talks about how they have looked at the subjects of maths, Norwegian and English. Siv and teacher Mari have talked about all the subjects and given them colour coding. They have talked about red subjects, which are the subjects that Siv really enjoys, blue subjects, which are those that she enjoys less, and green subjects, which are subjects that Siv thinks are difficult.

They talk about how Siv finds school, and what she herself thinks she is good at.

Siv explains that she is good at playing, and that she often makes up stories for the girls she plays with. PPT counsellor Mette writes this down.

PPT counsellor Mette explains that she would like to come on a visit to the classroom and see how Siv manages, both in the subjects that she likes and the subjects that she struggles with. They look at the timetable together and agree on two classroom visits. "Then we will do some tests and find out what you are really good at, and what you are struggling with," says counsellor Mette. Teacher Mari adds: "We will find out how we can improve things as much as possible for you at school." Siv says that this is fine.

The child's view

Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the right to assess the best interests of the child, is inextricably linked to Article 12, on the child's right to be heard on matters that concern them (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). The adults that should hear the

child must be properly prepared and skilled in talking to children. In other words, a prerequisite for assessing what is in the best interests of the child is identifying what the child's view is. Let us look what happened at the meeting between the PPT, Mari and Siv after testing and observation.

After the classroom visits, sitting tests and submitting forms completed by the school, Siv and her parents, PPT counsellor Mette has a meeting with Siv and her parents. In this meeting, Mette summarises the work: "I can see that you are polite, kind to your fellow pupils and that you do as well as you can in every subject," she tells Siv. "The tests show that mathematics is difficult for you, and that you may have lost some of the basics of this subject. In Norwegian and English, you struggle with the grammar, and reading and writing tests is difficult for you. You are better at speaking. I think that telling all the stories to your friends has helped you with that. But you take a long time to get started on exercises, Siv, and I would like to explore that with you. I think that it would be good for you to be in a smaller group for mathematics, where you will get thorough explanations and exercises that you understand. What do you think about that?" Siv twists a little in her seat. "I don't want to be in a small group for every maths lesson, and not for the whole lesson. I would like to be part of the class and listen when the teacher introduces new material, and then go into the group room with the others." Counsellor Mette nods, and says that she has made a note of this, and that it sounds like a sensible idea.

How to get the child's voice across

Children can often have opinions on how they learn best. In order to obtain the child's opinion, the adults must ensure that the interviews held are dialogical. Such interviews are based on dialogical principles, like the child interview based on Dialogical Communication Methodology (DCM) (Gamst, 2019). Its main principle is that the adult must keep their assumptions out of the interview, and in that way give the child space to present their own ideas. The adult presents the topics they wish to talk about and encourages the child to speak as freely as possible. The adult should ask as few questions as possible, as the method instead involves encouraging the child to talk more, and then makes use of

summarisation to ensure that the child has been understood correctly. The aim of the method is to get the child to speak freely, and the term used to clarify the adult's role is as a *listening funnel*. The model is associated with Kari Gamst (2018) and is about focusing one's attention on the child's statements. The adult confirms what the child says about a topic through nods (I hear what you are saying) and small words such as 'mm'. When there is a pause, the adult may say "tell me more about that" in order to show interest and prompt the child to give more complete answers. Children will often need a little time in order to marshal their thoughts.

Pauses in the interview are natural and explained by the fact that the child needs time to gather their thoughts, because they have discovered that thoughts are connected. The adult must therefore tolerate silence and pauses without filling them with questions.

Presence and common understanding

Being present in the interview and being present together are also difficult for both parties in the interview. When the adult summarises the interview, they can ensure that they have a common understanding by then asking the child whether they have included everything, whether there is anything that they have forgotten, and whether the child wants to add anything. Using these principles can have a very good effect. We would like to emphasise that this is a method that one must practise using.

Let us look at how PPT counsellor Mette ensures that in her interview with Siv, she achieves a dialogue based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Convention on the Rights of the Child as an approach

Counsellor Mette from the PPT wants to talk to Siv about how she finds school assignments. Teacher Mari has explained that Siv likes to play and tell stories. Counsellor Mette also thinks that her meetings with Siv have given her a relatively good relationship with Siv, so it is likely that Siv will participate in the interview as truthfully as she can. She also knows that Siv is a child who may wish to please adults, so she thinks carefully about how she should present topics, right down to the level of choice of words.

Counsellor Mette knows that it is important for Siv to have a structured framework, so she will limit the interview to 30 minutes (Gamst, 2019).

In order to find out whether Siv can express herself in a free narrative, i.e. with several statements in a row, counsellor Mette will start with this, and she will use the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the introduction to the interview. When Siv arrives, counsellor Mette has put out some cuddly toys and a ball, in case Siv wants to hold something during the interview (Gamst, 2019).

“Thank you for meeting me, Siv, and for talking about what you think about school assignments. Remember that I have to write a report with recommendations on how the school can best organise the way it teaches you”. Siv nods in confirmation. “Remember that we talked about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and about the fact that you have the right to give your opinions?” Siv nods again. “Only you know how things are for you, and only you can say something about how you learn best. So I would like to hear about that. We will talk for around 30 minutes. If you need a break, just tell me. Is that alright?” Siv nods again. “When we begin, I will ask you to speak as freely as you can, and after you have talked for a while, I will summarise what you have said, so that I can be sure that I have understood you. Does that sound alright?” Siv nods. “Are you ready to begin?” asks counsellor Mette. Then the interview starts.

Counsellor Mette tells Siv that is not certain that things will be arranged exactly the way Siv wants, but that Mette would then explain why. They then talk a little more about the child’s right to be heard when age and maturity permit. “Siv, you are both old enough and you know how you learn. I am impressed at the insight you have about what works in the various subjects. Things are a little different in Norwegian and English. I suggest that you work with different assignments than the class for a while, but that you stay with the others in the class for the lessons. An extra teacher will then come into the class who will be able to help all of the pupils, including you. What do you think about that suggestion?” Counsellor sees that Siv is hesitating. “You can think about it until tomorrow and then phone me when you have decided. Is that a good solution?” Siv nods.

Child friendly

This practice example demonstrates how formal meetings can be designed to be more child-friendly, which makes it easier for children to allow their voice to be heard. However, we must remember that we lose an important perspective if we cannot manage to motivate children to talk about their own situation. After all, the most important participant is the child themselves. By working systematically to listen to children, children will gradually expect to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Only then will we have user participation in practice (Kvello, 2019).

Using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a concept for hearing children and making assessments about the best interests of the child will make it clear to parents and pupils what we are referring to. The child’s perspective will then come across more clearly on the issues we are working with – also in an adult perspective. In this way, every educator will be able to work with human rights from a micro-perspective.

On the child’s terms

It can be difficult to hear children in ‘interview situations’ that are constructed by adults. Children must be heard on their own terms, and that means that we adults may have to lie on the floor and play, because it is in that way that the child can be heard (Olsen, 2019). Knowledge of each child is therefore an essential prerequisite for hearing the child. For small children without verbal language, we can ‘hear’ them through participatory observation and discussions with people who are close to them. Young people can be heard through an activity in which the attention is directed at something outside themselves. For example, going for a drive can provide a framework for a good interview, since the driver and the young person both have their attention on the road. The only thing that limits how children can use their right to be heard is our imagination.

Children’s right to be heard must not be confused with allowing children to decide. Co-determination is about giving the child’s view attention on the same terms as other considerations in the matter. The most important thing is to inform the child that the outcome on issues about which they have spoken will either be what they want, a compromise or a decision that goes against the child’s wishes.

Result of the process

We will give some examples of PPT counsellor Mette's reports that illustrate and confirm Siv's right to be heard. Example 1 shows how the PPT counsellor assesses that the

child is of both an age and maturity that indicate that they should be heard, and with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Example 2 shows what counsellor Mette's summarisation could look like.

Example 1

Siv is 10 years old, and in my view, she is of both an age and maturity to be heard on matters that affect her, as shown in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Example 2

Siv explains that she likes Norwegian. She thinks that it is fine to ask for help when she needs it, but she would prefer to find the answers herself. Siv's strength is storytelling. The PPT recommends that this is taken into consideration, so that she gets to demonstrate her strength in the class situation. Siv enjoys being able to answer questions in class, and she enjoys presenting what she has been working on, also in English, particularly in oral activities. The PPT suggests increasing teacher density in Norwegian and English, which will allow differentiated teaching to take place in the classroom. Siv understands that she will be given different assignments to the rest of the class. It is important for Siv not to stand out from the rest of the class. The adaptation must therefore happen behind the scenes, and in a way that ensures the other pupils do not see that she has different assignments. For example, this could involve making sure that workbooks have the same front page for all pupils.

In mathematics, she has agreed to go into a small group after new subject matter has been presented in the class. She does not want to be in a separate group for all the mathematics lessons. The PPT recommends that Siv's request regarding adaptation be heard.

When asked "What is the most important thing that would help you to be happy at school?" she replies that the most important thing is to have someone to be with.

Summary

In this article, we have pointed out the pedagogic consequences of using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a tool to be used by experts in their work. We have seen that this requires competence in the field of child law, and in how to elicit the child's perspective in interviews with children. We have also pointed out that the child interview provides the basis for assessing the best interests of the child.

We have pointed out elements that must be taken into consideration when eliciting the child's perspective in the child interview.

The most important work is summarising the child's statements, thereby giving them clear rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The manner in which the PPT counsellor obtains this perspective depends on the PPT counsellor's relationship with the child and ability to concretize the opinions that the child has expressed. We are optimistic on behalf of Norwegian children who need special adaptation. In a future model for more inclusive learning communities, they could be heard to a greater degree, and what they say will be taken seriously.

This is the moral obligation inherent in inclusion (Heide & Holiman, 2019). We are pleased that children can say something about how they learn best, and that this is put down in writing, and that children learn both participation and democracy.

If the new bill for the Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (NOU 23: 2019) is passed, it could give children a clearer legal right to an assessment of the best interests of the child based on interviews with children, parents and professionals. This concretization of what has already been enshrined in the Constitution could now become part of teaching practice.

Finally, we must remember that incorporating the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the work of expert assessments is an adult responsibility. Children do not get more rights than adults are willing to allow in practical teaching work!

Helpful resources for this work

For interested readers, we would like to highlight three resources that could help to put the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the agenda. The first is the County Governors' Office's *Sjumilssteget* ['The Giant Leap'], which shows how we can work with the Convention on the Rights of the Child at municipal level. You can find the resource here: sjumilssteget.no/

The second resource is Statped's online resource about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which focuses on how children can be heard, enabling us to make assessments of the best interests of the child. The resource is searchable on Statped's website statped.no. Here is a link to the online resource: [Barnekonvensjonen | www.statped.no](http://www.statped.no)

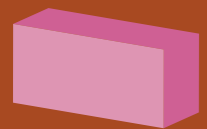
The third resource is the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training's *Veiledning til bruk av barnekonvensjonen i saksbehandlingen* [Guide to the use of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in case processing]. You can find it here: udir.no/globalassets/filer/regelverk/rundskriv/veiledning-til-bruk-av-barnekonvensjonen.pdf

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From a sociocultural perspective, children’s learning and development occurs through participation in social communities – where community with peers is of particular importance. Children’s participation in learning communities with other children, or facilitation of such participation, is a recurring theme in this anthology. The contributors to this anthology are advisers at Statped with experience from a variety of fields. They account for various approaches founded on experienced-based and research-based knowledge. What they all have in common is that they, through their adviser roles, have worked closely with the field of practice. This anthology shares the experiences from collaborations with kindergartens and schools in the efforts to develop a knowledge-based practice.

The anthology is primarily directed at students and professionals who work in kindergartens and schools but may also be of interest to others.

