

I: The Framework Program “You, Me and the Two of Us!”

Norwegian – and Nordic - day-care institutions (Pedagogical institutions for children 1 – 6 years), differ from other European and American institutions in one very important way: The Norwegian children spend a lot more time in informal relationships with both children and adults, participating in role-play and in a variety of activities in the playground. There are some formal lessons in Norwegian day-care institutions, but compared with England, Belgium and other European countries, they are fewer and do not last long.

As a consequence, Norwegian day-care institutions in addition to specific topics, attach great importance to **play, care and social interaction**. Increasing social competence in children **is one of the main goals** for the pedagogical practice in the Norwegian Curriculum for day-care institutions.

Therefore I developed the framework program called “*You, Me and the Two of Us! A Framework Program for increasing Social Competence in Children in Day-Care Institutions*”. The program is based on

- international studies within social competence as a defined field of research,
- analyses of Norwegian day-care tradition as a context for children's development of social competence,
- newer developmental theory, and
- a close analysis of some selected international competence programs in the field.

Today 57% of the day-care institutions in Norway are using this program, and 70% percent of the greatest day-care institutions use it.

Focus in the framework program is placed both

- **on developing each child’s social competence, and**
- **on the social environment of the day-care institutions as a context for this development**

“You, Me and the Two of Us” – Three Books and Three Pamphlets:

In 1997 three books were published describing the framework program; The *Theory book*, the *Handbook* and the *Children’s book* (Lamer 1997a, b, c).

The *Handbook* describes the framework for the practical-pedagogical work to increase the children's social competence. As a consequence of the explicit view of learning and the experiences of the implementation processes, the *Handbook* comprises of three pamphlets; the

- *Theme pamphlet*, the
- *Here-and-now pamphlet* and the
- *Basis pamphlet*.

The Theme pamphlet contains suggestions for carrying out learning situations which are planned and structured in advance, so-called theme gatherings. The theme gatherings are based on the children's book "*You and me and Truls og Trine*" which is about a boy and a girl called Truls and Trine, and the other children in their day-care institutions. These theme gatherings are used to create a common platform for norms and values which will influence the social environment, and focus is placed on skills that are central in acquiring social competence.

The Here-and-now pamphlet is aimed at making the staff aware, and it supports those parts of their natural daily interaction which is essential for children's social development. The pamphlet contains suggestions for methods which the staff can use to promote each child's or group of children's social competence, in daily here-and-now-situations. Methods which are more generally aimed at encouraging a good social environment are also described in the pamphlet.

The Basis pamphlet aims at informing the staff in newer pedagogical perspectives and concepts and theories about small children's socio-cognitive development and learning. A step-by-step use of these three pamphlets is aimed at giving the personnel an easy start and enough time to develop and change their own practices.