



# Norwegian Research on ECEC Quality from 2010 to 2021—A Systematic Scoping Review

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**Abstract:** This review concerns how quality in ECEC is thematized and examined in Norwegian research published in 2010–2021. The review contributes to developing relevant professional knowledge and insight into what quality in ECEC is, should be or can be. A systematic scoping review includes 97 empirical studies of quality in the Norwegian ECEC context. The results show an increase in studies addressing quality after the year 2017. Most studies use interviews and observations, i.e., qualitative data. Research based on quantitative studies mainly applies to questionnaires, whereas multi-method designs occur with the third greatest frequency. The majority of the studies are descriptive or explore relationships. A few studies concern method development, interventions or reviews of the literature. ECEC staff and ECEC teachers are the most common informants. Two-thirds of the studies included were published in English, and only one-third were published in Norwegian. Thematically, process quality emerges as the most studied dimension of quality, dominated by investigating the aspect of staff–child interactions. About one-third of the studies investigate structural quality, with most attention paid to the physical environment and the organization of the ECEC provisions. Less research is directed at result (outcome) quality and curriculum quality. This overview contributes to increased knowledge about how quality is understood and used in research, as an essential prerequisite for creating a safe and sound everyday life for children in ECEC.

**Keywords:** ECEC; quality; Norway; systematic scoping review



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## 1. Introduction

This systematic scoping review aims to identify and analyze empirical studies regarding how quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is thematized and investigated in Norwegian research. The quality of ECEC provision is a highly relevant issue of importance to policymaking, professional education and development and, not least, the actual educational activities, as evidenced by international research (e.g., [1–4]) and Nordic research (e.g., [5–8]). In recent years, the quality of ECEC provision has received increased attention in Norwegian policy documents, such as the White Paper [9], the National Kindergarten Strategy Towards 2030 [10] and in Competences for the Kindergarten of the Future [11], which states that all children should have access to high-quality ECEC services. This research overview can thus contribute to the government’s invitation to the ECEC sector (cf. the aforementioned White Paper [11]) to contribute to a joint effort to improve ECEC quality.

Today, there is a certain degree of international consensus that it is primarily high-quality ECEC that has significant potential to contribute positively to children’s play and well-being and to their learning and development (see, e.g., [12–14]). Low quality is linked to concerns about children’s outcomes [15,16], particularly for children from homes who are at risk [17,18].

However, there is still debate about what the term quality means and whether and how quality can be assessed [1,19]. Concepts such as structural quality, process quality, curriculum quality and result quality have previously been discussed and [20] have subsequently been used in several contexts, including Norwegian policy documents [21] and academic studies [22,23]. Structural quality is understood as the framework for what happens in ECEC [24,25], often referred to as conditions and factors that cannot or cannot easily be changed by staff alone. The concept of process quality is defined as the relationship between individuals and structures in ECEC [7,26–28] and is mainly aimed at cooperative processes between stakeholders. Furthermore, curriculum quality relates to the content and subject areas of ECEC [23], often referred to as how and to what degree a written curriculum is implemented and fulfilled in practical implementation and expressed in daily routines and activities. Studies of result quality (outcome quality) are aimed at the impact of children's attendance and participation in ECEC on their skills and competences in terms of learning and development [16,29].

An updated overview of research on the quality of ECEC in Norway will, first of all, contribute to a better understanding of which dimensions of the quality concept have received attention and which quality dimensions remain under-researched. Secondly, increased knowledge of how the concept of quality is understood and used in research is an essential prerequisite for future research contributions to creating a stimulating and safe environment for all children under ECEC provision. The results from this study will, thirdly, also provide more knowledge about the purpose of the studies and the research methods and data collection methods used. This systematic review is thus intended to guide researchers and policymakers in highlighting the importance of further research on the quality of ECEC. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How many studies investigate quality in Norwegian early childhood education and care, what is their purpose, and in what form and language are they published?
2. Which research methodological approaches characterize these studies?
3. Which aspects of quality are highlighted in the studies?

## 2. Materials and Methods

A systematic scoping review aims to map the main concepts supporting a research area and the central sources and types of available evidence [30]. We adopted a protocol-based approach to identify relevant studies [31]. The following inclusion criteria are defined, based on the research questions, with the aim of identifying all relevant contributions to the research literature:

*Empirical research:* The study relied on empirical (qualitative or quantitative) data as the basis for the analyses. The empirical research should be based on a systematically planned and appropriately presented methodological process, from data collection to analysis.

*Time of publication:* The study is published between 2010 and 2021.

*Country:* The study considers research in Norway.

*Target group:* The study is aimed at public or private ECEC provision, i.e., institutions for 0–6-year-olds.

*Topic:* The study explicitly concerns the quality of ECEC provision. The study examines key aspects of ECEC activities that are important for children's well-being, development and learning, such as value base, purpose, content, working methods, and organizational and physical conditions or effects.

*Type of publication:* The study is published as a journal article, PhD thesis or research report. Studies that do not meet these inclusion criteria have been excluded.

### 2.1. Literature Search

The identification of studies concerning research on the quality of ECEC in Norway was based on a systematic search of relevant databases and educational journals for Scandinavian ECEC research. The systematic search strategy aimed to find and identify empirical studies of quality in Norwegian ECEC, in line with inclusion criteria. Norwegian and

international databases were searched via the University Library of Stavanger's electronic resources. In addition, manual searches of relevant educational journals were conducted to ensure the search string was correct. The entire project team conducted the searches. The search string is presented in Appendix A.

Searches were conducted of national (NORA, Oslo, Norway; ORIA, Trondheim, Norway; Idunn, Oslo, Norway; NORART, Oslo, Norway), Scandinavian (NB-ECEC, Copenhagen, Denmark.) and international (Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Washington, DC, USA; Scopus (Elsevier), Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Web of Science, Philadelphia, PA, USA.) databases. The international databases are relevant because Norwegian research is increasingly published in international journals. Hand searches were conducted of two Norwegian educational journals, *Barn [Children]* and the journal *Nordic Early Childhood Educational Research: Stavanger &, Bergen, Norway*, and of the National Research School for Teacher Education (NAFOL) website. The searches were conducted in February and March 2021. Table 1 provides an overview of the databases and journals searched.

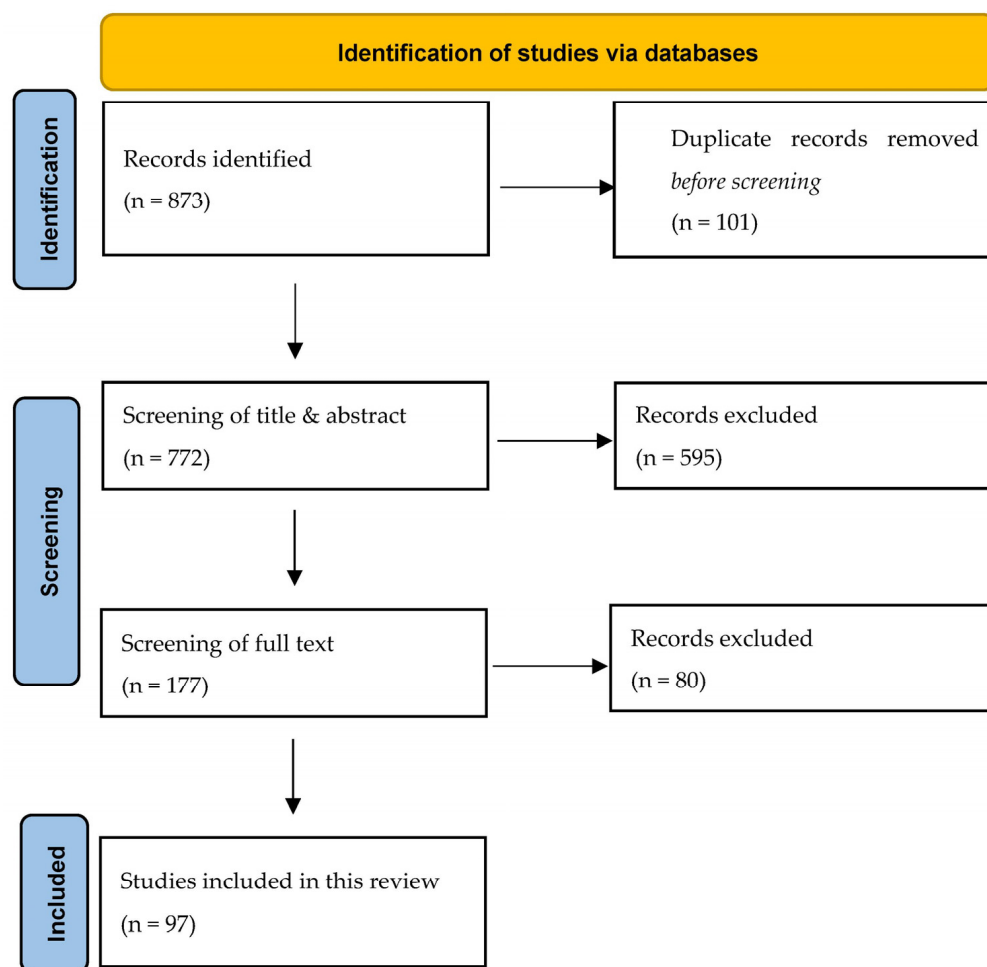
**Table 1.** Overview of databases searched and the number of hits in these databases.

Source	Date	Hits
Barn	15 March 2022	9
Idunn	23 February 2022	4
NORA	23 February 2022	1
NAFOL	25 February 2022	42
NORART	15 March 2022	45
Nordisk barnehageforskning	25 February 2022	12
Paideia	21 March 2022	56
ORIA	15 March 2022	76
ERIC	23 February 2022	59
Scopus	23 February 2022	559
Web of Science	23 February 2022	10
Total		873

## 2.2. Screening Process

The studies identified by systematic searches of Scandinavian and international databases and journals were screened by title and abstract, and then by the full text, by two independent peers. The screening aimed to exclude studies that did not meet the defined inclusion criteria for mapping Norwegian empirical research on quality in ECEC from 2010 to 2021. Figure 1 provides an overview of identification, screening and inclusion of the studies.

The EPPI-Reviewer Web 4 software [32] was used for screening, coding and reporting. This software ensures that the assessment of relevant research is systematic, structured and transparent. The screening aimed to exclude studies that did not meet the defined inclusion criteria. The researchers received training in the use of the EPPI-Reviewer and participated in coding and quality assessment of relevant research, to ensure inter-rater reliability. Both title and abstract screening and full-text screening were performed by two peers independently and then compared in EPPI, to reach a joint decision in the event of disagreement related to the exclusion of studies. Notes related to training, assessment and communication of coding and assessment are retained in the EPPI-Reviewer system. Table 2 provides an overview of excluded articles after screening by title, abstract and full text.



**Figure 1.** Flowchart illustrating the identification, screening and inclusion of studies.

**Table 2.** Overview of excluded items based on the inclusion criteria, title, abstract and full-text screening.

	Excluded by Title and Abstract	Excluded by Full Text
Time of publication	2	8
Country	32	2
Target group	20	1
Topic	514	6
Publication type	27	63
Excluded studies	595	80

All included studies are presented in Supplementary Materials in alphabetical order.

### 2.3. Data Extraction

Coding, data extraction and quality assessment of the 97 studies included were conducted in the EPPI-Reviewer Web. The first part of the EPPI-Reviewer registration form (Part A) records general information about the study, such as the study's language of publication, research design, data collection method and who inform the study. The second part (Part B) consists of 18 questions and deals with topic-specific issues containing information about the quality concepts (structural quality, process quality, curriculum quality, result quality) addressed through research. These questions were answered via multiple response categories that could be further elaborated on in text boxes linked to the questions.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, 17 randomly selected studies were double-blind coded and then reviewed by the two researchers, to ensure equal understanding and application of the coding scheme. After the coding process, 30 randomly selected articles were reviewed again by two of the peers independently, to ensure that the quality dimensions were understood in the same way.

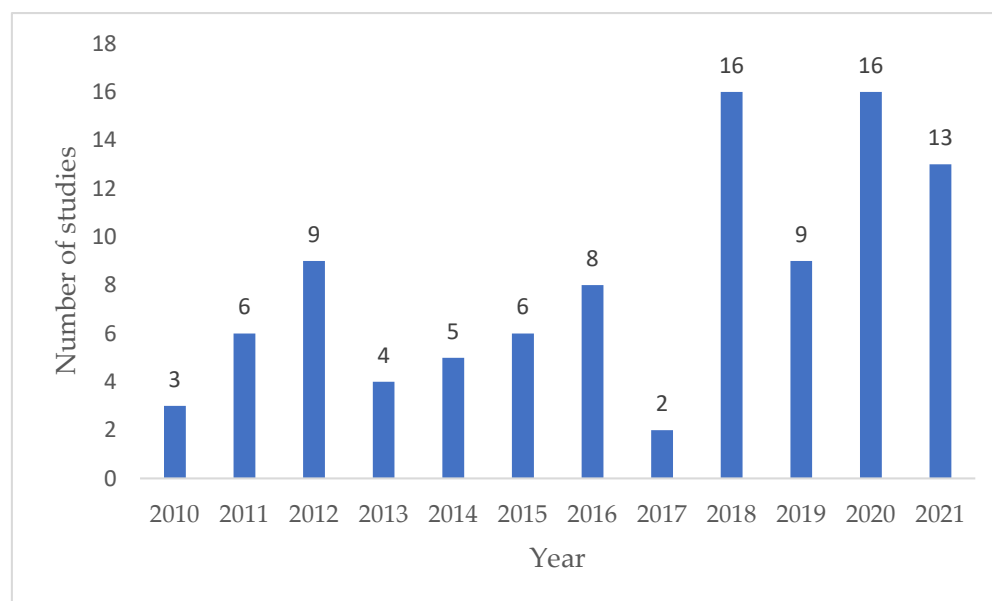
The risk of disqualification was addressed by the researchers not assessing their own studies or studies from their academic environment, nor studies for which they considered themselves disqualified for other reasons (e.g., supervisory relationships or collaboration with authors).

### 3. Results

This systematic scoping review provides an overview of selected aspects of Norwegian research on quality in ECEC for the 2010–2021 period. A total of 97 studies fulfilled all other inclusion criteria for these 12 years. Since several of the questions concerning the general characteristics of the studies (Part A in the EPPI-Reviewer) permitted multiple response options, the total number of responses can be greater than 97.

#### 3.1. Quantity and Type of Publications

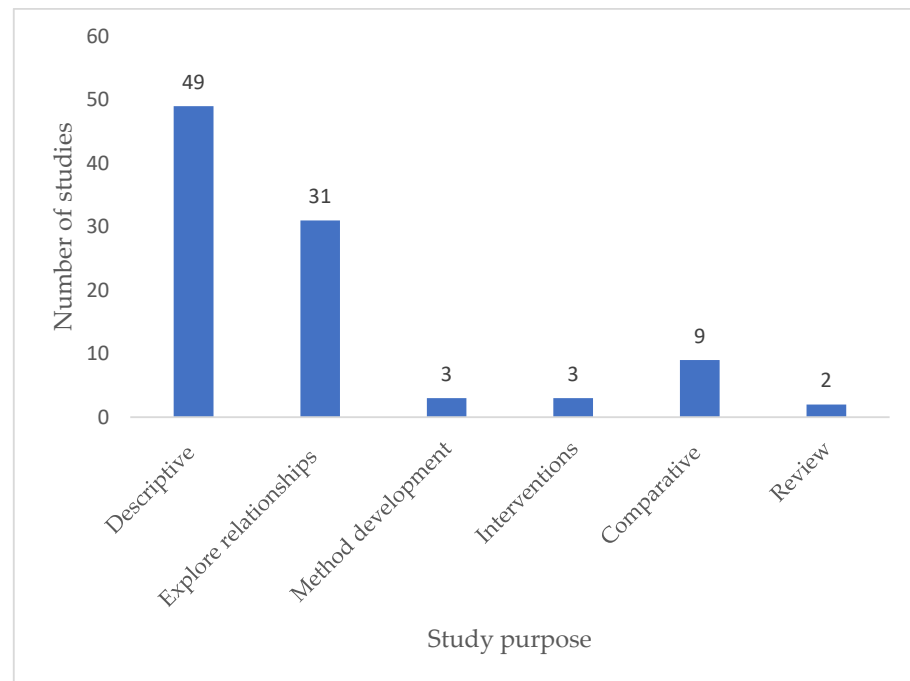
The number of studies addressing the topic of quality for 2010–2021 is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Number of Norwegian studies addressing the topic of quality in ECEC each year in the 2010–2021 period (n = 97).

The number of studies addressing the topic of quality varies considerably during this period. In 2018 and 2020, 16 studies address the topic of quality in ECEC, while in 2021, 13 studies were registered. Disregarding the smaller number of published studies in 2019 (9), these findings may indicate an apparent increase in publications after 2017.

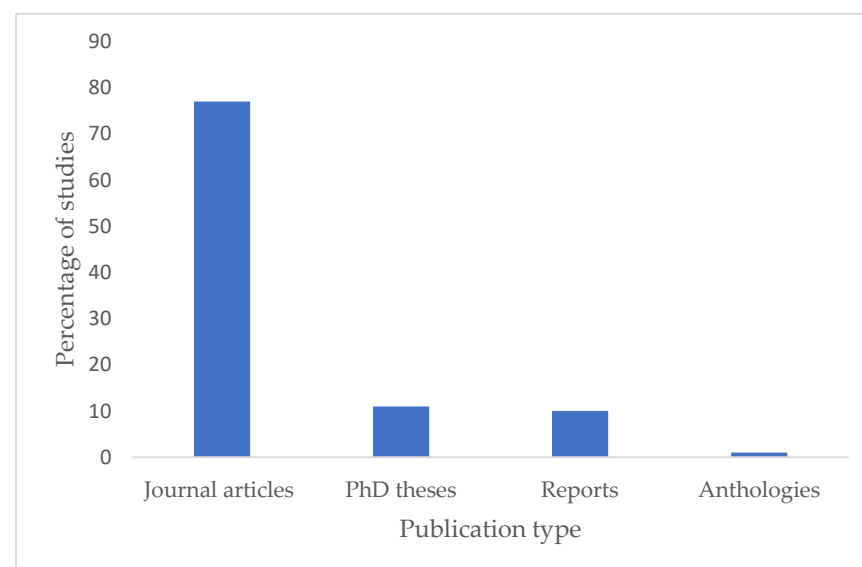
The overall purpose of the study, regardless of its specific research questions, is to inform about the objectives and characterize the research approaches applied when investigating quality in Norwegian ECEC (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Purpose of the studies (n = 97).

Most of the studies are descriptive, either by describing a current situation (49) or by considering relationships between different dimensions or indicators of quality (31). Nine studies compare quality aspects in the Norwegian ECEC with other countries (comparative), while methodological development, interventions and reviews are relatively rare.

Figure 4 shows the types of publication in which research on quality in Norwegian ECEC provision has been published, distinguishing between the formats of journal articles, PhD theses, reports and contributions to scientific anthologies.



**Figure 4.** Percentages (%) of publication types (n = 97).

Slightly more than three quarters of the studies (77%) were published as articles in scientific journals, while 11% were reported as PhD theses and 10% as reports. Only a small proportion of the studies were published in scientific journals. Regarding the language used in these publications, around two-thirds (64) were written in English, and only one-third (33) were written in Norwegian.

### 3.2. Methodological Approaches of the Studies

Figure 5 provides an overview of the types of data on which the studies are based.

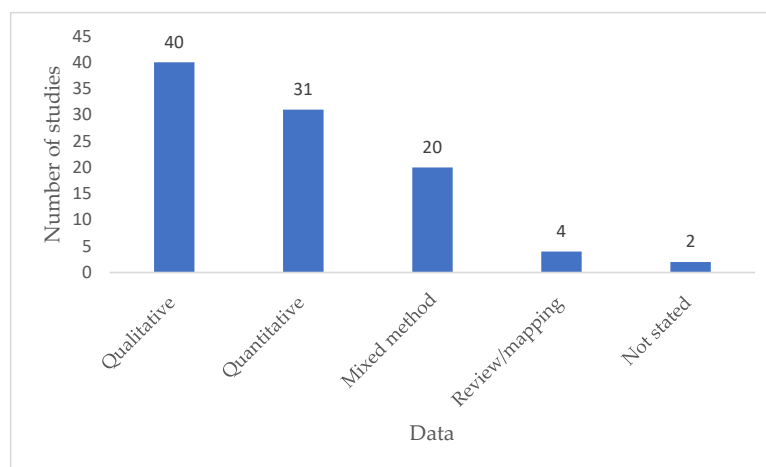


Figure 5. Types of data used in the studies (n = 97).

Qualitative data is the empirical basis for 40 of the studies, while 31 studies are built on quantitative data. As many as 21 studies use mixed methods, and 4 publications conducted a review/mapping of the data. Two studies did not state which data were used. Table 3 below shows how the number of publications in the four publication types has varied throughout the period.

Table 3. The number of studies distributed on publication year and data collection method (n = 97).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Qualitative	2	1	5	1	4	2	5	2	4	3	7	4
Quantitative	0	3	2	3	1	2	2	0	6	1	5	6
Mixed method	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	5	3	3	2
Review/mapping	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Not stated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Total	3	6	9	4	5	6	8	2	16	9	16	13

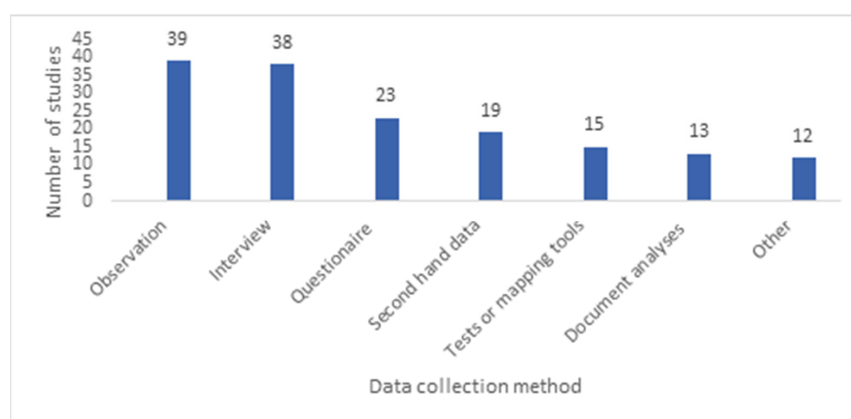
Qualitative data collection is the most used method when studying quality in ECEC over the years of publication. Still, the proportion of studies based on quantitative data is not that far behind. As of 2018, there is a certain tendency for the number of studies to increase, regardless of whether they use qualitative, quantitative or mixed method data. Except for 2019 (for quantitative studies), the number of quantitative and mixed method studies seems to stabilize at a somewhat higher level. The variation between years may otherwise also reflect the completion of major research programs, resulting in increased publication rates. Publications based on a review/mapping of the literature occur only in the last three years and one in 2015. Table 4 shows a cross-tabulation of the data that has been used as a basis for the studies that focus on different quality dimensions.

Table 4. The total number of registered aspects of quality divided by data collection method (opportunity for multiple responses).

	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed Method	Review/Mapping
Process quality	83	52	41	5
Structural quality	57	46	40	4
Curriculum quality	3	15	13	3
Result quality	31	28	15	3

Since most of the included studies address several dimensions and aspects of quality in ECEC, this table only provides a relatively rough impression of the combination of collected data and quality dimensions. The included studies frequently address several dimensions of quality. Aspects of process, structural and result quality are mostly studied based on qualitative data. However, curriculum quality is most often studied by quantitative and mixed methods.

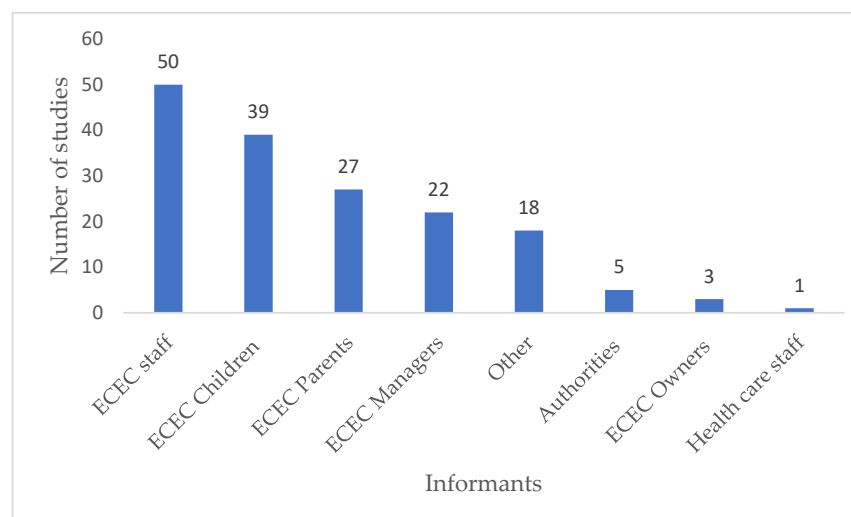
Figure 6 goes into more detail about the methods of data collection applied.



**Figure 6.** Data collection methods used in the studies (opportunity for multiple responses).

Observation and interview were the most used methods and were applied in 39 and 36 studies, respectively, with questionnaires being used in 23 studies, while 17 of the studies relied on secondary data, meaning that they used data or findings from existing research. Around 15 of the studies used tests and other assessment tools, and 11 studies used document analysis. These findings reflect the relative dominance already shown of studies based on qualitative data in research on quality in Norwegian ECEC.

An important question in the context of ECEC quality studies is which persons or groups of persons are the sources of data generation. Figure 7 shows who inform the studies included in this review.



**Figure 7.** Number of studies by who inform the study (opportunity for multiple responses).

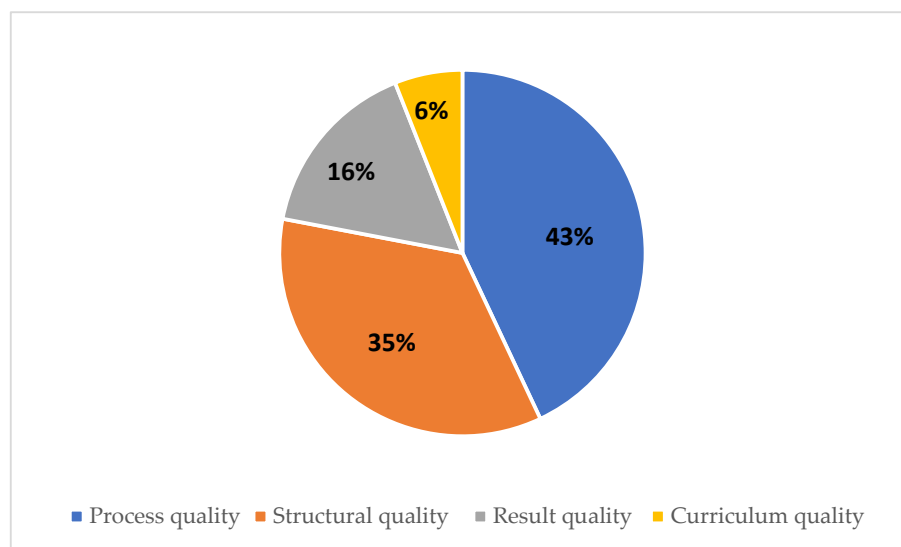
ECEC staff (50) provide information on quality in more than half of the studies, while children (39) are the next most frequent source of information, followed by parents (27) and managers (22). The figure also shows that the other (18) category accounts for most of



the information. Owners (3), authorities (5) and healthcare professionals (1) provide less information on quality than the other categories.

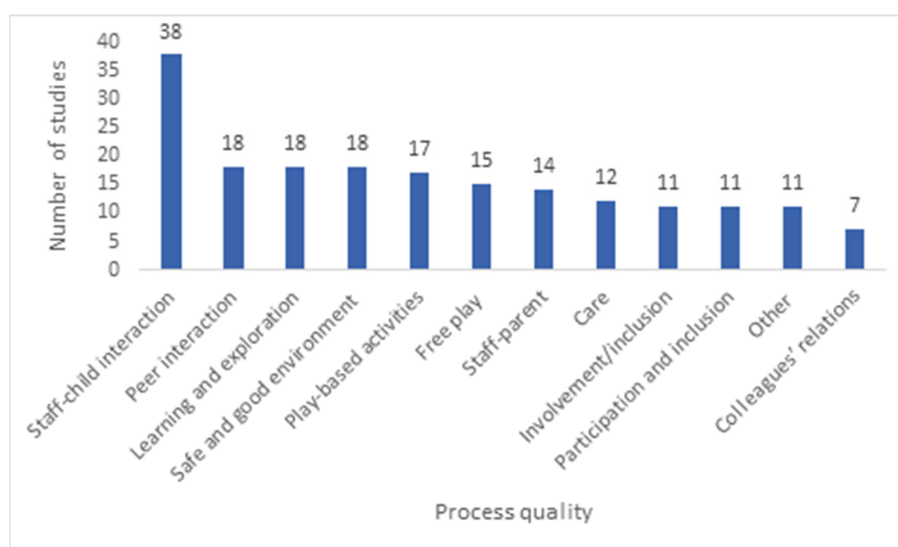
### 3.3. Dimensions of Quality

The proportions of process quality, structural quality, result quality and curriculum quality addressed in the studies has an uneven distribution (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Proportion of studies addressing the four quality dimensions (opportunity for multiple responses).

Process quality accounts for the largest proportion of studies (43%). Structural quality is addressed by a good third (35%) of the studies, while results (16%) and curriculum quality (6%) each receive significantly less attention. Figure 9 breaks down the number of studies for different aspects belonging to process quality.

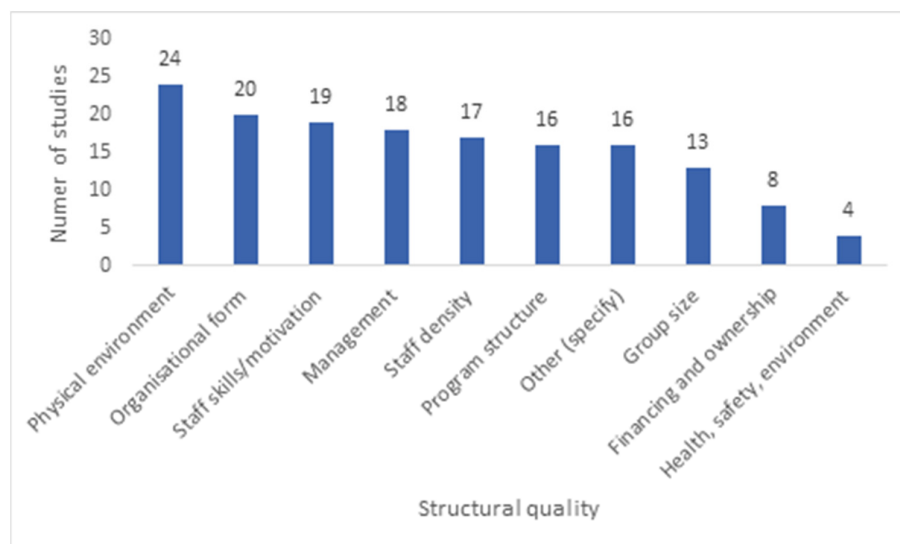


**Figure 9.** Number of studies, including different aspects of process quality (opportunity for multiple responses).

There is a high prevalence of staff–child interactions as a core aspect of process quality (38). Interestingly, this is more than twice as high as compared to studies dealing with child–child relationships (18). Learning and exploration are the third most reported aspects

of process quality (18). The aspect that stands out with the fewest studies is related to colleagues' relationships (7), followed by involvement of children and families and then participation, community and inclusion, which occur even more rarely. The remaining themes are evenly distributed between 15 and 18 studies. The other category (11) reports on such aspects as ITERS-R, management competence, food servings and daily routines.

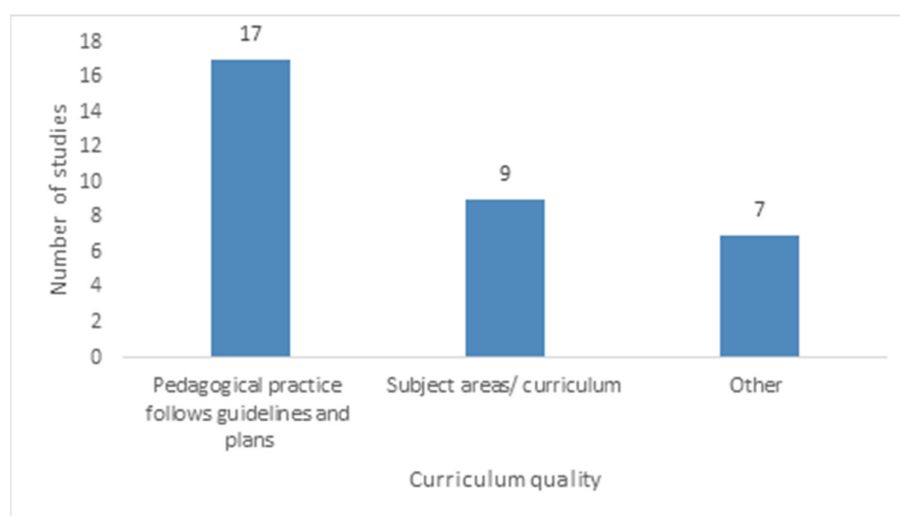
Figure 10 illustrates the addressed aspects of structural quality.



**Figure 10.** Number of studies that address different aspects of structural quality (opportunity for multiple responses).

The aspect that stands out for most studies is physical environment (24), including light, sound and area size, followed by organizational form (20), staff skills/motivation (19), management (18) and staff stability (17). The fewest studies focus on health, safety and the environment (4), followed by financing and ownership (8). Group sizes are reported in 13 studies and the program structure in 16. The other category (17) represents reported aspects, such as parents' socioeconomic status (SES), routines and children's time spent in ECEC.

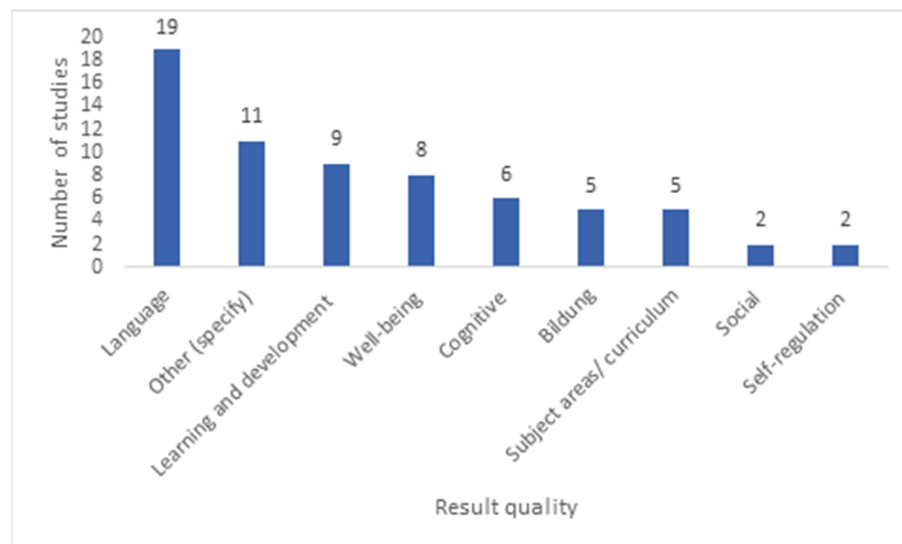
Figure 11 informs about the number of studies dealing with the different aspects of curriculum quality.



**Figure 11.** Number of studies that address different aspects of curriculum quality (opportunity for multiple responses).

Findings reveal that pedagogical practices (17) are reported as the most studied aspect of curriculum quality. Furthermore, subject areas (9) are the second most reported aspects. The other category represents 7 studies that report on such aspects as universal design, user satisfaction and school readiness.

Figure 12 shows which aspects of result quality have occurred in the studies that included this quality dimension.



**Figure 12.** Number of studies that address different aspects of result quality (opportunity for multiple responses).

The areas addressed most frequently in the studies are language (19) and learning and development (9). Aspects such as emotional, cognitive, subject areas/curriculum and Bildung are reported in 5 to 8 studies. Fewer studies on social (2) and self-regulation (2) aspects exist. The category other (11) contains aspects such as children’s well-being, learning outcomes, stress, problem solving and children’s behavior in ECEC.

#### 4. Discussion

This review of research investigating quality in the Norwegian ECEC contributes to a better understanding of which quality dimensions still need to be researched. Still, one must consider that some researchers may argue that the quality dimensions remain under-researched because some dimensions are not compatible with the Norwegian ECEC sector due to its holistic approach. Overall, there is an increase in the number of studies of quality in Norwegian ECEC from 2010–2021. During this period, the Norwegian ECEC sector saw several structural changes, such as introducing the statutory right to a place in ECEC [21] for children from the age of one [33], a maximum price for children attending, and equal government financial treatment of both municipal and non-municipal ECEC settings [34]. These changes may have led to a larger number of children attending ECEC institutions and, as a consequence, a political demand for research on the quality of the institutions in which the children spend so much time. As part of the increased social and political attention, research funding in the field also increased significantly, including the establishment of two national centers for ECEC research in 2018.

Two-thirds of the studies included are published in English and only one-third in Norwegian. This coincides with recent research findings [35] and is reflected in the national system for documenting research [36]. The findings are also in alignment with the indicator report [37], identifying a general decline in the proportion of humanities and social sciences research publications in Norwegian. For the humanities, there was a reduction from 42% to 27% in the use of the Norwegian language between 2011 and 2019, and for the social sciences, there was a reduction from 33 to 24% in the use of the Norwegian language [36].

Increased publishing in the English language may be related to a change in the attitudes and intentions of Norwegian ECEC researchers, who seek to share research findings not only with peers nationally but also with the international community. This may also be viewed in the context of the general national political development, whereby a greater degree of internationalization of Norwegian research is demanded [38]. In addition, there is a growing international interest in ECEC quality, and several studies, for example, in England [39], Australia [40] and the USA [41], investigate various aspects of quality in ECEC [42]. Norwegian researchers may be inspired by international studies, and this may serve as a catalyst for publishing more in English, in the expectation of an extensive range and international audience when written in English. It can be argued that these international studies of quality stimulate the publication of research in English, including research on quality in Norwegian ECEC [37].

The purpose of the studies included is primarily descriptive, i.e., studies describing selected aspects of quality in ECEC and associations between them. There are also some comparative studies, while it is clear that fewer studies deal with method development, interventions and review studies. This corresponds with the findings from Furenes et al. [35], who identified these patterns for Nordic ECEC research in general. Compared with findings from a research mapping of trends in empirical ECEC research in the Scandinavian countries from the period 2006–2019 [35], our findings reveal a greater proportion of quantitative and mixed method designs in Norwegian studies of quality in ECEC than in Scandinavian ECEC research in general, for which Furenes et al. [35] documented that 70–80% of this research is qualitative, calling for greater methodological diversity. Furenes et al. [35] also stated that using quantitative and mixed methods is more extensive for studies of quality in ECEC than in general ECEC research. The studies related to structural quality are mostly linked to physical environment and organizational form; therefore, this study has similarities with several other studies that found an increase in research addressing ECEC organizational forms [43–48]. The importance or relevance of the physical environment, tied to ECEC quality, can be correlated to how Norwegian ECEC seeks to integrate education and care to provide holistic child development [49], in line with a holistic learning perspective where play, care and learning are seen as intertwined and not isolated from each other [50,51].

Regarding structural quality, we find little research concerning health, environment and safety. We also find very few articles regarding the funding and ownership of ECEC. It may be the case that researchers do not connect the topics to the ongoing quality discussion, since the Norwegian ECEC addresses equality between private and municipal ECEC. The financing of the ECEC is not discussed either, despite the parental payment.

In 2015–2016, there was a political shift from quantity (full ECEC coverage, teacher density, structure and organization) to quality. This is clearly reflected in White Paper 24 [34] and White Paper 19 [52]. Specific requirements are discussed for the children's learning outcomes, and questions are asked about how the ECEC maps the children's competences (including language). In line with amendments to the Norwegian Kindergarten Act [33] (particularly when it comes to §2, §3, §41, §42, and §43) and changes in the Framework Plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens [53], which is also a binding regulation on the national level, more specific demands are made of the tasks, obligations and competence of the staff. This shift may have caught researchers' attention and stimulated greater research activity regarding process quality in the Norwegian ECEC. Although a holistic and child-centered approach is still dominant, today, the importance of the ECEC is increasingly discussed, not only in the here and now (children as beings) but also in a future perspective (children as becomings).

In terms of process quality, most studies relate to staff–child relationships. This is consistent with other research findings [35]. However, it is surprising that there are only a few studies focusing on relations between colleagues. This may be a complex area to study, as the staff work so closely together and are closely knit in their work. It is also surprising that so few studies include the involvement of children and families and the

relationships between parents and staff, because they are both significant caregivers and play an important role in the children's development. The collaboration between parents and staff should be "in close understanding and cooperation with the children's home" [33]. One can ask whether this might be an indication that the importance and role of parents is underestimated. Participation, community and inclusion have also been researched, but to a lesser extent. This may be related to priorities and legislation.

There are also few studies of care, which is considered to be one of the core areas of ECEC. It might be the case that it is thematized in other areas, such as play, relationships, etc. Another explanation might be that the concept of care was removed from the framework curriculum for ECEC teacher education in 2012. Aslanian [54] argues that this took place without the practice field's awareness, and even with this change, the concept of care was strongly present in education.

Regarding the quality dimensions of the studies, curriculum quality accounts for only 6%. An immediate explanation may be that children's encounters in ECEC, play, learning and development-stimulating activities are captured under activity in process quality studies. Some studies [55] use the other three quality dimensions and not curriculum quality. This may nevertheless be interpreted as a surprising result, since how and whether play and learning activities are consistent with policy documents, especially legislation, and the framework plan have been widely debated between professionals and researchers from different academic environments. This is mainly related to understanding the shift in Norwegian ECEC from a social pedagogical approach and a holistic perspective on children's learning towards a greater emphasis on school preparation content, mathematics and language skills [56].

Few studies include the quality of results (outcomes). Those that address the quality of results have mainly focused on language. This may be related to the fact that language has a strong position in a Norwegian ECEC tradition. It may be the case that political guidelines and policy documents influence research on quality in ECEC. For example, the White Paper [52] Time for Play and Learning devotes considerable space to the importance of language skills and children's development and learning. This may be an expression that political guidelines and policy documents influence research on quality in ECEC. There is little information concerning social and emotional competence and self-regulation. This is somewhat surprising, as this is referred to as crucial for children's development, well-being and learning in both research and policy documents.

Norwegian ECEC regulations are highly process oriented and child centered, and they do not contain explicit learning or skill objectives. This may be a likely explanation for the apparent lack of interest in research on the effects of ECEC in Norway. On the one hand, results-oriented research may generate useful knowledge contributing to the further development and strengthening of a holistic ECEC model. On the other hand, it can also be perceived as a threat to the model and a move towards "schoolification" of the everyday lives of the youngest children.

## 5. Limitations

This study has several limitations. Studies published before 2010 and after 2021 are not included. In addition, this study applies a particular concept of quality that contains four dimensions: structural quality, process quality, curriculum quality and result quality. Within each of these dimensions, there are also limitations related to the aspects of the quality concepts. There may thus be aspects of quality that have not been identified and included in this review. This study has only included published studies and not grey papers, textbooks, unpublished reports, textbooks or conference papers. There may thus be relevant studies that could have contributed relevant knowledge to this review. Furthermore, the review has only included publications for which the term quality appears in the title, abstract or keywords. There may thus be studies that address quality aspects without the term quality in the title and abstract. In this study, no quality assessment of the studies included was performed. This means that no account was taken of whether the studies

included have high transparency, validity and reliability. Yet, the study does provide an overview of published studies that address the four dimensions of the quality concept.

## 6. Implications

This study has implications for further research, pedagogical practice in ECEC, administration and policy making. Research on ECEC quality in the Norwegian context is increasing, and more than before, we can see a multitude of methods used to investigate different quality aspects. This is a positive development, and hopefully, the variety of methods will continue to increase. Even though the amount of research is expanding, we find that some of the quality dimensions received more attention than others. Structural aspects of quality, such as the physical environment, have received much attention, as have processual factors, such as interactions between adults and children. These are important topics. However, the quality dimensions of the curriculum and the quality of results have received little attention. More research is required to understand how these dimensions influence ECEC in the Norwegian context. Research on all quality dimensions is needed to achieve a more holistic picture of what quality is, should be or can be.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/educsci13060600/s1>. Included Studies.

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## Appendix A. Search String

**Norwegian:** barnehage\* OR førskole\* AND Kvalitet\*

**English:** ("child care center" OR "child care centre" OR "child development center" OR "child development centre" OR "child\* academic development" OR "crèche" OR "day care" OR "daycare" OR "day-care" OR "early child\* care" OR "early child\* education" OR "early child\* intervention\*" OR "early child\* program\*" OR "early child\* services" OR "early education\* provision" OR "ecc" OR "ecec" OR "ece" OR "kindergarten" OR "nursery school" OR "pre K" OR "pre kindergarten" OR "pre school" OR "pre-K" OR "pre-kindergarten" OR "pre-primary education" OR "preschool" OR "pre-school" OR "toddler\*") AND GE (Norway\*) AND quality\*. Limiters—Peer Reviewed; Date Published: 20100101-20213112; Journal or Document: Journal Article (EJ); Language: English Search modes—Boolean/Phrase.

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