Global Perspectives
on **Leadership** in
Early Childhood Education

Edited by Matshediso Modise, Elina Fonsén, Johanna Heikka,
Nkidi Phatudi, Marit Bøe & Thembi Phala

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Contents

Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

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Foreword

Marie-Louise Samuels

> A leader is like a shepherd … He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they were being directed from behind. (Nelson Mandela (1994), *Long Walk to Freedom: Nelson Mandela's Autobiography*.)

This is how I started the address at the International Leadership Research Forum (ILRF) conference from 25 to 27 September 2019, held in South Africa at the University of South Africa. I will always remember this address, as it was the last request that I received in my 20 years as the national director for Early Childhood Development in the Department of Basic Education in Pretoria, South Africa.

It was at this conference that I met some of the international stakeholders in early childhood development (ECD), including academics, principals, directors, and teachers, as well as the individuals who later edited this book entitled *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education*.

The chapters of this volume contribute towards further development of a global understanding of the importance of leadership and management in early childhood education. They also emphasise the need for leadership and management to be grounded in principles of inclusion, quality, gender, and diversity.

It is important that governments of different countries support interventions to improve leadership in the early childhood development sector. This will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportuni-

ties for all', and in particular to meet target 4.2 so that by 2030 'all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'.

In my 20 years of working in the early childhood development sector, I have seen the benefits of strong leadership at all levels. One could be in the same neighbourhood, have the same socio-economic status, have the same number of children, and have teachers with the same level of education, but one centre could be offering a quality service and the other not. The key to success is the leadership at the centre.

In conclusion, the volume *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education* serves as a profound testament to the multifaceted dimensions of leadership within the realm of early childhood education. Through its meticulous exploration of themes clustered under the headings of Leadership/Conceptualisation and Interpretation, Leadership for Professional Development and Pedagogical Quality, as well as Governance and Policies, the manuscript navigates a comprehensive landscape. By delving into these distinct yet interconnected areas, the authors illuminate the intricate interplay between visionary leadership, pedagogical excellence, and the regulatory frameworks that shape early childhood education globally. This scholarly work not only enriches our understanding of the diverse manifestations of leadership within this critical domain but also offers an invaluable resource for educators, policymakers, and researchers striving to foster holistic development and transformative change in early childhood education on an international scale.

Ms Marie-Louise Samuels served for 20 years as the national director for Early Childhood Development in the Department of Basic Education in Pretoria, South Africa. Samuels' work experience required visionary and strategic leadership as well as guidance pertaining to policy development and the monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum and assessment for children aged birth to four years in South Africa. Samuels served both in government departments and in private institutions at a senior management level for more than 21 years. One of her most memorable achievements was the introduction of an additional year of compulsory education in South Africa.

Introduction

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Nkidi Phatudi

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This volume on *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education* highlights leadership issues high on the global political and professional agendas. Leadership is considered a key factor for quality practices and improvement in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, and ECEC leaders are expected to improve and sustain quality in a time of changing requirements and extensive policy changes that have influenced their work. Current results from a litera-

ture review on ECEC leadership suggest a need to create a stronger evidence base on how to develop successful leadership for diverse ECEC settings and contexts, as well as improve and sustain process quality in ECEC (Schleicher, 2020).

The title of the volume, *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education*, alludes to the constituency of membership in the International Leadership Research Forum in Early Childhood (ILRF–EC). The forum draws together global stakeholders interested in ECEC leadership to share good practices and the findings of research conducted in the sector through the production of research publications. The volume builds on this global collaboration and is the fifth publication arising from the ILRF–EC network initiative.

This book aims to create knowledge about leadership issues and thus contribute to a stronger research base on leadership by bringing together global perspectives on ECEC leadership issues from various contexts and understandings among those involved in the sector. Further, it aims to contribute knowledge and tools for policymakers, practitioners, and ECEC leaders (teachers and directors) in training and will hopefully be of value to the ECEC community in higher education, school settings, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and at the policy level.

The chapters in this book offer various perspectives on global leadership practices and introduce the reader to new thoughts and ideas shared in their findings. The findings of the chapters are based on empirical studies, and the reader is encouraged to approach problem areas in new ways and to apply lessons learned from the volume in their own contexts.

The terminology surrounding early childhood education differs from country to country, reflecting the variations within the sector. To establish consistency rather than use various acronyms about early childhood education (for example, ECEC and ECCE), we have chosen to use the format ECEC in this publication.

In Finland and other Nordic countries, 'early childhood education and care' (ECEC) is commonly employed, as care and teaching are integrated into a comprehensive full-day early childhood education programme. 'Early childhood education' (ECE) is more commonly used in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where early childhood education means three to four hours a day of school-like teaching, with the children then in a day-care centre (or in the care of a family member or

neighbour) if the parents are unable to provide care afterwards. Some countries alternatively use terms such as 'early childhood care and education' (ECCE) or 'early childhood development' (ECD), depending on the administrative sector responsible for overseeing this domain. A country may have a social and health ministry that takes charge of early childhood education, while in another the ministry of education may be responsible.

The Core Organising Principles of the Volume

This book is organised into 16 peer-reviewed chapters grouped under three themes affecting early childhood leadership. The parts further explain the leadership conceptualisation, professionalism, and policies of leadership in ECEC in different countries. Chapters in the first part, 'Concepts and Interpretations of Early Childhood Education and Care Leadership', contribute to the theory of leadership in ECEC. The part consists of the following seven chapters.

In the first chapter, 'Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care Leaders' Conceptualisations and Understandings of Pedagogical Leadership', Elina Fonsén, Raisa Ahtiainen, and Kirsi-Marja Heikkinen highlight the several changes the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Finland underwent in the 2010s. Leaders in ECEC play a critical role in developing their centres' pedagogy and practices. Pedagogical leadership was viewed as a way for leaders and teachers to collaborate on curriculum interpretation.

Chapter 2, 'Early Childhood Leaders' Conceptualisation and Understanding of Leadership in Community Centres: The Case of South Africa', is based on the research project 'Project in Early Childhood Policy Analysis' (PECPA) conducted in ECEC community centres in the black settlements of Gauteng Province of the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Using theory from school and centre management, Matshediso Modise, Sharon Mampane, and Nkidi Phatudi explore principals' conceptualisation of ECEC management. Findings show that principals' conceptualisation and understanding of leadership practices focus on administrative tasks that exclude distributive leadership. Current conceptualisations thus limit pedagogical and sustainable leadership tasks.

Chapter 3, 'Wrestling with the Notion of Leadership and Teacher Involvement: Understanding Caribbean Teachers' Myths and Beliefs

within Global Perspectives', by Carol Logie, Lenisa Joseph, Ria Eustace, Altaf Mohammed, and Jovelle Donaldson, presents a survey of 721 early childhood teachers in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, providing data on their myths and beliefs about leadership. Key findings demystify the notion that only positional leaders can lead within ECEC settings. A framework for global progress and help for teachers in developing countries is given.

Ann Kristin Larsen's chapter, 'Leadership in Norwegian Municipal Early Childhood Education Care Centres' (Chapter 4), discusses the relationship between ECEC directors or owners. The author recommends that a distributed leadership model should underpin the relationship between the director and the owner of an ECEC centre. According to the Norwegian framework, the owners of preschools may offer pedagogical leadership in consultation with directors, or they may delegate pedagogy matters to directors.

Chapter 5, entitled 'Leadership Responsibilities of Early Childhood Directors in Palestine from the Directors' Viewpoint', examines the leadership obligations of early childhood directors in Palestine considering policy frameworks that define such responsibilities but that are not implemented or enforced. In this chapter, Sami Adwan, Karin Hognestad, Somaya Sayma, and Marit Bøe highlight directors' duties under four theoretical topics: the administrator, the integrator, the entrepreneur, and the producer. Directors see their role in setting the goals of their centres as all-encompassing: they must ensure that ECEC is nourished and flourishes within the underprivileged services offered throughout communities.

Geraldine Nolan provides a critical view on how the Irish government has introduced obligatory leadership roles for ECEC services without discussion, research, or training in their chapter, 'Leadership in Irish Early Childhood Education and Care: In Pursuit of Purpose and Possibilities' (Chapter 6). Interviews with 50 ECEC participants show leadership confusion and marginalised practitioner knowledge. Taking a social feminism approach, the author questions how leadership is conceptualised and practised in Irish ECEC services.

Chapter 7, 'Team leadership and Diversity in Norwegian Early Childhood Education and Care', presents a theoretical discussion of team leadership and the balance between sameness and difference. Cecilie Thun draws upon and extends existing literature on team leadership in ECEC. The ambition is to contribute to theoretical advance-

ment by introducing an intersectional approach to the theoretical framework for research on leadership in diverse societies.

The second part of this book, entitled 'Leadership for Professional Development and Pedagogical Quality', consists of chapters concerning how to enhance the professional development of leaders and teachers, and through this, high-quality pedagogy. The part contains five chapters.

The first chapter of the second part of the book, 'Shadowing Centre Directors as Pedagogical Leaders in Early Childhood Education Settings in Finland' (Chapter 8), points out three main areas of responsibility for pedagogical leadership: leading pedagogical activities and curriculum work within the centre, leading professional development of educators, and leading pedagogical assessment and development. In their study, Johanna Heikka, Merja Koivula, Merja Hautakangas, and Katja Suhonen show that leaders are in key positions to guide the quality provisioning of ECEC programmes that impact children's learning outcomes.

In their chapter entitled 'Pedagogical Leaders' Use of Professional Judgement in Early Childhood Education and Care: A Case from Norway' (Chapter 9), Torill Moe and Kjell Aage Gotvassli write about how pedagogical leaders think about the concept of professional judgement, how it can be bad, and how their own work fits in. Pedagogical leaders relate the concept of professional judgement to unpredictability and complex situations that require intuition and immersion. Professional judgement can provide arbitrariness, uncertainty, and insecurity in pedagogical work. The data material consists of in-depth interviews with eight pedagogical leaders. One last finding is that professional judgement depends on how complex the situation is.

Chapter 10, 'School Leaders' Attitude towards the Use of Digital Technology in the Early Grades', attends to the attitudes of leaders towards the use of technology for teaching and learning in a South African study. The message that Roy Venketsamy, Zijing Hu, and Candice Wilson give to administration is that schools need to have the necessary infrastructure in place before technology can be introduced and that leaders should be capacitated in the use of technology.

In Chapter 11, entitled 'Peer Mentoring as a Means of Leader Support in Early Childhood Education and Care', Päivi Kupila discusses how peer mentoring provides a safe space to discuss professional issues and dilemmas. Building on qualitative data, the findings show that

peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECEC. The results enhance our understanding of peer mentoring from the perspective of the peer mentors.

The last chapter of Part II, 'Does Leadership Matter? A Narrative Analysis of Men's Life Stories in Early Childhood Education and Care' (Chapter 12), by Joanne McHale, Victoria Sullivan, and Birgitte Ljunggren, examines the narratives of six men who had worked at ECEC centres and their decisions to remain or quit. The males felt exploited in terms of labour rights, labour division, and responsibility. Some of the men succeeded and were portrayed as protagonists with a happy ending. The men had to overcome various challenges, and their leadership tenacity helped them to triumph.

The last part of the book, 'Governance and Policies in Leading ECEC', examines the governance and policies of ECEC leadership in various countries and how these influence ECEC. This part consists of four chapters.

The opening chapter of the last part, 'Early Childhood Development Centre Managers' Provision of Comprehensive Quality Programmes: Policy Implementation' (Chapter 13), by Jabil Mzimela, Zanele Zama, and Jongiwe Tebekana, provides discussions by centre leaders in the Eastern Cape province and KwaZulu-Natal province on how to implement comprehensive quality ECEC development programmes in rural and semi-urban settings that align with national early childhood policy. The research employed communities of practice theory. A lack of awareness of national ECEC policy goals led to little implementation and no coordination with other provincial ministries in assuring the development of a quality programme offering.

In their chapter entitled 'Supervising Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland' (Chapter 14), Ulla Soukainen describes the provisions of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 for buildings, learning settings, personnel qualifications, objectives, and quality in Finnish ECEC. Moreover, reviewing and overseeing the supervisory authority is part of the ECEC director's duties. Children and employees at municipal ECEC institutions are routinely sampled. Top authorities of the Regional State Administrative Agency decide on the appropriate adult–child ratio.

Chapter 15, 'Owners' Governance of Directors' Mentoring Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in Norway', by Magritt Lundestad, recommends that a distributed leadership model

should underpin the relationship between the director and the owner. Owners of preschools in Norway may offer pedagogical leadership in consultation with directors. Directors may be the municipality that owns half of the ECEC centres, or they may be private owners. The chapter captures the responsibilities of the directors under three themes (the administrator, the integrator, and the producer) based on the theoretical framework.

Eeva Hujala, Janniina Vlasov, and Kirsi Alila describe in their chapter, 'Integrative Leadership Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care' (Chapter 16), how governance, leadership, and operational culture in the Finnish ECEC context are integrated. Legislation and administrative premises provide the framework for the leadership and management functions, as well as for quality management. The chapter aims to introduce a comprehensive approach to ECEC leadership called an integrative leadership framework.

Finally, Elina Fonsén's concluding words provide a brief background for the book's originality, purpose, and division, as well as a summary. The book has three thematic parts whereby the first part contributes to the theory of leadership in ECEC; the second part consists of chapters concerning how to enhance the professional development of leaders and teachers and, through this, high-quality pedagogy; and the last part examines the governance and policies of ECEC leadership in various countries and how these influence ECEC.

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PART I

Concepts and Interpretations of Early Childhood Education and Care Leadership

Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care Leaders' Conceptualisations and Understandings of Pedagogical Leadership

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Abstract

Since the 2010s, the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Finland has gone through several changes. Leaders working in ECEC have a crucial role in developing pedagogy and practices in their centres. Pedagogical leadership is one of the key concepts in educational discourse around leaders' work; however, the field lacks a unified definition for pedagogical leadership in terms of both research and practice in ECEC. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how leaders conceptualise pedagogical leadership and how they see their own roles as pedagogical leaders. The data are five focus group interviews

with ECEC leaders (N = 15) that were conducted in 2019. The data were analysed by employing the discursive institutionalism approach. The discourse analysis revealed how ECEC leadership tasks were reflected in relation to the importance of pedagogical leadership competence and the use of 'pedagogical lenses'. Further, leaders described the ECEC curriculum as a strategic tool. Pedagogical leadership was seen as a means for leaders and teachers to jointly interpret and implement the curriculum. In light of these findings, it may be stated that ECEC pedagogical leadership is a concept that appears to be taking shape theoretically in ECEC leaders' discourses. However, its daily implementation requires clarification before a shared understanding of the matter can be reached.

Keywords: early childhood education leadership, pedagogical leadership, discursive institutionalism

Introduction

The Finnish education system is characterised by equal opportunities for all children irrespective of background, gender, capability, ethnicity, and place of residence. Recent education policy changes in Finland have formed a national framework for more systematic practices in the realisation of early childhood education and care (ECEC). The National Core Curriculum for ECEC (Finnish National Agency for Education [FNAE], 2018) and the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (Act, 540/2018) are aimed at giving structure to and clear objectives for the pedagogy and care provided by public and private ECEC centres. These changes emphasise ECEC pedagogy and pedagogical leadership, and leadership as a concept has been connected to both ECEC centre leaders and teachers in the process of realising the curriculum (Soukainen, 2019). Consequently, the ECEC centre leaders are at the centre of leading and supporting the work community in the implementation of the new curriculum. In this study, we have used the approach of discursive institutionalism to examine the domestication of the governance guidance on implementing the curriculum (Schmidt, 2008).

Pedagogical leadership has become a central concept for educators working in Finnish ECEC; yet it is challenging to find a common way to define the concept (e.g. Male & Palaiologou, 2017) and to understand it as a practice (Soukainen, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to

examine how Finnish ECEC centre leaders, having a central role in leading the change, understand the concept of pedagogical leadership and how they perceive themselves as pedagogical leaders. It is necessary to depict the variety of aspects related to the concept if we want to support the creation of a common definition of the matter among leaders working in ECEC. Our investigation has been built on five focus group interviews with ECEC centre leaders.

Leadership in Early Childhood Education and Pedagogical Leadership

Leadership in ECEC has a strong impact on the quality of the pedagogy and, through that, on children's learning and well-being (Fonsén et al., 2022; Keung et al., 2019). Leading the human resources and teachers' pedagogical work in ECEC centres is considered to be the main responsibility of the leaders (Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013). The National Core Curriculum for ECEC (FNAE, 2018) sets the guidelines for pedagogical work. The implementation of high-quality pedagogy in an ECEC centre requires mastery of pedagogical leadership from the leader (Fonsén & Vlasov, 2017). However, there seems to be less and less time for leaders to focus on pedagogical leadership (Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013).

Pedagogical leadership can be defined as the process of leading the implementation of the ECEC curriculum (FNAE, 2018). Lahtero and Kuusilehto-Awale (2015) use the concept of broad-based pedagogical leadership, which consists of elements of direct and indirect leadership that all focus on the pedagogical goals of teaching and learning. That is, school leaders need a pedagogical view on which they can base their leadership. Equally, the foundation for leadership in ECEC is on the leaders' pedagogical competence (Fonsén, 2013). Further, Fonsén (2014) argues that pedagogical leadership focuses on professional development and organisational learning. Moreover, pedagogical leadership, by its nature, needs to be distributed, which means that the responsibility for leading curriculum work and implementing pedagogical improvements is shared and enacted with the teachers (Cheung et al., 2019; Heikka, 2014). Pedagogical leadership requires human capital that is constructed with both knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogical thinking. Besides this, pedagogical leadership requires skills to manage and evaluate the pedagogy to be implemented, and

most importantly, the capability to argue for pedagogical values that guide the pedagogy (Fonsén, 2014).

Distributed Pedagogical Leadership

According to Heikka (2014), distributed pedagogical leadership at the level of the ECEC centre is a shared understanding between all members of the work community concerning the purpose of the work and pedagogy. Therefore, because of their pedagogical knowledge, ECEC teachers have an important role in pedagogical leadership (FNAE, 2018). Teachers can absorb the role of a teacher leader and be significant actors in distributed pedagogical leadership (Heikka, 2014). Being a teacher leader has positive effects on the teachers themselves, their colleagues, and their community, as it improves atmosphere, democracy, and organisational commitment (Nguyen et al., 2020). In addition, teacher leadership can form a part of teacher professional development (Fonsén & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019).

Research Question

In this study, our aim is to clarify the concept of pedagogical leadership by examining Finnish ECEC leaders' discourses. The research question is: How do ECEC leaders describe pedagogical leadership and what discourses emerge from these descriptions?

Research Methodology and Design

This study is based on five group interviews with ECEC leaders in 2019. The interviewees were recruited from a group of ECEC leaders participating in an 18-month in-service training programme about educational leadership targeted at leaders from all levels of the Finnish school education system (e.g. ECEC, upper secondary education). In the middle of the training, all ECEC leader-participants (N = 42) were sent an invitation to participate in the group interviews. Fifteen leaders responded to the invitation, and they were divided into five groups. The interviews were based on five themes: training of leaders, future directions of educational leadership, leading curriculum, pedagogical leadership, and leading change. The group interviews were aimed at creating a place for ECEC leaders to discuss and share their experi-

ences and knowledge in a safe environment. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for further analysis.

During institutional changes, the lenses of discursive institutionalism provide an approach for analysing conceptualisations of pedagogical leadership and curriculum implementation as a part of pedagogical leadership. Discursive institutionalism has an explanatory power for the domestication of cognitive or normative ideas (Schmidt, 2008). In the case of institutional speech, micro-level interpretations of leadership may differ from the macro-level understanding about an organisation's higher-level leaders. By using discourse analysis, the local meanings can be distinguished from the global interpretations of phenomena (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Schmidt, 2008). Further, at a time of pressure arising from neo-liberal governance, it is crucial to notice the impact of global financial and marketing policies for leadership in education (Moos, 2017). We used discourse analysis to trace the contextual meanings from the interviews, to identify the differences in the meaning-making of the leadership, and to find the contradictions in them that could be detrimental to the organisation's operations.

Ethical Considerations

At the University of Helsinki, in which this research was conducted, researchers follow the ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences issued by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK; http://www.tenk.fi/en). A statement of the ethics of a research design must be requested from the University of Helsinki's ethical review board if a study features any of the following items specified by the TENK: participants under the age of 15; exposure of participants to exceptionally strong stimuli; or research involving a risk of causing mental harm or involving a threat to the safety of participants or researchers or their family members or others closest to them. Our research did not include any of these items.

In this study, we have followed the process of informed consent. All the ECEC leader groups we interviewed were provided with information concerning their rights as research participants (e.g. the right to withdraw). The data have been pseudonymised, and all names (i.e. people, workplaces, cities) have been replaced with artificial identifiers. Leaders' voices are included in the findings by adding quotations,

and individual leaders are referred to by using their individual number (e.g. L3) in a certain focus group (e.g. FG2).

Findings

Leadership Discourse through Pedagogical Lenses

ECEC leaders defined pedagogical leadership as 'looking at leadership through pedagogical lenses'. Leaders considered pedagogical reflection on daily decisions and actions to be more important than the implementation of official regulations in employees' activities. Furthermore, they appreciated their own presence in the centres and daily observation of pedagogical practices. Because of the child-centred nature of ECEC, leaders perceived pedagogy as the core task of their work.

> It [pedagogical leadership] is the most important, including all dimensions of ECEC leadership. It is there when you recruit staff and build up the working teams. It is how you talk about matters and what you focus on in your leadership. It is embedded everywhere: the ECEC goals, centre structures, the discussions with the staff. (FG4, L1)

Mutual vision was seen as crucial for pedagogical leadership. Pedagogy was described as a 'common thread' for the ECEC leader and the ECEC teams being led by teachers. Pedagogy was also seen as one way to guarantee the quality of ECEC.

Leaders also pointed out that pedagogy covered only one part of their duties and that there was not enough time for pedagogical leadership, which is a well-recognised problem in the field (Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013). Moreover, leaders were concerned about how the Finnish Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018) shapes pedagogical leadership and about what changes the field will encounter in the near future.

> Let us consider that regulations [concerning the qualification requirements for ECEC staff] come into full effect in 2030. I am very excited about the time before this: how changes in the staff structure will appear, how it is going to affect the ECEC leadership and how I'll manage to go through all this in my own ECEC centre. (FG2, L1)

Questions and uncertainty arose as a result of the need for pedagogical competence and knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge was pivotal, but

at the same time the ECEC field suffered from a lack of qualified ECEC teachers. Having high-quality ECEC was seen to be based on teachers' pedagogical competence, as ECEC pedagogy is the core know-how of professional teachers. This caused hardship, especially in the recruitment process for ECEC teachers and in leaders' ability to share leadership and to lead the centre's pedagogics.

This first discourse constituted the basis of the strong pedagogical view behind leadership. It resonates with earlier research (Fonsén, 2014; Lahtero & Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015) that defined pedagogical view and competence form the foundation of leadership.

Pedagogical Leadership as a Means for Interpreting the ECEC Core Curriculum

ECEC leaders stated that the curriculum facilitates pedagogical leadership and provides the basis for justifying leadership and leaders' decisions. The leaders considered themselves as pathfinders and role models in relation to the implementation of the ECEC curriculum. They also stated that leading the curriculum required the ability to inspire and motivate employees with a positive attitude.

> The main work [is leading the curriculum]. The curriculum forms the basis for the leadership and our main duty is to lead the employees to realise the curriculum in their work. (FG1, L1)

ECEC leaders implied that the curriculum has provided a solid value base for pedagogical work and leadership in ECEC. The most important value was the children's overall well-being. Leader FG4, L1 narrated that every decision in her work should be based on child welfare and ECEC quality. Other significant values were equality, diversity, and a high-quality learning environment.

The staff turnover rate was seen as problematic from the perspective of leading the curriculum. When new employees entered, the curriculum work started all over again. Leaders said that leading the ECEC curriculum required ongoing daily discourse in the work community, not just in pedagogical meetings or during the community's in-service training.

> The high staff turnover rate is a challenge. A person might not work longer than six months as a team member. We have to take the curricu-

> lum work very slowly in order to become familiar with the curriculum. From a leader this requires continuous daily pedagogical discussion. (FG5, L3)

The ECEC curriculum requires pedagogical thinking from leaders and teachers, as it changes the roles of leader, teacher, and ECEC nurse. In these discourses, leaders expressed relief, as the idea of 'everyone does everything', irrespective of education and competence, was no longer recognised. Leaders argued that the curriculum had to be both the tool and the ECEC core to diminish the homogeneity of the pedagogical work and affect employee participation positively.

This second discourse arises from the understanding about the meaning of curriculum as a basis for pedagogy. The ECEC National Core Curriculum was seen as the main tool guiding pedagogical leadership and the leader was seen as being responsible for interpreting the curriculum for the work community. Leaders can justify their decisions with arguments based on the curriculum. Therefore, leaders need to have a background in the study of educational sciences, as that background forms the foundation for the extensive professional knowledge required in leading pedagogical practice and provides the ability to think critically about pedagogy and to interpret curriculum (see Autio et al., 2017).

Implementing ECEC Curriculum Through Distributed Pedagogical Leadership

Distributed leadership practices were often mentioned as necessary tools for ECEC curriculum implementation, and leaders emphasised the role of ECEC teachers as executors of the curriculum at the level of pedagogical practice. Leaders also indicated the importance of being a role model. Discussions and pedagogical modelling were important when implementing the curriculum at the level of the ECEC centre. Planning, scheduling, and overall orderliness were at the core of the strategically led curriculum.

> Because of the clarification of the teacher role and responsibility, the ECEC teachers' pedagogical role and role as a team leader are highlighted. That's a very important starting point to the reform. (FG4, L2)

Leaders stated that distributed pedagogical leadership played a key role in their work, since the workload had significantly increased in a number of ECEC centres. Discourses about distributed leadership varied, as some leaders indicated that distributed leadership was realised between leader and co-leader while other ECEC leaders said that leadership should be based on positions of administrative and pedagogical leaders in a joint leadership model.

> I was just thinking about distributed leadership. ECEC centres are large at the moment. I think we need administrative leaders to help pedagogical leaders with this workload because in the near future everyone will die under this workload. (FG1, L1)

ECEC leaders argued that the teacher's role was to be both a team leader and a pedagogical leader, as teachers were responsible for pedagogical planning and for enacting their plans in their child groups. Teachers must be able to explain their pedagogy to the team, the leader, and the parents.

> ECEC teachers are the pedagogical leaders of the team and they make sure that the things we agree on at the centre level also happen in the child groups. In the child groups, the teacher has to know the pedagogical actions: why and what we do and with whom. The teacher also carries the responsibility of the other team members and makes sure that their pedagogical contribution is along the ECEC curriculum. (FG3, L2)

The ECEC teacher was viewed as overseeing the whole team and its actions. ECEC leaders stated that team leadership involved seeing the strengths of the team as well as hearing several points of view in the team discussions. Leader 5 (FG3) clarified that group pedagogy was 'the holy Trinity' consisting of care, education, and teaching, all equally valued, as the key role of the teacher is to take care of pedagogy and teaching.

This discourse summarises how pedagogical leadership is seen not only as a leader's duty, but how the ECEC teacher is seen as being responsible for the pedagogy. The ECEC curriculum states that teachers are responsible for pedagogy at the team level, and therefore a teacher has an important role in pedagogical leadership (FNAE, 2018). This follows the definition provided by Heikka, Halttunen, and Waniganayake (2016) that distributed pedagogical leadership means having a shared understanding about the pedagogy.

The ECEC Curriculum as a Strategic Tool in Pedagogical Leadership

Leaders said that leading curriculum work requires a sense of direction, a firm attitude towards leadership, and a strong vision concerning the centre's goals. In this discourse, leaders constantly used the expression 'common thread', which reflected the pedagogical orientation in ECEC leadership. Curriculum work was seen as a process leading to constant change, and change management skills were therefore important. The main challenge was to engage everyone in the core task mandated by the curriculum. To support this, leaders organised regional curriculum workshops to assure ECEC teachers of the importance of the curriculum and its implementation. Along with the curriculum work, developmental evaluation was one crucial element in the pedagogical discourse. It was important to experience and learn together, as this provides the opportunity to participate and to change the practices.

> The vision is important to me, but also working and learning together, thinking how we should do it. It helps to engage everyone when you get to understand them. (FG4, L1)

Working culture was an element that emerged from the leaders' discourse. Leaders said that they needed curriculum competence to choose relevant themes that were already part of the community focus. This was essential to successful development work because of the need to consider staff motivation, and further, because it was impossible to take in the whole curriculum at once. Leaders also narrated how the ECEC working culture was already realising the curriculum. New concepts were confusing to teachers and nurses. The leaders saw it as their duty to help the staff to see how their centre's community working culture already had elements of the new curriculum.

> Teachers and nurses tend to forget that the new curriculum is already living in the working culture but with different terms. It is important to open a dialogue about the curriculum to realise we are already on our way to implementing the curriculum. (FG4, L2)

Leaders stated that constant pedagogical discussion was an important part of leadership and curriculum implementation. Pedagogical meetings of the whole ECEC centre offered a good means of talking about

the curriculum. Attendance by the whole community was seen as essential for creating a common pedagogical discussion, to engage the members, and to lead the common pedagogical thread that consists of shared pedagogical values, goals, and obligations.

> Leading the curriculum is a process. You have to tolerate the incompleteness and start from the beginning when new employees start, and people change, and the curriculum process starts again from scratch and from the beginning. It demands certain leadership skills: the ability to lead pedagogical vision, the competence to see essential parts of the curriculum and divide it into smaller pieces to focus on the important matters. In this process we promote our core task, the ECEC pedagogical work. (FG1, L3)

Leaders highlighted the role of leadership perseverance in moving forward with baby steps to achieve deeper understanding and deep, persistent change. Social competence was a big part of successful leadership, as it was important to understand people's reactions to different things and their ability to communicate with all sorts of people to develop curriculum in the ECEC centre. Leading the curriculum required tolerance of incompleteness, repetition, and slow progression as well as open interaction with the curriculum in the working community.

The discourse of pedagogical leadership using ECEC curriculum as a strategic tool consists of leaders' discussions about the techniques they used for leading pedagogy. Leaders highlighted the importance of vision in giving a direction to the work and to the whole work community. However, they did not argue that it is a mechanical, top-down process for transferring policymakers' ideas. On the contrary, interpretation and reformulation with pedagogical competence was used in the process. A similar finding in ECEC leadership was outlined in the study by Ljunggren and Moen (2019), in which they analysed the implementation of the Norwegian ECEC framework in relation to organisational and leadership translation strategies.

Pedagogical Leadership by Managing Structures and Methods

In this discourse, pedagogical leadership happened in organised structures such as ECEC teachers' meetings. Successful pedagogical leader-

ship was present, as were positive feedback in the centre and the prior-itisation of leadership tasks.

Leaders pointed out that some of their employees needed more guidance than others, and therefore leadership requires the ability to adjust actions to meet a certain context. Leaders stated that having a coherent framework with mutual pedagogical goals and vision was essential to the success of pedagogical leadership. Mutual conversa-tion in the community about pedagogical values was also considered important, and was the foundation of goal-oriented work. The findings of this study were that there are several pedagogical leadership roles for the formal ECEC leader. The pedagogical leader is an enabler who creates the structures of the pedagogical core task and its development but also guides the community discourse in the professional pedagogi-cal direction. Leader 2 in FG 3 pointed out that the ECEC leader has an 'observer' role, as having time to observe is essential for knowing how to carry out leadership work. The discourses on leadership above were considered to be the tools of pedagogical leadership, as they make pedagogical discussion visible and lead to the vision by providing posi-tive feedback to the surrounding community.

Interestingly, in the last discourse, leaders saw themselves as formal leaders, enablers, and guides of the centre's pedagogical discourse *in theory*. However, when referring to their work *in practice*, they empha-sised a 'go and see' type of practical leadership, guidance, observation, and path-leading in the everyday life of the centre. This is similar to Soukainen (2019), who has spoken about the difficulties of implement-ing the pedagogical leadership theory in practice.

Discussion

In these ECEC leaders' discourses, lack of competence among person-nel was named as a hindrance to pedagogical leadership and quality. However, Fonsén (2014) and Heikka (2014) argue that pedagogical leadership is a concept that refers to professional development and organisational learning. Leading pedagogically unqualified personnel requires strong pedagogical leadership and a great number of resources from the leader, as the leader must spend more time evaluating and developing pedagogy and leading the learning process of the organisa-tion (Ahtiainen et al., 2021).

The big question in the future is how we will lead if we do not have enough qualified teachers. How can leadership be shaped to function in different contexts, and how can the competence of qualified teachers be utilised in distributed pedagogical leadership? Moreover, when looking through discursive institutionalism, leaders see themselves as interpreters of the curriculum, not just as implementers of national regulations. They see that through pedagogical lenses they have the competence to explain and channel the meaning of the curriculum to the work community (see Lahtero & Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015). With qualifications in the educational sciences, they have the competence to lead pedagogy and, further, can avoid the risk of using a mechanical top-down process in the implementation of the curriculum (see Autio et al., 2017). The ECEC curriculum provides them with a strategy, the tools, and a structure for pedagogical leadership and its distribution (e.g. Cheung et al., 2019). In light of our results, a common educational basis for ECEC leaders would be a step towards closing the gap in the conceptualisation of pedagogical leadership between—and also within—micro and macro levels of the education system (see Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Schmidt, 2008).

Conclusions

This study considered ECEC leaders' conceptualisation of pedagogical leadership. The Finnish ECEC leaders see pedagogical leadership as an important resource, and the curriculum forms the basis for this leadership. Staff turnover and the lack of competent personnel challenge leaders' work and affect their motivation to persistently invest in maintaining and developing pedagogically well-functioning ECEC communities. However, pedagogical leadership should not be a question of favourable circumstances alone, as we must be able to shape the leadership and its goals to meet the requirements of the current situation. Therefore, we must start looking at our centres and their leadership from the perspective of the context and base our work on the strengths and available opportunities to enable us to maintain a strong pedagogical orientation and sense of competence.

Limitations

Interview studies rarely provide results that can be generalised; nor do they aim to do so. Another limitation comes from the study design, with the focus group interviews arising from the in-service training programme. The participants represent a development-oriented group of leaders, and this may unify their attitude towards leadership. However, during times of reform, as is the case in this study, in-depth information gained through interviews with people working closely with the issues the reform touches upon can provide valuable information about the multifaceted nature of the reform (Schildkamp et al., 2014).

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CHAPTER 2

Early Childhood Leaders' Conceptualisation and Understanding of Leadership in Community Centres
The Case of South Africa

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Abstract

This chapter conceptualises leadership in early childhood care and education (ECEC) centres in South Africa. The report emanates from the Project in Early Childhood Policy Analysis (PECPA) research project conducted in ECEC community centres in the rural communities of Gauteng Province (RSA). Because of the minimal research conducted on centre managers' conceptualisation of leadership in rural South African ECEC centres, the study aims to highlight the challenges, understanding, and practices of ECEC centre leaders. Five principals

were purposively selected from five rural community settings in this qualitative case study. The school-based management theory and leadership principle, termed centre-based management, underpinned the chapter. The research lends itself to an exploratory qualitative data collection method through face-to-face semi-structured interviews to explore the phenomenon under study. Findings reveal that principals' conceptualisation and understanding of leadership practices focus on administrative duties that exclude distributive leadership. The conceptualisation of leadership is limited to performing managerial duties such as practitioner recruitment, fundraising, and centre resource development. The conclusion is that ECEC leadership and sustainable development of community centres urgently require well-trained, informed, visionary, experienced, and critical-thinking leaders.

Keywords: centre-based management, change, distributive leadership, early childhood education centre, leadership conceptualisation, teamwork

Introduction

The success of any educational organisation depends on leadership. Literature on early childhood care and education (ECEC) centre leaders' conceptualisation of leadership practices is minimal, especially in developing countries where ECEC is mainly in the hands of private service providers. Hence, this chapter aims to bridge this gap by systematically exploring the understanding of leadership in ECEC principals' rural communities. Fonsén and Soukainen (2020) suggest that leadership in an ECEC context is embedded in the pedagogical leaders' practices. Leaders establish a sense of purpose that unites people and inspires them to achieve their goals in a collaborative organisation. Fulfilling dreams takes time, patience, attention, vision, and strategy. Leadership involves vision, a good management style, relevant knowledge, people skills, organisational acumen, and self-development, yet most leaders learn on the job (Detsky, 2011). ECEC leaders must manage their centres even while these talents are under supervision. According to Ibrahim and Daniel (2019), leadership is motivating people to accomplish organisational goals, and leadership style is the only factor in success. Thus, this research examines early childhood leadership conceptualisation and understanding in South African community ECEC centres.

Delineating Leadership

Leadership is difficult to describe, as writers' perspectives and settings vary. Leadership depends on its history and environment. According to McCleskey (2014), research that adopts a single definition of leadership may fail if the term depends on the researcher's interest, challenge, or context. Leaders encourage people to achieve organisational objectives and execute transformative policies (Morgan, 2020). Although leadership ideas may be similar, ECEC leadership is crucial. The following subsections summarise the theoretical foundations concerning leadership principles at ECEC centres.

South African Early Childhood Context

South Africa has two Early Childhood Development (ECD) systems: one controlled by the province and supported by the government, and one autonomous and administered by private organisations or communities (DBE, 2015). After the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa (SA), jobless mothers and grandmothers in rural areas established ECD centres, addressing the government's call to make ECD accessible to all South African children (Modise, 2019b). The Departments of Social Development, Basic Education, and Health oversee SA's government-registered and government-funded ECD centres and ensure excellent practices and services in the ECD sector (Storkbeck & Moodley, 2011). Pre-Grade R programmes, which are from birth to four years, need ECEC centres to register with the Department of Social Development. As of April 2022, birth to four years was transferred to the Department of Basic Education, which exclusively registered for Grade R (a grade before year one of formal schooling) programmes. However, most Pre-Grade R or Grade RR ECD centres lack the necessary paperwork and employ unqualified staff (Atmore, van Niekerk, & Ashley-Cooper, 2012). Skilled and supportive caregivers and practitioners help children develop correctly (Modise, 2019a). In this chapter, the terms ECEC and ECD will be used interchangeably, as they refer to the same thing.

Conceptualising Leadership in Early Childhood Care and Education

Leadership in ECEC implies different responsibilities for different people within the ECEC environment, depending on the specific context. Thus, various countries refer to ECEC leaders differently based on their roles. For example, in South Africa, ECEC leaders are called principals. In countries such as Finland and Germany, among others, leaders may be the director, while some may refer to them as managers. Heikka and Hujala (2013) view leadership in ECEC as a holistic process involving the leader, the administration, and the personnel, and indirectly parents and everyone who influences ECEC practice. Stakeholders, particularly leaders and practitioners, need a shared vision and objectives to succeed. According to Douglass (2018), leadership in ECEC improves early care and education for everyone. Rodd (2012) sees leadership as a process and responsibility that requires attention to several roles, functions, and ways that are aligned with and promote commitment to shared values and vision. On the other hand, McCrea (2015) opines that ECEC leadership entails four positions: a team leader, a policy designer, a pedagogy creator, and a rights advocate. The above definitions of leadership are all inherent in a visionary leader of a team in the realisation of organisational goals in creating a sense of purpose.

Visions and shared visions encourage organisational, team, and individual change, according to Boyatzis, Rochford, and Taylor (2015). Hill and Turiano (2014) say this sense of purpose boosts professional commitment and stability. Visionary leadership helps people discover purpose and responsibility. Helping people understand ECEC leadership might motivate them. Thus, ECEC leaders must see leadership as a shared vision among all stakeholders. Notably, Boyatzis and Soler (2012) find that a shared vision generates lasting transformation that empowers team members and inspires new possibilities. To promote a unified vision, centre leaders must acquire specialised skills and talents. Similarly, Ahtiainen, Fonsén, and Kiuru (2021) see ECEC centre leaders as key players who must be capable of leading the pedagogy and curriculum work yet simultaneously basing their work on the distribution of responsibilities.

Leadership Skills and Practices

The principles of leadership skills and practices highlight that acquired knowledge abilities are significant aspects of becoming an effective leader. Therefore, strong adherence to the skills theory often demands considerable effort and resources devoted to leadership training and development (Wolinski, 2010). Leadership practices and strategies incorporate transformational, shared, collaborative, and distributed leadership. Transformational leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers based on mutual stimulation and the elevation of followers. Shared leadership allows team members to lead the group (Adelere, 2011), with Zhu, Liao, Yam, and Johnson (2018) expressing the view that leadership and a position of authority could be changed or shared and that knowledge, not power, should be prioritised.

Maalouf (2019) notes that collaborative leadership entails getting the right mentality, developing harmony, maintaining the capability to connect smoothly with others, and managing contradictions. De Witt (2017) explains that collaborative leadership includes the purposeful action leaders take to enhance the instruction of teachers to build deep and meaningful relationships with all stakeholders while learning together. This distributed perspective expands the leadership role beyond the centre manager and motivates individuals to contribute their expertise and skills in completing tasks and achieving goals (Torrance, 2013). Leadership is needed at all levels within an organisation and can be practised to an extent by a person not assigned to a formal leadership position (DuBrin, 2022).

According to DuBrin (2022), to understand a study one must understand the difference between leadership and management. DuBrin (2022) states that 'leadership is the capacity to inspire confidence and support among those essential to realising organisational objectives'. In addition, it involves a type of responsibility aimed at achieving particular ends by applying available resources (human and material) to ensure the operation of processes in an organisation (Ololube, 2013). Raymer's (2014) research asserts that the combined effects of leadership are a fundamental driving force for improving organisational performance. Leaders are thus managerial agents whose responsibility is to maintain a competitive edge (Karamat, 2013). In addition, to understand the effects of leadership on performance, ECEC centre leadership must play a key role in sharpening the organisation's performance

by introducing relevant, innovative strategies (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011). Collaborative leadership can be seen as an active exchange of ideas, opinions, and resources.

Centre-Based Management and Leadership Framework

This chapter adopts a school-based management and leadership approach to underpin its theoretical foundation. The principle and intention of centre-based management is to ensure that leaders in ECEC centres practise distributed leadership as experts prescribe. However, findings from most research studies indicate that principals, unfortunately, exclude the principle of distributive leadership. A study conducted by Wong and Fitzgerald (2022) found that school leaders should cultivate a distributed leadership culture. This implies that distributed leadership is neglected or excluded. Distributed leadership, according to Sonmez and Gokmenoglu (2022), increases teachers' support, critical consciousness, and inclusive behaviour. Distributed leadership, where all team members have the potential to lead through intentional practice, is increasingly seen as an effective leadership model (Denee & Thornton, 2021).

Research Methodology and Design

This study examines South African ECEC leaders' conceptualisation and understanding of leadership by addressing the following questions: What is leadership and management's understanding and conceptualisation of being a leader at an ECEC centre? How do leaders support practitioners? What are leaders' expectations in terms of effective centre management? Moreover, what do leaders want to change regarding ECEC centre leadership? This qualitative research study seeks local viewpoints on a research problem (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016). Qualitative research reveals culturally distinct values, attitudes, behaviours, and social settings or contexts (ibid.). Five principals from rural communities answered qualitative, semi-structured research questions. Principals from a rural community and with over five years of ECD teaching experience were eligible. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), qualitative semi-structured interviews have a unique potential for eliciting information about the partici-

pants' lived experiences. In this study, the semi-structured interviews revealed principals' awareness of ECEC leadership and support for practitioners, their expectations for effective centre leadership, and their vision for ECEC leadership change. In addition, they allowed researchers to probe further for clarification purposes. South African Gauteng North District Department of Education ECD centres were the study's setting, with ECD centres located in rural Hammanskraal in north-western Gauteng Province.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through face-to-face focus group semi-structured interviews. The research employed thematic data analysis. According to Creswell (2012), comprehending textual and visual information is crucial to research-related answers. Categories, patterns, and themes were created from participants' data. The data were analysed before and after collection. The interview questions produced articles, and the primary data-containing transcripts were content-analysed to find responses that matched each article. Illustrative quotations supported data display and analysis. The data reached a saturation point when no new themes or ideas emerged. The collected data were analysed utilising Creswell's six processes: preparing and organising the data, exploring the data through coding, coding to develop description and themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings. Then, phrases were identified and grouped into themes using coding. Data were checked for overlaps during code labelling. The study report later categorised and used more significant, distinctive themes. To increase the accuracy and dependability of the findings, the focus was more on the overall image than on the immediate concept. The authors conducted the semi-structured interviews and included general research questions about their conceptualisation of leadership, for example:

What is your vision and understanding of management and leadership?

How do you support the practitioners?

What are your expectations for centre management and leadership?

What do you want to change concerning ECEC leadership? In other words, what do you want to do differently?

The themes that emerged from the participants' responses were: Theme 1: Uncertain Leadership; Theme 2: Support and Funding; Theme 3: Expectations for Centre Management and Leadership; Theme 4: Same policy advantages as Grade R; and lastly, what would they change?

Participant Demographics

ECD leaders and founders of community ECD centres participated in this study. Their centres accept six-month-olds to four-and-a-half-year-olds. Because they offer Grade RR and R programmes, they must register their ECD centres with the Departments of Social Development and Education. The centres are in rural South Africa. African women who spoke one of their local languages participated in the study. Some had ECEC diplomas in early childhood and some were unqualified founder principals. Their age range was from 30 to 58 years.

Ethical Considerations

The research examined ECEC leaders' concerns, attitudes, and tactics. This research forms part of the 'PECPA' where 11 universities were participating in the bigger Gauteng Department of Education project. The university hosting the administration of the project gave ethical approval for the study to be conducted. Participants were told they were participating in the study voluntarily and could withdraw at any moment if they felt they no longer wanted to continue participating. Research anonymity was guaranteed. To hide their identities, the participants were given ECEC centre numbers instead of names.

Findings

The four key questions examined how ECEC leaders conceptualised and understood leadership in the context of ECEC in South Africa. The following are the replies:

> My vision is to see teachers who are independent, trained, and who become leaders. I must be open to them and not hide information so they can do what I do and be role models for this type of business through how I behave. (Principal 1)

Even though some principals were retired, other enthusiastic principals' ambition for ECEC leadership was to create more centres, which would change people's lives. Their goal was to positively improve the lives of young children by extending their humanitarian vision to the entire community. Their ECEC leadership allowed them to act as community social workers and role models. One principal said the following:

> I was over-aged, and I could not do this, but to be an ECEC leader, I see more opportunities. I regard the ECEC centre as a business, and I am like a saint. I help women change their lives and encourage them to improve; others had lost hope as parents and faced challenges. (Principal 2)

Bringing love to education was another principal's vision for leadership, as shown in the passage below:

> I understand and am thankful that having an ECD centre means education is essential. I have a love for children and parents. If you do not love the parents and the children, you cannot work well with them. Being a leader in ECEC means teaching your teachers to love children and to understand them. (Principal 3)

The government's funding of the centre was one of the leadership goals of one principal. She said the following:

> My vision is to get funding from the government. You see, some people who work at the crèches are not educated, and some are single parents; they earn from R1500.00 a month. In R1500.00, they must pay their children's school funds, buy food, pay electricity and contribute towards the uniform to look beautiful. If I get funding, I will see to it that I pay my practitioners well. (Principal 5)

As influential leaders, they support practitioners and children financially in ECEC centres. They give practitioners more power and include them in decision-making to ensure healthy interpersonal relations. Although there are financial difficulties in isolated rural locations, the following forms of assistance are available, as suggested by Principals 4 and 5.

> Concerning education, I support my teachers by finding institutions to learn from. Some practitioners are currently busy with National Qualifi-

cation Levels 4 and 5 at X Academic in the neighbouring village or community. We pay a certain amount for their education. Unfortunately, we need donors' help to raise funds. (Principal 4)

For practitioner shortages, we advertise vacancies. The teachers spread the word, and those interested send us their CVs. The committee shortlists candidates according to our requirements, and the shortlisted candidates come for interviews. (Principal 5)

Some ECEC centre managers help with resource development. For instance:

We use recycled materials like containers and bottles for teaching the water theme. We demonstrate things that sink and those that float. We ask for these things from parents during our committee meetings. For example, we also ask for old stoves, irons, and clothes to enact 'make-believe' lessons with them. (Principal 2)

Teachers accompany children to the bathroom, ensuring they have tissues and a towel. They provide water in a basin for children to wash their hands in the bathroom. I emphasise that they teach them the appropriate way of asking to use the bathroom and to be respectful. (Principal 4)

Some leaders explain to practitioners the Department of Education's stance on ECEC teachers. Consider this:

We follow a handwashing policy daily to protect teachers and learners from diseases. Teachers teach learners about infectious diseases and how to protect themselves. We have some children whose parents are HIV-positive, so teachers and learners need to know how to care for themselves. (Principal 1)

All the principals shared similar standards for treating centres and staff equally. Similar opinions are expressed in the following responses:

I expect all my centres to be like all other childcare centres worldwide. Not on how beautiful they look, but on the education our children receive. I would like to see professors or practitioners from my centre do our work. I expect my teachers to teach children so that when they leave here and go to other institutions like X and Y, they can proudly say they came from this centre having learned the right things. (Principal 4)

When asked what the government should be doing to help centres succeed, centre leaders responded as follows:

> I would like the government to fund us, especially the Department of Education. We have Grade R children in our crèches who do not receive food, but the Grade R children in primary schools receive food. The Grade R classes in primary schools are the government's responsibility, but not in the community centres. (Principal 3)

Like many other principals, these principals are excluded from the Department of Education's funding because they did not register with the Department of Education and Social Development. Some reasons for their non-registration might be that they needed to meet the registration requirements in terms of the infrastructure: teachers employed at the centre, for example, foreigners without proper documentation, etc. As alluded to in the Department of Education meeting report on 3 March 2020, the Department of Social Development subsidy pays R15 per child for 264 days for registered ECEC centres. Unregistered centres should consider registering their centres to enable them to get subsidies.

The following was the response when asked who the Department of Social Development funds:

> Birth to four years fall under the Department of Social Development and get funding. Children in Grade R in schools get funding because their curriculum falls under the DoE [Department of Education]. So, to address disparities in ECEC centres, the government encouraged community centres to establish Grade R classes for learners so that they do not have to travel or walk long distances to public schools. But then the centres must register with the Department of Education to be funded or to get food. (Principal 4)

The following was the response to the question on the qualifications of centre principals in comparison to foundation phase educators at government schools:

> We are also qualified and have completed Grade R. We received training through government institutions as this is a government project, and payment has to be at the same level as teachers in schools starting in 2019. This is not an individual thing to fight for, it needs a group. (Principal 4)

This situation propels the qualified Grade R teachers to raise their voices regarding salary disparities despite their meeting the Department of Primary Education's qualification requirements.

The following responses came from the five principals regarding having a diploma qualification:

> So I wish that the government would provide centre leaders and managers with the same benefits offered to public schools. We, as ECD centres, lay the foundation. Government intervention in terms of equal remuneration for teachers is significant. (Principal 1)

> I would like to see centre leaders and staff appreciated and not taken for granted. They must appreciate us; they must uplift us most of the time. They should also offer us incentives; remember, they can take many forms. It can be through a certificate, money, or telling people how good we are. (Principal 2)

> They must appreciate us because we are doing everything else other centres are doing. We are hired and work very hard, but the Grade R teachers get better treated than us. Department of Education offers bursaries, but we still need those bursaries as ECCE centres in communities. We also want to study, but we need more money. We also want to step up and move forward, but things pull us down, like a lack of money. Some of us are single parents. (Principal 3)

> Teaching kids for me is not about money. I like kids very much. I am a hard worker, but the lack of appreciation sometimes demotivates us. You feel like the department does not take notice of us because they do not invite us to attend training. They say they want the public-school grade Rs only. We want to attend workshops that the department provides to improve our practice. (Principal 4)

> The change that I would like to see as a manager is a government that takes care of my employees to make them happy and motivate them. It can be through money, it can be through gifts, and it can be by communicating. It is nice to be called into the office to be told that you did well. You feel appreciated. Joining the union to represent us will help. The government needs to hear our voices. (Principal 5)

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that the ECD leaders understand their roles as leaders in the community centres as being those of compassion and providing financial support to the teachers. From the responses they provided, they present an unclear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. In the subsequent paragraphs, the authors present brief discussions of the four emerging themes from the principals' responses.

Uncertain Leadership

Most principals' comments revealed uncertain leadership positions because they interpreted vision, management, and leadership as compassionate acts of helping practitioners in the centres where a vision showed personal involvement. Their goal was to positively influence everyone's life and extend their leadership to the entire community to achieve this. Despite having divergent opinions, the principals' remarks on their conceptualisation for ECEC centre leadership focused on the support or aid given to practitioners because they desired to see practitioners gain independence, training, and leadership positions. In helping practitioners alter their lives and deal with issues, they saw their transparency and giving of information as that of a vision, leadership, and management role model for running a centre or launching other centres. Their concern about education and ECD centres needs to be viewed as a sign of their leadership and management vision.

Support and Funding

Most principals stressed the significance of offering financial assistance to practitioners and students in ECEC centres. Their support is emphasised in remarks where they claim that they only provide a small amount of financial aid because facilities in isolated rural locations receive little funding from the government. They need sponsors and help to raise money. By including practitioners in the decision-making process, they empower them. The ECEC principals' practices are aligned with distributed leadership practices, which De Witt (2017) explains as 'collaborative leadership' that includes the purposeful action leaders take to enhance the instruction of teachers and build

deep and meaningful relationships with them. As a result, their centres have friendly interpersonal relationships. They help by assisting practitioners to identify educational institutions, and some are currently engaged in further education. To get interested people to send their CVs when other centres need practitioners, they urge the practitioners to advertise by spreading the word.

Some ECEC centre leaders ask for old stoves, irons, and garments to stage 'make-believe' classes and provide recycled items like containers and bottles for instruction. Children can wash their hands after using the restroom with tissues, a towel, and water in a basin. Surprisingly, instead of talking about their roles, some shared their expectations regarding treatment and receiving funding from the government. This led to the third theme.

Expectations for Centre Management and Leadership

The principals anticipated receiving the same treatment as other schools worldwide, though not in terms of appearance, because the environment is different. However, in terms of financing and teaching, the principals expect that the government should have funded them even though they were not registered. For ECEC centres to be registered in South Africa, they must satisfy an excessive list of requirements, some of which may not be easily met in disadvantaged contexts (Blose & Muteweri, 2021). They also wanted the children to learn and to attend higher education institutions, and they acknowledged that for the centres to get funding or food, they must register with the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development. They expected to be paid on a par with schoolteachers, as some have the same qualifications in Grade R studies.

The Same Policy Advantages as Grades R

All principals wanted to be acknowledged and encouraged through workshops and training, and said they should be provided with incentives and scholarships to pursue additional education. If they perform well, they would like to know. They reasoned that if they joined the union, they might be able to be heard by the government, which needed to hear from them. They agreed that fair treatment is necessary from the government, given that ECD centres lay the groundwork. They

want the government to offer the same advantages and equal compensation instead of their being put down. They requested stationery and Grade R books for guiding infants to age four. Even though parents prefer that their children be educated in English, principals value the government for allowing them to use their mother tongue.

The recent migration of ECD in South Africa from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Education requires a more robust understanding of leadership roles by ECEC leaders. This increases the demand for competent centre leaders, necessitating a reconceptualisation of their practices and responsibilities (Fonsén & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019). Of the framework of leadership practices addressed in this study—'transformational, transactional, and distributed'—aspects specifically related to principals' understanding and conceptualisation of ECEC leadership in ECEC communities emerged in a set of four themes in their responses.

From the responses to the four questions the principals were asked regarding their conceptualisation and understanding of leadership in ECEC centres, the authors came up with the four themes from the common aspects mentioned by the participants in their responses. The first theme on management's vision and understanding of leadership skills for ECEC environments indicates that most principals who manage more than one centre have unclear leadership roles, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. However, teachers are aware that it is possible to make administrative decisions before getting the 'go-ahead' from the principal, as this will affect the performance of ECEC centres. Their belief is in line with Leithwood, Sun, and Pollock (2017) when they allude to the idea that principals' leadership is critical in supporting students' achievement. The sharing of leadership duties allows individuals to acquire knowledge and skills to uplift the centre's performance (Torrance, 2013). Thus, distributed leadership may increase school capacity and crucial decision-making (Bush & Ng, 2019) and meet the state's conflicting academic and human development goals.

The second theme of support and funding at ECEC centres highlights support through teacher study funding to enhance professional skills. The teachers enrol with established learning institutions to become informed practitioners (Raymer, 2014). This theme indicates that staff's well-being increases all-round performance, improves job satisfaction, reduces absenteeism, and supports ECEC learners wholeheartedly. Minimal funds are a challenge practitioners face. It is com-

mendable to note that ECEC principals have not lost hope and continue to fundraise and provide financial support to teachers furthering their studies. This practice resonates with Tambe and Krishnan's (2000) notion of transformational leadership, where leaders and followers motivate each other and inspire people to pursue ultimate objectives and self-actualisation needs. The principals' support for teachers fits with the second part of transformational leadership theory, which emphasises that leaders are helping followers achieve their goals or are sharing resources (Mofokeng, 2022). The Department of Social Development should offer nutrition for Grade R children, according to the third theme on what principals expect from the government in funding ECEC centres. Funding from the relevant departments is critical in improving the management of ECEC centres in South Africa.

The 'brain drain' principals experience at their ECEC centres is the fifth and final theme concerning what they would change in their ECEC centres. With teachers holding the same qualifications as those with a diploma from a tertiary university, it is unacceptable that practitioners at ECEC centres receive unequal salaries and little government assistance. The ECEC practitioners depart from these facilities in search of better pay and other perks at places like government primary schools after obtaining a professional qualification (Modise, 2019b). Government salaries that vary for holders of the same qualifications are unfair.

Limitations

The sampling selection for this study restricted the selection of participants to ECEC leaders from only a single Department of Education district out of 15 districts in Gauteng province of South Africa, a single rural community, and a single province out of nine. As a result, the findings of this study were specific to these participants and this research setting. The sample should have included ECEC teachers to hear their conceptualisation and understanding of ECEC leadership. The transferability of the findings to other ECEC settings in South Africa may be limited. The different investigation methods could have influenced the participants' responses; the principals participated in one semi-structured focus group interview. Despite the limitations, this study gives a voice to principals in rural ECEC community centres.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study are not exhaustive but reflect the leadership practices of five ECEC principals in South Africa. These recommendations are built on the results of this study, which explored ECEC principals' conceptualisation and understanding of their roles as leaders.

An essential element of the success of ECEC centres is an understanding of leadership, so policy practices should address, support, and promote efficient leadership and management in ECEC sites.

In order to prevent brain drain, ECEC teachers must be paid competitively enough for them to stay in the field.

The government must fund community-based teachers and leaders in the ECEC sector and provide workshops and training so they can advance their careers and practices.

The ECEC principals should collaborate and work professionally with the ECEC teachers and implement a variety of leadership styles—such as distributive leadership—for a common goal.

ECEC teachers who lack qualifications should pursue ongoing training and development to regain their confidence in working at ECEC centres.

Conclusion

Since there is limited research on leadership practices in ECEC centres in South Africa, it would be beneficial if researchers conducted similar studies to find answers to centre managers' questions about leadership and management in ECEC centres. When ECEC teachers feel sidelined in decision-making, they will not develop a sense of belonging or ownership in relation to the centre and will feel demotivated and undervalued. Salary and performance are contentious issues in underresourced ECEC centres, so the performance of learners in these centres is compromised. Principals should be able to choose a model of core leadership that can improve their leadership performance in the ECEC centres.

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CHAPTER 3

Wrestling with the Notion of Leadership and Teacher Involvement
Understanding Caribbean Teachers' Myths and Beliefs within Global Perspectives

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Abstract

As developing nations continue to provide children with high-quality education, they too struggle to understand the notion of leadership and teacher involvement within the sector. This study is part of a Car-

ibbean cross-national project on leadership in the early childhood sector funded by the government of Trinidad and Tobago and The University of the West Indies. A survey of 721 early childhood teachers in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados provided data on their myths and beliefs about leadership. Key findings debunked the notion that teachers believed that only positional leaders can lead within ECEC settings. Intuitive understandings of the potential of distributed leadership were analysed. Global myths and beliefs were scrutinised. Global understanding and possibilities for qualitative research across borders were identified. A conceptual framework is offered for global advancement and support for teacher leaders from developing countries.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, leadership, myths, beliefs, Caribbean teachers, island states

Introduction

Current issues affecting the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector around the world have led the research community to be concerned about the demands of leadership and its impact on the education sector. Researchers have noted that quality leadership is inseparable from the context and effectiveness of the day-to-day management and perceptions of a centre's environment (Roberts, Crawford, & Hickmann, 2010; Sanduleac & Capatina, 2016; Sheridan et al., 2009). Yet leadership remains an elusive phenomenon. As researchers, we still grapple with a definition of leadership that imbibes the very culture within which each country operates. ECEC[1] is closely intertwined with social relationships, inherent beliefs, and experiences. This chapter will focus on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Commonwealth nation of Barbados, both small developing states in the Caribbean. The data described within this chapter were based on a survey of 721 ECEC teachers. The study examined their beliefs/ myths, which are so often espoused within our wider global ECEC community too. One of the questions from the larger study, which this chapter will address, is: What were the beliefs of early childhood teachers in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados as they relate to leadership in ECEC settings? Answering this question may provide a measure of clarity as we tackle the intricacies of leadership and teacher involvement around the world.

Leadership is hereby referred to as 'activities tied to the core work of the organisation that are designed by organisational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organisational members' (Spillane, 2006, p. 11). Researchers argue that nurturing leaders is an important task for the advancement of high-quality administration and programming in the early childhood sector (Waniganayake & Sims, 2018; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This position is further strengthened by Rodd (2013), who argues that 'effective leaders possess the insight and ability to perceive both the explicit and implicit needs of a situation requiring leadership and adapt their style in ways that engage and empower others to respond and contribute to positive outcomes for young children, and the early childhood sector' (pp. 33–34). Therefore, if it is assumed that teachers within the education sector can be affected by the myths associated with leadership and their very own beliefs and notions of leadership, then could these elements have consequences for the quality of care, learning, and administration in early childhood environments? More importantly, are these elements impactful on the larger field of nation-building and community advancement in small island states?

As researchers continue the struggle of defining leadership in a constantly changing world, the value of leadership remains constant. It can also be argued that administrators continue to rely on the expertise of teachers to lead and improve the quality of service within early childhood settings (Crawford et al., 2010). But is this fact or intuitive assumption? It is imperative that we know the role of teachers in the important task of leadership. According to Barth (2007), Crowther et al. (2002), and Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003), teacher leaders have a clear vision and seek to transform ideas into everyday approaches for action and perseverance. Furthermore, teacher leaders continue to be described within international research (Gabriel, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014) as being able to create a culture of teamwork and to promote professional learning. This argument is further strengthened by Caribbean research (Logie, 2013a), which found that varying perspectives of leadership existed within early childhood environments. Therefore, if effective management of change is to occur within early childhood settings, it is important to delineate the beliefs and practices of staff within the sector and further understand the potential and behaviours of our teaching staff.

Highlighted within current research is the discussion as to whether leaders are associated with a special position or office. The results from this study proffer that the above notion may well lead to gross restrictions on the ability and potential of teachers in the classroom.

The paucity of research in the Caribbean on teacher leadership, particularly in the early childhood sector, was a key factor influencing the conduct of this study; the other factor was the need to contextualise issues affecting leadership. The purpose of this cross-national study, therefore, was to explore teacher leadership (beliefs and myths) within Caribbean territories and examine those findings within global perspectives.

The Notion of Teacher Leadership

Despite the challenges associated with defining teacher leadership, research by Crawford et al. (2010) argues that administrators are more and more willing to rely on the expertise of teacher leaders to enhance the quality of service given to children and families. Because of the benefits strong leadership could bring to early childhood environments, it is important to understand the myths and beliefs of teachers as they relate to their involvement and ability to lead within their respective centres.

International research strongly suggests that teacher leaders often have a clear vision that can be articulated to other members within the workplace (Barth, 2007; Crowther et al., 2002; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Heikka & Suhonen, 2019). Teachers were found to translate their vision into practical strategies (Crowther et al., 2002) for action by setting goals and monitoring the progress towards the attainment of such goals. They were committed to setting goals (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014), and persistently confronted obstacles (Barth, 2007; Crowther et al., 2002).

In highlighting the contributions of teacher leaders, Thornton (2010) expresses the view that 'teacher leaders serve as mentors and encourage their peers; they influence policies in their schools; they assist in improving instructional practice; and they help develop leadership capacity and retention of other teachers' (p. 36). Teachers who are leaders maintain focus on the school's curriculum and on lifelong learning for themselves, and more importantly they understand what works within their environment (Bowman, 2004; Halttunen, 2013;

Halttunen et al., 2019; Helterbran, 2010). Studies have also found that teachers who believe in leading from within the classroom can bring about change and promote democratic school environments (Barth, 2001). However, for teacher leadership to be successful, the school context—according to Harris (2003)—must be one that promotes collaboration and shared leadership. The question is, do teachers believe they are given the opportunity to influence policy and lead the various operational aspects of their school environment?

The Context

The study focused on nurseries in Barbados, as well as government-owned preschools, kindergartens, childcare centres, and day-care centres in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, both English-speaking countries. All centres under study catered to children aged three to five and were funded by the governments of their respective countries.

Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost twin island republic in the Caribbean. With a population of approximately 1.4 million, the republic is close to its target of universal early childhood education. Currently, there are 175 government and government-assisted early childhood centres that cater to approximately 16,000 children aged three to five (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2018). The study focused on government and government-assisted centres staffed by trained ECEC teachers with tertiary level Bachelor's in Education degrees or staff members with the minimum qualification of a Certificate in Early Childhood Education.

Barbados

The Commonwealth nation of Barbados is home to a population of 283,000. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2018), there were 6127 children aged three to four years within the education sector. Early childhood education in Barbados developed out of the need for mothers to seek employment. Further expansion of early childhood services, increased numbers of public nurseries, and early childhood teacher training continued after the country's independence in

1966. It must be noted that Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago both have a high literacy rate.

The Sample

The study gathered data from a wide range of respondents within government and government-assisted centres in Trinidad and Tobago and within nurseries in Barbados. The sample consisted of 721 ECEC female teachers—five hundred and ninety-seven (597) and one hundred and twenty-four (124) across rural and urban districts in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, respectively. District educational coordinators from Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados were contacted to assist with the distribution of the surveys. Using a purposive sampling strategy, the coordinators were able to distribute questionnaires among the teaching staff of the various ECEC centres/nurseries/preschools/kindergartens/day-care centres within both countries. All early childhood teachers from the various government day-care nurseries within Barbados were approached to complete the survey. Of the total one hundred and thirty-eight (138) teachers across the six (6) districts/parishes in Barbados, one hundred and twenty-four (124) participated in the study. This represented 89.9 per cent of the total population of teaching staff in the government early childhood sector. In Trinidad and Tobago, 57 per cent (597) of the total number of early childhood government and government-assisted teachers (1047) across all eight (8) educational districts completed the survey.

Within the sample, 373 were over the age of 40 (51.7 per cent), and of these, 23.9 per cent were between 50 and 60 years of age. There were 346 (48 per cent) under 40 years of age. Two respondents did not complete the survey. The findings indicated there was a fair balance between those under 40 and those over that age.

Of the respondents in Trinidad and Tobago, 21.7 per cent had attained secondary and post-secondary level certification as their highest level of education, 73.2 per cent had completed tertiary level education, and 0.2 per cent had obtained community college certification. About 2.3 per cent had gained certification outside of the field of education.

Within the Barbados sample, 71.8 per cent of teachers had completed secondary and post-secondary education as their highest level of certification and 6.5 per cent held undergraduate degrees, having

completed tertiary level education. Roughly 7.3 per cent of this sample had obtained certification at the community college as well as certification outside the field of education (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Highest attainment of female teacher respondents by country.

Level of education	Trinidad, valid percent	Barbados, valid percent
Secondary	14.2	37.9
Post-secondary	7.5	33.9
University	73.2	6.5
Community College	0.2	7.3
Other	2.3	7.3
No certification	2.6	7.1

The Instrument

For this study, The University of the West Indies developed a Perception of Leadership and Practice Survey (PLPS). It consisted of thirty-two (32) structured, unstructured, and scalar response items, which gave a deeper understanding of teacher beliefs on leadership practice within the sector. The survey provided data on government-assisted nurseries, ECEC centres, and kindergartens. For the purpose of the study, the above centre types were collapsed into either government (fully government owned) or government-assisted centres in both countries. Data on staff certification, professional status, and educational attainment were also gathered. Survey questions also focused on teachers' thoughts on leadership within their workplace as well as their perception of myths related to effective leadership expressed within the international research. Additionally, the survey provided teachers' perception of challenges to becoming a leader in the workplace as well as their notion of teamwork and power relationships. Teachers were asked to answer Likert-style questions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements. Standard ethical research procedures were applied.

Findings and Discussion

The Position Myth: I Am the Leader Therefore I Lead

Maxwell (2005) reflected on the following: 'If I had to identify the number one misconception people have about leadership, it would be the belief that leadership comes simply from having a position or title' (p. 4). The questions one must ask as we seek enlightenment on what are the true elements of leadership are these: Does one's position at the top make you a leader? Does Maxwell's observation permeate the school culture in developed and developing countries? Because of the importance and impact of leadership on the provision of quality ECEC services in any workplace, it is certainly a notion that needs further attention.

When teachers were asked about their views related to the Position Myth, interestingly, 88.4 per cent across both territories disagreed with the following statement: I can't lead if I am not the chief administrator. Only 7.7 per cent of teachers/practitioners believed the statement (see Table 3.2). There was a non-response rate of 4.3 per cent, while 3.9 per cent of respondents had no opinion.

Results Defy the Statement

It has been argued within the literature that the person who has been given the position (within these settings the chief administrator, head of centre, or principal) typically has the new opportunity to lead. Maxwell (2011, p. 41) argues that 'most of the time when people enter a leadership position they do so because it was granted or appointed by some other person in authority'. Maxwell further proffers that this is the upside of the position, as it offers an opportunity for the positional leader to gain the respect of their staff. Moreover, he argues that leadership must be earned and cultivated and will only be successful when the authority of the leadership position is recognised. Additionally, Maxwell (2011, p. 42) notes that 'the best leaders promote people into leadership based on leadership potential, not on politics, seniority, credentials or convenience'. Arguably, a leadership position is an invitation to grow as a leader. Similarly, Rodd (2012) posits that an environment does not always need a positional leader to effectively guide the work within a teaching environment and that leadership could be distributed among its staff.

Table 3.2: The Position Myth: Teachers' responses.

Myth	Strongly disagree	Dis- agree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Response rate
	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent
I can't lead if I am not the chief adminis- trator (n = 690)	43.2 (298)	45.2 (312)	3.9 (27)	4.9 (34)	2.8 (19)	93.4
Power resides with the princi- pal (n = 650)	15.4 (100)	32.6 (212)	10.9 (71)	27.1 (176)	14.0 (91)	90.2

When asked if power resided with the principal, the study found that 48 per cent of teachers did not believe that statement to be true (illustrated in Table 3.2). By comparison, 41.1 per cent of teachers agreed, while 9.8 per cent had no opinion on the statement. Just under 10 per cent (9.8 per cent) did not respond to the question. Because there were strong views on either side of the above statement, this area of study needs further investigation. It certainly begs the question—what is the connection between power, position, and leadership?

The Destination Myth: When I Arrive at the Position of Leader Change Will Happen

Intuitively, within our settings and in conversations with ECEC teachers around the world, there appears to be a belief that a Destination Myth exists. Is it that teachers or staff in ECEC believe that they must arrive at the position of head teacher/principal or designated leader to have influence over policies, staff, and their present curricula? Does this Destination Myth exist within the Caribbean education sector? Do ECEC teachers blame their challenges and ability to reach their potential within the sector as an element of not being given the opportunity to lead and bring about change? This research study explored those concerns by questioning assumptions, beliefs, and views of practitioners within the region.

The surveyed early childhood teachers—when presented with the following statements—consistently challenged them, exposing and

debunking the Destination Myth: 1.) 'When I become the chief administrator/head practitioner I'll no longer be limited' and 2.) 'I cannot reach my potential if I am not the chief administrator/head practitioner'.

When teachers were asked if becoming the positional leader would allow for unlimited opportunities for change and success, only close to a quarter (20.9 per cent) of the sample agreed with the statement. Findings aligned with those of Maxwell (2005), arguing that good leadership is learned in the trenches and extending the argument that 'if you don't try out your leadership skills and decision-making process when the stakes are small and the risks are low, you're likely to get into trouble at higher levels when the cost of mistakes will be high' (p. 9). Therefore, leaders should grapple with daily situations and embrace the possibility for errors along the way. These results indicate that Caribbean teachers believed it is a mistake to dream that one day when you gain the top position you will be able to lead and fix the challenges that occur within the setting (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: The Destination Myth.

Myth	Strongly disagree	Disa-gree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Response rate
	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent
When I become the chief administrator/ head practitioner I'll no longer be limited (n= 665)	30.8 (205)	48.3 (321)	12.0 (80)	7.2 (48)	1.7 (11)	92.2
I cannot reach my potential if I am not the chief administrator/head practitioner (n = 688)	49.9 (343)	44.0 (303)	3.1 (21)	1.6 (11)	1.5 (10)	95.4

The finding was further strengthened and supported with 646 teachers (93.9 per cent) of the 688 respondents disagreeing with the following statement: 'I cannot reach my potential if I am not the chief administrator/head practitioner'. Only 21 (4.6 per cent) agreed. There were 21 (3.0 per cent) who had no opinion. Of the 721 teachers surveyed, 33 (4.6 per cent) gave no response. Early education teachers therefore debunked the Destination Myth, as many agreed with Maxwell's (2011) assumption that one can indeed prepare for leadership. The Caribbean study findings also concur with Maxwell (2005) that if you want to succeed you need to learn as much as you can about leadership before assuming a leadership position. Maxwell further argues that 'good leaders will gain in influence beyond their stated position' (p. 11).

Among ECEC teachers globally, there may be a perception that influencing others is a key element of leadership. Furthermore, it can be argued that within any organisation, the staff typically appear to be persuaded by and follow either a person given the title or a person of influence. Influence is the ability of an individual to impact someone's ideas or to move someone into one direction of either thought or action (Maxwell, 2011, 2005; Sinek, 2017). In the 21st century, a leader might well be the 'influencer' of an organisation, if one is to use social media terminology.

In wrestling with the notion of strong management and administration, Kivunja (2015), Rist et al. (2011), Urban (2008), and York-Barr and Duke (2004) all point to the importance of good leadership as a critical element in bringing about change. Strikingly, within this Caribbean study, 529 or 78.7 per cent disagreed that they as ECEC teachers have the necessary power to lead and bring about change within the centre, while 14.6 per cent agreed that teachers did at present have leadership power within the centre. Only 6.7 per cent of respondents had no opinion on the issue, while the non-response rate was 6.8 per cent (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Early childhood teachers' belief/view on present ability to bring about change.

Belief/View	Strongly disagree	Disa-gree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree	Response rate
	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent (n)	Valid percent
I have the necessary power to lead and bring about change within the centre (n = 672)	29.9 (201)	48.8 (328)	6.7 (45)	9.5 (64)	5.1 (34)	89.0

Typically, ECEC teachers within the study believed they could also be administrative leaders if given power. As posited by Heikka and Hujala (2012), respondents believed that leadership duties ought to be shared (82.8 per cent). The majority (92.8 per cent) of teachers shared the view that 'ECEC teachers ought to be given opportunities to lead in the nursery / day care / school / centre', while only 2.8 per cent disagreed, 4.4 per cent held no opinion, and 5.4 per cent did not respond. On the statement that '[a]n individual ought to feel free to take on leadership roles', 537 (80 per cent) of ECEC teachers surveyed agreed. Only 9.2 per cent did not support this view, while 10.7 per cent had no opinion on the statement and 6.9 per cent did not respond to the question.

When ECEC teachers were asked to rate their views on the statement that '[c]o-workers ought to be encouraged to accept leadership roles in the classroom', 92.7 per cent agreed, 1.9 per cent disagreed, 37 teachers (5.4 per cent) held no opinion, and 4.4 per cent did not respond. However, respondents believed that they were not given opportunities to lead, with only 6.2 per cent of the teaching staff of the view that they gained the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. As defined by Rodd (2012), leadership is the product of the effort of a group of individuals and is linked to the elements of shared or collaborative effort. These staff members indicated through their beliefs that shared leadership would allow them to adapt to the ever-changing educational sector. Although the study did not specifically ask for the nature of the leadership role (be it pedagogical, administrative, or that

of community activists), respondents held strong views on leadership. There was an overwhelming belief that respondents were ready to take on leadership roles if given the chance. This latter finding needs further examination.

Teacher Leadership Begins with Self-Confidence and Opportunity

As noted earlier, Heikka and Hujala (2012) argued that strong leadership not only provided new knowledge within an environment but offered a sense of control and power to those within the ECEC environment to bring about change. When asked whether [l]eadership responsibilities ought to be shared', 87.8 per cent of respondents believed that they should, 2.6 per cent disagreed, 4.2 per cent did not share an opinion, and 5.5 per cent did not respond to the statement. Likewise, 85 per cent of teachers supported the view that '[a] leadership team is more effective than just one leader', only 8.4 per cent disagreed with this view, 45 teachers (6.5 per cent) stated that they had no opinion about the statement, and 4.6 per cent gave no response. More than half (58.5 per cent) of teachers shared the view that '[l]eaders don't just share tasks; they also gain power from their actions'. However, 23.8 per cent disagreed with that statement, while 111 of the respondents (16.9 per cent) had no opinion and 62 (8.6 per cent) did not respond. When asked about the statement that '[l]eadership ought to be shared even though there is a team leader', 601 or 88 per cent agreed. Only 6.1 per cent held the opposing view that leadership should not be shared if there is a team leader. A small number of teachers (5.9 per cent) expressed no opinion, while there was a non-response rate of 5.3 per cent.

Teachers—No Need to Wait

Teachers are very often drawn into the ring of governance to tackle administrative or pedagogical issues, thereby finding themselves leading the charge for change to correct institutional faux pas or challenges within the ECEC sector. A key finding of the study was the existence of teachers' confidence and belief in their ability to effectively lead and solve issues within the sector, if given the opportunity to do so. Teachers believed they were capable of leading from their classrooms, as

91.5 per cent and 74.2 per cent respectively in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados responded 'Yes' when asked: 'Do you think preschool practitioners can be effective leaders?' Only 7 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago and 0.8 per cent in Barbados responded 'No'. There was a non-response rate of 7.8 per cent and 25 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados respectively.

When asked '[i]f a centre had a team leader, should leadership responsibilities still be shared?' 83.4 per cent of teachers agreed that it should. At the same time, 91.1 per cent of respondents also agreed that all decision-making should be shared. A strong argument can be made for distributed leadership in some form within these ECEC centres.

Moreover, teachers consistently argued (82.8 per cent) that ECEC staff who are assigned the preparation of classroom activities can undertake leadership roles. The position that teacher leadership should be nurtured and that teachers should be included in the decision-making process is supported within current literature (Davitt & Ryder, 2018; Brewer, Okilwa, & Duarte, 2018; Halttunen, Waniganayake, & Heikka, 2019). There is therefore no need to wait—rise to the occasion and lead.

Key Challenges

As we wrestle with what are the important elements of leadership as well as how our views impact the very ecosystem we live in, we must define our role in society. Do we wish to lead or to follow, and do we believe in an egalitarian notion of interdependence and pedagogical and administrative support for our co-workers through teamwork? Another question that must be answered is this: Can ECEC teachers, regardless of whether they live in small island states or a financially evolved nation, lead and assist in the provision of quality education within the sector? That elephant in the room is hereby acknowledged and answered by teachers within these Caribbean islands. Yes, they can. However, challenges will exist within each setting or ecosystem as it continuously adjusts to the nuances and experiences each member brings into the workplace. Here are key challenges that affect us globally.

1. Inability of the positional leader to share or distribute leadership roles. Researchers have argued that there is evidence of environments where teachers are distrusted (Berg et al., 2013; Heath & Heath, 2010;

Sinek, 2017). In small island states—where the principal/positional leader has gained the position of power through longevity in the post, or certification, or favour—it is difficult to relinquish roles to others, as the position is seen as a privilege and/or entitlement.

With a note of caution, Danielson (2007) and Denee and Thornton (2017) argue that distributed leadership should not be viewed only as a chance to share perceived onerous or less attractive roles to lessen the burden on the positional leader. The authors suggest that distributed leadership should be viewed as the provision of opportunities for all within the environment to develop leadership competencies within a culture of teamwork. Similarly, Sinek (2017) supports this view, stating that:

> The more energy is transferred from the top of the organisation to those who are actually doing the job, those who know more about what's going on on a daily basis, the more powerful the organisation and the more powerful the leader. (p. 184.)

Caribbean research also concurs that:

> In order to reap the benefits of shared leadership in early childhood settings, there is a need for the positional leader to develop the leadership capacity of employees and provide support for them as they execute new leadership roles. (Logie, 2013b, p. 239)

2. The nature of teaching as a profession. By its very definition, teaching could be viewed as a two-dimensional occupation. You teach in the classroom and your assessment as a quality practitioner is based on your ability to teach within the parameters of the curriculum and to carry out your classroom responsibilities as required. However, this assertion may lead classroom teachers to function 'in silos', and the practice may not lead to successful quality learning environments that attempt to: a) provide opportunities to lead; and b) stress resilience and adaptation to change. Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet (2013) argue that leadership must be managed carefully, particularly in environments where staff members are inexperienced and may need support.

According to Helterbran (2010) and Mettiäinen (2016), teachers must overcome the 'I am just a teacher' syndrome, re-examining their roles and functions and bringing new enthusiasm within the workforce. A more robust three-dimensional approach to the ECEC profession should perhaps be considered whereby leadership mentoring

and training play an integral part in a teacher's daily professional life. Another obstacle on the path to leadership among teachers may be their fear of taking the initiative to lead and their belief that it is just not their job to do so (Sanduleac & Capatina, 2016; Thornton, 2010). In small island states, particularly those within the Caribbean, there is typically a stereotypical perception of the ECEC teacher as the 'nice Miss'/'Auntie' within the classroom. Current research (Lipsky, 2010; Waniganayake & Sims, 2018) suggests an additional role for ECEC teachers as street-level bureaucrats. This would allow teachers to position themselves as leaders with professional authority to make decisions on a day-to-day basis. Further qualitative research on leadership is needed to clarify global teacher beliefs and how they impact on dynamic, quality ECEC environments.

Conclusion

The struggle towards quality leadership continues. Across the world, whether in small island states or in larger developed economies, teacher agency and professional influence are currently viewed as valued and essential components of the education sector. Teachers within this study forcefully argued that they have the potential to lead if given the chance to do so. Harris and Jones (2019) argue that the idea of teachers as co-constructors of educational change and policymaking is long overdue. Harris and Jones further note that 'funding may disappear overnight, political support may wane, policy-makers' interest may be side-tracked, but the enormous potency of teacher leadership remains, endures and survives' (p. 125). While differences in the Caribbean appear within government policies, budget allocations, and the national understanding of the cultural context of leadership, hope remains strong for teacher leaders within these small island states.

Notes

1 Known in the Caribbean as the Early Childhood Care and Education sector—ECCE.

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CHAPTER 4

Leadership in Norwegian Municipal Early Childhood Education Care Centres

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Abstract

This chapter is based on a qualitative interview survey among directors of Norwegian early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres. The research question is as follows: What expectations, possibilities, and challenges do ECEC directors perceive in their cooperation with their immediate superiors, and how does this cooperation affect the autonomy and freedom of action of directors' leadership role? The main findings of the survey are that directors have regular contact with their immediate superiors in the municipal leadership and management hierarchy, as well as when a need arises. The contact takes place in the form of meetings with other directors and individual contact by phone and email. At these meetings, information is provided, matters of a legal and administrative nature are discussed, and there are discussions about the implementation of pedagogical guidelines from the municipality. The individual cooperation between the director and their immediate superior largely focuses on individual cases relating

to children and parents, personnel matters, or pedagogical issues. The directors find this cooperation important and regard their immediate superior as a source of support. Five out of six interviewees have a superior who is a trained kindergarten teacher. They want their superior to provide pedagogical advice and be a discussion partner in pedagogical matters. They are mostly satisfied with the cooperation, but find that their superiors have little time to set aside for pedagogical follow-up work. Although the superior has overriding pedagogical responsibility for the ECEC centres, the directors themselves perceive that they have pedagogical authority and freedom of action and autonomy, and that their superior trusts them.

Keywords: leadership, early childhood education and care centres, directors, owner

Introduction

The Framework Plan for Kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017) states that directors have day-to-day responsibility for pedagogical, personnel, and administrative matters at early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres. It also states that good pedagogical and administrative leadership requires good cooperation with the ECEC owner. The owner has overall responsibility for ensuring that the ECEC centre is run in accordance with current statutes, rules, and regulations (cf. Section 7 first paragraph of the Kindergarten Act).

One of the challenges when studying cooperation between directors and what the Framework Plan refers to as the owner is to define who the owner is. ECEC centres in Norway are either owned by the municipality or privately owned (just over half the ECEC centres are privately owned). In formal terms, the owners of the municipal ECEC centres are the politicians elected to the municipal councils. In practice, however, the directors have little contact with these politicians, at least in large municipalities. Most directors have a superior at middle management level in the municipal leadership and management hierarchy. In this survey, the directors refer to these superiors when asked who they think of as the person who represents the ECEC owner. Five out of six interviewees have a superior at this level who has both personnel responsibility for the interviewee in question and pedagogical and administrative responsibility for the ECEC centres in the munic-

ipality—or city district in the case of large municipalities. The sixth director's superior does not have pedagogical responsibility.

There is great variation between Norwegian municipalities as regards organisation in this context, who the director's immediate superior is, and whether this superior has personnel, administrative, and pedagogical responsibility. Regardless of where in the hierarchy the director's immediate superior is placed, it can be said that they represent what the Framework Plan refers to as the owner. In the past, the municipality as owner was not very involved in the pedagogical management of ECEC centres. Today, many directors experience a high level of owner involvement in both pedagogical and administrative matters (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

One interesting question is whether owner involvement, here seen through the relationship between the director and their superior in the municipality, affects the professional autonomy of the director and the individual ECEC centre. More knowledge is needed about, among other things, what cooperation between the director and their immediate superior entails. Does the director find that they are able to maintain their autonomy internally in the ECEC centre, despite the owner being more involved? Is the director's freedom of action regarding professional judgement and autonomy curtailed? Do directors generally want their immediate superior to relieve them in their pedagogical supervision of the ECEC centre? How do the directors want this cooperation to work? Do they think it is important that their immediate superior is a trained kindergarten teacher? These questions are discussed in this chapter.

The research question is: What expectations, possibilities, and challenges do ECEC directors perceive in their cooperation with their immediate superiors at the municipal level, and how does this cooperation affect the autonomy and freedom of action of directors' leadership role?

Since there is a great deal of variation in who represents the owner and what their titles are, I have chosen to refer to this role as the director's 'immediate superior'. The survey is limited to directors of municipal ECEC centres. It is intended to form the basis for a larger survey that will also include private ECEC centres.

Theory

Forms of Organisation of ECEC Centres

Leadership is exercised in an organisation—a system of structures. This system impacts leadership (Larsen & Slåtten, 2020). Organisational structures can affect the director's cooperation with their immediate superior and the framework within which they exercise autonomy and freedom of action.

Organisational structures concern the division of tasks, among other things. The division and delegation of responsibility and power of decision impact the framework for leadership, autonomy, and freedom of action. Whether the ECEC centre has a flat or a hierarchical structure can have a bearing on the director's pedagogical leadership (Larsen & Slåtten, 2014). The ECEC centre is also part of a larger organisation that includes the ownership level. The director is one of several actors in the chain of governance—from the national level to the individual ECEC centre. As the leader of their entity, the director has a position at the top of the hierarchy. At the same time, however, the director also holds a position at the bottom of a leadership hierarchy where state governance is at the top level, the owner is at the middle level, and the director is at the bottom level. Considering the development this sector is undergoing, there is a need for analysis of ECEC centres as part of a larger organisation.

Leadership

Leadership can be understood in different ways, and a traditional understanding is that leadership is the process of influencing others (Yukl, 2013). More recent definitions of leadership point to leadership as practice-oriented interactions and processes. In such cases, leadership is regarded as a function focusing on personnel, and where the collective is more important that the individual (Kirkhaug, 2019). Many definitions include the notion that leadership is about influence, cooperation, and interaction. Relationships are thereby an essential part of understanding what leadership is. Leadership is also exercised within a structural framework, i.e. an organisation. In summary, we could say that leadership is about being able to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to an efficient organisation through interaction and cooperation.

Some leadership literature distinguishes between leadership and management. Whereas leadership is often regarded as influencing through actions, management is regarded as impacting employees' behaviour through impersonal systems. To emphasise how leadership differs from management, we can say that leadership is about 'the more personal part of a manager's job where the manager uses him/herself to exert influence through, e.g. social relationships, decisions in individual cases, direct communication with employees and professional supervision, or by being a front figure and role model' (Døving et al., 2016, p. 38).

In leadership literature, a distinction is drawn between the individualistic perspective and the distributed perspective. A distributed perspective on leadership expands the individualistic perspective to include the activities of several people. Distributed leadership is often referred to as a form of cooperative leadership. Theories on distributed leadership are especially interesting when studying leadership at several levels in organisations. Distributed leadership can be exercised internally in the ECEC centre between directors and pedagogical leaders, but it can also be leadership that the directors and their immediate leaders perform together. The OECD report *Leadership for 21st century learning* (OECD, 2013) emphasises the benefits of a more distributed leadership practice. The report argues that the leadership of the future is innovative and cooperative. The report states that changing structures and introducing a joint leadership practice that can link the activities of leaders and middle managers in learning systems is the most efficient leadership practice. This is described as 'learning leadership'. The term 'learning professional communities' is relevant in this context and refers to leadership groups' common learning when exercising leadership (Paulsen, 2019). Theories on distributed leadership are useful as a means of studying leadership cooperation between directors and their immediate leaders.

The Director's Professional Judgement, Freedom of Action, and Pedagogical Autonomy

We can say that there are three characteristics of professionalism in professional practice: a) it is based on a distinct theoretical and methodological knowledge base acquired through higher education, b) the practitioners have freedom of action to exercise professional judge-

ment, and c) they have special responsibility through their social mandate (Molander & Terum, 2008). Thus, these criteria must be met for an ECEC director to be professional in their professional practice, and it is particularly interesting in this survey to consider freedom of action to exercise professional judgement. According to Freidson (2001), the exercise of professional judgement is at the core of professional work.

Brante (2014) refers to four conditions for professionals' exercise of professional judgement: legitimacy, trust, authority, and autonomy. A director can exercise judgement because of the legitimacy of their position, trust from their surroundings, professional and formal authority, and autonomy, for example, to make pedagogical decisions.

As such, autonomy is linked to the director's freedom of action; a director has freedom of action with a high or low degree of autonomy. Autonomy can thereby be understood as the possibility to make independent choices of action. Examples of important choices of action for a director include what methods to use in the planning, documentation, and assessment of pedagogical activities, and which considerations should be given most weight in a decision-making situation.

We can also envisage that autonomy exists in a group. Traditionally, ECEC centres have a flat structure and culture, where autonomy primarily rests with the centre's management team, and not with the director (Helgøy et al., 2010; Larsen & Slåtten, 2014; Larsen, 2019; Løvgren, 2012; Slåtten, 2019; Smeby, 2011; Steinnes & Haug, 2013). Furthermore, autonomy can be part of the professional fellowship that exists between all the directors in a municipality or city district, together with their superior in the municipality. Distributed leadership, group leadership, and professional learning communities can be viewed as means of spreading autonomy, including to levels above the ECEC centre. Autonomy can manifest itself to varying degrees at different levels and within a jurisdiction, i.e. in the professional domain required by the profession and for which the profession is responsible (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001).

With a higher degree of owner involvement, it is interesting to discover whether the director retains their pedagogical autonomy or whether the immediate superior at the level above curtails the individual director's freedom of action and autonomy. According to the report *The kindergarten teaching profession – present and future* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019), there is a tendency for the owner level to be incorporated into the leadership hierarchy, at least in big ECEC

centres. It is pointed out in the report that it is not kindergarten teachers who hold these positions in many cases. This will probably affect the content of the cooperation and the directors' wishes regarding how close pedagogical cooperation should be.

Methods

The sample consisted of six interviewees, all directors of municipal ECEC centres, in three municipalities. The directors were selected on the basis of geographical distribution. Each interview lasted around 40 minutes and took place in the director's office, and audio recordings were used.

The validity of qualitative studies is about credibility, verifiability, and transfer value (Grønmo, 2016). In this survey, it has been an objective to ensure this validity to the highest extent possible. Among other things, internal validity is about having basic data to underpin our conclusions, whereas external validity is about whether our findings have transfer value, i.e. whether the findings can tell us something about social contexts beyond the context studied (Krumsvik, 2013). The interviewees were given an opportunity to speak freely and discuss matters they themselves regard as important. This meant that more experiences and points of view were elucidated. Follow-up questions were also asked. This strengthens the internal validity. It is difficult to assess external validity, as there are few interviewees. The data basis is small, and the situation was affected by the 'lockdown' of Norway in March 2020 because of the coronavirus situation. This survey therefore has limited generalisability, but it can provide a picture of what directors think and feel about their cooperation with their owner.

The empirical findings presented must be based on data about actual circumstances, and must rely as little as possible on the researcher's discretionary judgement (Grønmo, 2016). In this survey, reliability is strengthened through open questions and follow-up questions in the interviews.

The interviews have been accurately transcribed, and the texts have been read several times. This resulted in a better overall and more nuanced impression of the data material. A manual content analysis with classification and coding was also carried out. The coding involved using descriptive codes and discussion codes in the analysis.

The data are also presented in a matrix in order to recognise patterns more easily.

About the Interviewees

All interviewees worked as directors with responsibility for one ECEC centre. They were between 39 and 52 years of age. Table 4.1 provides more information about the interviewees.

Table 4.1: The interviewees: Directors in ECEC centres.

Characteristic	Inter-viewee 1	Inter-viewee 2	Inter-viewee 3	Inter-viewee 4	Inter-viewee 5	Inter-viewee 6
Total number of years as a kindergarten teacher	8	22	24	22	25	10
Number of years as a director	8	10	11	12	13	0.5
Further education	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Number of children in the ECEC centre	99	63	89	99	197	54
Number of kindergarten teachers	10	7	10	11	19	6
Number of skilled workers/ assistants	12	8	11	12	32	6
Geography	Oslo	Oslo	Oslo	Eastern Norway	Eastern Norway	Oslo
Assistant director	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

About the Director's Immediate Superior

All the interviews began by clarifying who the director's immediate superior was. They have different job descriptions and areas of responsibility. The forms of organisation and structure varied between the different city districts in Oslo, and between municipalities. Some information is provided in Table 4.2 about each of the interviewees' superiors.

Table 4.2: The interviewees' immediate superiors.

Characteristic	Inter-viewee 1	Inter-viewee 2	Inter-viewee 3	Inter-viewee 4	Inter-viewee 5	Inter-viewee 6
Responsible for how many ECEC centres	22	17	10	27	22	31
Is a trained kindergarten teacher	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Has pedagogical leadership responsibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Results

Clear Expectations of Themselves

The directors highlight many of the same factors. However, how much weight they give to these factors differs somewhat. They all mention their important role vis-à-vis their staff. Four interviewees (1, 4, 5, 6) are concerned with their responsibility for ensuring that their staff have an opportunity to develop professionally, participate in decisions, and work together as a team:

> It is my responsibility to see each person, and that people work well in teams. I do not have to make decisions alone. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate. (Interviewee no. 1)

Several interviewees (1, 3, 5) say that it is important to work to promote the ECEC's centre's mandate. Two interviewees (2, 4) highlight that it is important to run a high-quality ECEC centre:

> Of course, to run a high-quality kindergarten, with good results on all surveys, children develop optimally, and a satisfied staff who get to develop professionally. (Interviewee no. 2)

Two say that the children are what matter most and that this means that they must work with the adults.

Regular Meetings with the Immediate Superior and Contact when a Need Arises

The directors meet their immediate superior regularly at meetings in which other directors also participate. Such meetings are called directors' meetings and are held every other week, once a month, or every six weeks. The directors also have performance appraisal interviews with their immediate superior, and some have what they refer to as leadership discussions. All directors have contact with their superior by phone and email. They find that there is a low threshold for getting in touch, and that they can phone or email to pass on information, ask questions, have discussions, and receive advice.

Need for Contact and Cooperation on Pedagogical, Personnel and Administrative Matters

At the directors' meetings, the superior provides information, matters of a legal and administrative nature are discussed, and there are discussions about the implementation of municipal guidelines. The directors are often divided into smaller groups to discuss these matters. Pedagogical issues are rarely discussed.

The reasons why the directors contact their superior vary somewhat. Several (2, 3, 5, 6) mention that they need to discuss complaints from parents, personnel matters, and individual children. These often involve legal issues. Pursuant to the Kindergarten Act, the owner has overriding legal responsibility, which may be the reason for this:

> Yes, we often have contact, because we often have meetings. Then I have contact with him if there are parental complaints, personnel matters or incidents related to children. Really about everything. So he is very concerned that we should have a very low threshold if something happens then. So we have a lot of contact. (Interviewee no. 2)

All but one (6) underline that they need to discuss pedagogical issues with their superior. They want the superior to be available and to act as a discussion partner in pedagogical matters. The directors point out that their superiors expect them to be independent and that they are shown trust, but they nevertheless want to be able to discuss pedagogical matters with their immediate superior.

Interviewee no. 5 says that it is important to have a superior with whom to discuss pedagogical matters. She says that her superior worked as a director for a long time, that she is close to the field of practice, and that she knows the situation on the ground. She stresses that this is very important:

> They are closer to practice, so they understand reality better. It is very, very important. (Interviewee no. 5)

All of the five interviewees whose superiors have been kindergarten teachers emphasise the importance of this.

Not Much Time—too Little Room for Pedagogical Aspects

Interviewee no. 3 says that she wishes she had more room for the pedagogical aspects and for professional development, and that her superior could get everyone to pull in the same pedagogical direction. She finds that the pedagogical aspects of her job get drowned in financial and administrative tasks. Several directors raised this issue. Interviewee no. 2 says that their superior is very busy. He does not always answer enquiries, and this can be frustrating. He also tends to provide information a bit late.

Mostly Good Cooperation with Immediate Superiors

All the interviewees describe their immediate superiors and their cooperation with them in positive terms. Three interviewees (1, 2, 4) say that their superior is a pedagogically capable person and that they cooperate very well. They regard their superior as someone who supports them, which is a crucial part of a demanding job. Interviewees no. 3 and 5 say that it works fine, but that the superior does not have much time:

> Based on the prerequisites and everything they have to do, I think it works very well. (Interviewee no. 5)

Interviewee no. 6, whose superior does not have a background as a kindergarten teacher and who is responsible for very many ECEC centres, is also satisfied. He finds that he is given support, trust, and recognition, and that it is easy to reach out to his superior. He especially needs contact in connection with individual cases and legal issues. He is pleased that his superior does not have pedagogical responsibility for the ECEC centres; he emphasises that this responsibility should rest with the director.

Different Experience of Clear Expectations

Whether the superior has communicated expectations to the directors varies. Four interviewees (1, 2, 4, 6) answer that their superior is clear in this regard:

> Yes, I experienced that. He is clear that we must have good financial management and the kindergarten must have good quality. (Interviewee no. 2)

Interviewee no. 6 has a clear perception of what is expected of him, and he has had a discussion about expectations with his leader. These expectations are also communicated through performance appraisal interviews and follow-up meetings. The two others are more uncertain. Interviewee no. 3 says that the superior 'sort of does this'. Interviewee no. 5 says that not much has perhaps been said, and that she primarily uses her management contract and job description as guidance. She also refers to the Framework Plan, and, based on these documents, she believes that what is expected of her is not unclear.

Expectations of Efficiency, Budget Control, and Quality

Three areas in particular are mentioned when the directors talk about their superiors' expectations. The ECEC centre must be run efficiently (interviewee no. 1); it must ensure quality for children and parents (interviewee no. 4); and it must stay within the budget (interviewee no. 3). One of the interviewees says that his superior is clear that he must exercise good financial management, that the ECEC centre must be of a good quality, and that he must have a strong presence at the centre.

The Directors Also Have Clear Expectations of Their Immediate Superior

Interviewee no. 1 says that he expects his superior to come prepared to meetings, to treat the directors equally, and to be clear about his expectations. Interviewee no. 4 states that she expects her superior to trust that she knows how to do her job, and to support her when she needs it. She is used to working independently, and she likes that, but sometimes—for example in personnel cases—she thinks it's important to keep her superior informed. She wants her opinion on how she intends to deal with the matter, so that she can be certain her thinking is correct—someone with whom she can think out loud.

Interviewee no. 5 says that her superior gives feedback on what works well, but also on what needs to be dealt with. She expects him to support her and to help improve the pedagogical work, and that they will discuss things. She also expects that her voice and the voices of the group leaders are heard. She says:

> That he gives me feedback on what works well, but also what one must address. And that he supports. So that he supported and helped to lift the academic, I expect. (Interviewee no. 5)

Interviewee no. 6 says that he expects the superior to be available when he needs her, for her to see him and his work, and that she is responsive and gets to grips with any problems he encounters.

Discussion

The directors in this survey are clear about their expectations of themselves and their role. They are concerned with their personnel responsibility and with ensuring that the staff have an opportunity to develop professionally, participate in decisions, and work together as a team. Thus, the directors demonstrate a leadership view we recognise from recent definitions of the term, i.e. leadership is seen as interactions and processes, where the focus is on personnel development and where the collective is more important that the individual (Kirkhaug, 2019). They also emphasise the pedagogical aspects of their leadership role and point out that it is important to promote the mandate of ECEC centres and the children's welfare. This may indicate that they are concerned with the aspects of leadership that are different from those with which

management are concerned. Some are concerned with maintaining a high and clear profile, which can also be interpreted as meaning that they are more concerned with leadership than with management, since being a role model and providing feedback are important aspects of leadership.

The directors' immediate superiors also exercise leadership. The directors in this survey focus on the pedagogical aspects: they want superiors with whom they can discuss pedagogical issues. In their opinion, their superiors at the owner level should focus on pedagogical follow-up of the directors and help them to do a good pedagogical job. That is interesting, since it also seems to be important to them to have autonomy. These directors seem to want to have superiors who support them in pedagogical issues, while they also want to retain their autonomy.

In the definition of leadership presented above, it was stated that 'leadership is about being able to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to an efficient organisation through interaction and cooperation'. It seems that the directors want—and to some extent have—superiors who lead in accordance with this interpretation of leadership. They want more time to be devoted to pedagogical discussions at directors' meetings, and they want frequent contact about pedagogical issues through individual contact. However, several of them point out that their superiors have limited time. It is very important that those above the directors in the leadership hierarchy are available and approachable. This is also important as a trust-building practice model on the part of the superior, who is in an asymmetrical position (Paulsen, 2019).

The directors' leadership style and cooperation with their superiors can be viewed from a professional practice perspective. The theoretical part of this chapter referred to four conditions for professionals' exercise of professional judgement: legitimacy, trust, authority, and autonomy (Brante, 2014). Through the directors' expectations of themselves, we observe that this is something they are concerned with. The interviewees also point out that they have professional autonomy, that their superiors trust them, and that they have legitimacy and professional authority.

At the same time, they are clear that they need to cooperate with their superior on pedagogical issues. In fact, it is pedagogical leadership that they highlight as the primary issue they need to discuss with

their superior. This gives cause to ask whether this indicates that the directors have less autonomy in their exercise of pedagogical leadership, or whether the role of director has become so extensive that many feel a need for more support in this work. The report *The kindergarten teaching profession – present and future* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019) points out that the directors' role as knowledge managers is stronger than before. This responsibility demands the capacity and competence to exercise pedagogical leadership. The need for more support in the pedagogical leadership context could be related to this.

One of the directors has a superior who is not a trained kindergarten teacher and who does not have pedagogical responsibility. Many directors in Norway currently find themselves in the same situation. There are also many directors whose superiors are not trained kindergarten teachers, but who nevertheless have pedagogical responsibility. It would be very interesting to learn more about this. What characterises cooperation in these relationships, and how do the directors perceive this cooperation?

The leadership responsibility certainly is extensive. ECEC centres traditionally delegate leadership tasks, and with more kindergarten teachers it may be possible to delegate even more tasks. At the same time, increasing demands on ECEC centres from several quarters will increase the pressure and expectations faced by directors. This was also evident in the interview material. The directors pointed out that they need superiors in the municipality who can help them with their pedagogical leadership. ECEC centres are undergoing organisational changes that will impact the exercise of leadership. Such specialised leadership structures raise new questions about leadership processes. How should leadership responsibility be divided between the owner and the director, and between the director and the pedagogical leader? Distributed leadership—as explained above—can be seen as a form of leadership that the directors welcome, where leadership is a matter of cooperation, and perhaps this is necessary, given how the sector is currently developing.

Conclusion

One of the objectives of this survey was to start building knowledge about directors' cooperation with their immediate superiors, or, more specifically, to identify what this cooperation entails, what they want

it to entail, and the impact of that cooperation on the autonomy and freedom of action of directors. The directors are mainly satisfied with their cooperation with their superior. They have regular contact and can contact their superior when a need arises. With the exception of one, all believe that being able to discuss pedagogical issues with their superior is the most important thing. The introduction of a pedagogical leadership level can be seen as an increasing degree of owner involvement, since the directors' immediate superior in the municipality represents the ECEC owner. There is reason to ask how this will influence the overall leadership of ECEC centres and the directors' pedagogical autonomy and freedom of action. Based on this survey, pedagogical leadership seems to be split between several levels, but the directors nevertheless feel that they have retained their freedom of action and autonomy.

In recent years, the Norwegian kindergarten sector has developed more complex leadership structures. This development is likely to continue, and we will probably see even more variation in leadership and management in the sector going forward. More research is necessary also regarding the relationship between directors and their immediate superiors in private ECEC centres.

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CHAPTER 5

Leadership Responsibilities of Early Childhood Directors in Palestine from the Directors' Viewpoint

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Abstract

This chapter discusses early childhood education (ECE) directors' leadership in Palestinian ECE in a time when Palestine reformed and developed its ECE system. Specifically, the study sets out to investigate what key leadership responsibilities were experienced by Palestinian early childhood directors. The lack of studies dealing with ECE leadership in the Palestinian context shows the need for a unified consciousness of leadership. This chapter adds to this challenge, and it is

hoped that novel researched-based knowledge might also add to the understanding of leadership responsibilities internationally. The study belongs to the Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART) project Developing Teacher Education in Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary Schools in Palestine and Norway, in which researchers from Palestine and Norway investigated ECE leadership as one selected topic. This chapter builds on empirical data from a quantitative questionnaire (N = 166) administered to a purposeful representative sample of ECE directors from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The results show the wide range of leadership responsibilities that ECE directors perceive in their daily work. Using the theoretical framework of leadership as function (Adizes, 1991), we found that ECE directors in Palestine rank responsibilities to children highest. Even though leadership responsibilities related to administration were ranged as lowest, this category contains most areas of responsibility. Moreover, the results highlight the directors' role and duties in securing and safeguarding the organisation's goals as core responsibilities. The results make a new contribution to understanding and developing the professional role in order to strengthen ECE leadership and be more effective and dynamic in Palestinian ECE during a time of significant expansion.

Keywords: ECE directors, leadership, responsibilities, everyday leadership, leadership functions

Introduction

With the increasing interest in leadership responsibilities, the work of early childhood education (ECE) directors is evolving rapidly in Palestine at the same time as early childhood leadership in Palestine has not been a well-researched area. Abou-Dagga, El-Holy, Subuh, Al-Tahrawy, and Al-Sheikh Ahmed (2007) have evaluated the quality in ECE in Gaza. They highlight a significant need to emphasise the role of ECE leadership, as ECE directors have a significant role in ensuring the quality of early childhood education. To provide quality ECE, directors need to engage in both human resource and administrative and pedagogical leadership functions, dividing their time between the tasks that fall within these functions (Douglass, 2019; Modise, 2019; Strehmel et al., 2019). The aim of this chapter is to discuss ECE directors' leadership in Palestinian ECE in a time when Palestine reforms and develops

its ECE system. Specifically, the chapter sets out to investigate what key leadership responsibilities are being experienced by Palestinian early childhood directors and thus add novel research-based knowledge to the field.

Background

In 2017, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education published guidelines for ECE centres (Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017b), and there has been a significant quantitative expansion of centres over the last ten years. There are 2017 ECE centres in Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip), which were attended in 2018/19 by 148,253 children (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Attendance at ECE centres is offered to children aged 3 years and 7 months prior to the commencement of compulsory education at basic school (at the age of 6 years). The two-year early education stage is not compulsory, but the new Law of Education (Law 8, year 2017) stipulates that one year of early education (KG2, sometimes called Grade 0) is compulsory (Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017a). Although the directors of private ECE centres must observe the requirements of the ministry, in reality this is not always the case. This means that directors fulfil their leadership role differently in different contexts, according to abilities, resources, and priorities.

ECE in Palestine is still underdeveloped, and services are not well distributed among its communities. However, there is a considerable and growing interest in early childhood education (ECE) from stakeholders. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education emphasises the importance of ECE in the Palestinian Strategic Sector Plan 2017–2022 (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017a). The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education has identified strategic goals, targets, challenges, and suggestions that would meet several needs related to improving ECE in Palestine. These needs directly relate to, among other things, promoting accountability, results-based leadership, governance, and management (p. 162). Additionally, an evaluation form developed and used by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education highlights the tasks that ECE directors are expected to perform, which are categorised according to five areas: (a) planning according to scientific principles, (b) supervision

and follow-up of human and non-human resources and other matters, (c) professional development for directors and for educators, (d) improving children's learning, and (e) relationships/communication (Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2018). As the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education continues to improve the work in ECE by regulating ECE policies, there is a need for more knowledge to develop ECE leadership for the sake of the quality of children's learning, development, and well-being.

Internationally, research suggests that administrative leadership and pedagogical leadership are the most commonly identified leadership functions, including ECE directors' responsibility for managing change and quality improvement (Douglass, 2019). A study of ECE leaders in Finland, Japan, and Singapore has found that leaders in these three countries considered pedagogical leadership and human resources management as the two most important tasks (Hujala et al., 2016). Research on ECE leadership from Palestine shows that the challenges are similar to those that ECE directors face in other countries, such as financial challenges. Other challenges are connected to cultural factors specific to the Palestinian context and to social and political factors related to leading ECE in conflict areas (Sayma et al., 2022). From the Middle East, we have found research focusing on ECE leadership. The study of Omar (2017) focuses on defining the roles, responsibilities, and skills required of ECE directors in Egypt. Its findings indicate the importance of ECE directors having the basic information and skills for using modern approaches in their planning and administration. Another finding relates to identifying problems and being involved in resolving them. Finally, the study highlights the use of recent approaches and means to motivate staff and utilise their efforts. The findings of the study by Abdel Rasoul (2012) states that the prerequisites for implementing an administrative strategy to develop the administration of directors in Egypt are qualified ECE centre directors, a supportive organisational climate, sufficient financing, and directors' involvement in decision-making related to the centres. The study also identifies problems facing the development of ECE in Egypt, such as the weak administrative and educational qualifications of ECE directors. The study by Al-Shtiehi (2016) investigated the support available to directors from the perspectives of executive leaders in Egypt, with the results showing that there is a low level of support available to ECE directors.

To conclude, the above studies show that ECE directors internationally are involved in multiple leadership functions. In view of the lack of leadership studies in Palestine in times of change, this highlights the necessity of paying attention to leadership responsibilities in order to respond to contemporary expectations and challenges. Taking this into consideration, the research question guiding this study is as follows: What are Palestinian ECE directors' current perceptions of their leadership responsibilities?

Next, we present the theoretical framework and the method, followed by the results of the study. Further, the results are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, with conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is required to investigate leadership responsibilities in ECE. The study argues that the leadership perspective in Adizes (1991) is fruitful for understanding the functions and responsibilities of leadership for directors. According to Adizes (1991), in any organisation there are four leadership functions that are necessary and sufficient to develop the organisation effectively, and it is a leadership responsibility to ensure these functions. The responsibilities relate to the roles of producer, administrator, entrepreneur, and integrator. Scholars have used Adizes' leadership framework and translated Adizes' categories into the leadership responsibilities and functions of directors in ECE (Børhaug & Gotvassli, 2016; Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2016). Adizes (1991) explains leadership functions in the category of **producer** as creating the core results of the organisation. In ECE, this means using pedagogical leadership to lead pedagogical work focusing on children's play, formation, and learning. Leadership functions related to **administrator** embrace planning in detail, coordination, deciding on rules and procedures, and controlling the work in the organisation. In ECE, this means practical administration, finance, documentation, and deciding on the rules and routines for the centre. The functions attached to **entrepreneur** involve creative leadership with a focus on utilising room for manoeuvre so that it is possible for the organisation to meet the demands of the community. In ECE, this means intentional leadership to increase financial resources, market the centre, and make the centre visible in social media. Another important aspect of this category is communication with parents, families, and other

welfare organisations attached to the centre. The last category is **integrator**, which is related to staff leadership and the work of leading staff from thinking and working as individuals to thinking and working as a team. In ECE, this means focusing on professional development, motivating staff in their pedagogical work with children, and resolving staff conflicts. Also, employment and scheduling are important functions within this category. Together, all four functions provide sustainable leadership of the ECE centre. The theoretical framework of leadership functions as producer, administrator, entrepreneur, and integrator will be used here to discuss Palestinian ECE directors' current perceptions of their leadership responsibilities as stated in the data for this study.

Method

This study used a quantitative descriptive research method. The population studied consisted of all Palestinian directors of ECE centres located in the West Bank (WB) and the Gaza Strip (GS). A purposeful sample was selected of 166 directors of ECE centres to serve the purposes of the study using a Google survey technique. The sample consisted of a total of 166 respondents: 118 (71 per cent) from the WB and 48 (29 per cent) from the GS. Of these, 98 (59 per cent) were working as directors only, while 68 (41 per cent) were working as directors and educators at the same time. Furthermore, 61 per cent had a BA and 23 per cent had a BA with a diploma. Directors with only a high school education and diploma,[1] or who had received only workshop training, accounted for 8 per cent. Directors who had an MA accounted for another 8 per cent.

The quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions after its validity was tested by seven experts (referee validity) and its reliability was tested using Cronbach Alfa (0.94). The questionnaire was developed based on open discussion with Palestinian directors (later not included in the sample), related literature and studies, and the rich experiences of the authors in the field. The questionnaire included an introduction, set out the purpose of the study, gave assurance of anonymity (ethical consideration), described how to answer the items, and provided demographic data about the respondents, followed by closed-ended questions relating to the responsibilities of the directors. The seven areas used in the closed-ended questionnaire were responsibilities related to 1) children, 2) the physical environment of the ECE, 3) daily routine and administrative

organisation, 4) parents and the local community, 5) programmes and activities, 6) educators, and, finally, 7) finance. These seven areas are reflected in the theoretical framework. A five-point Likert scale ranging from very little (one point) to very much (five points) was used for answering the closed-ended questions.

In addition, the questionnaire contained an open-ended question in which the respondents were asked to name three to five of the most important responsibilities of directors. The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis. All open-ended answers were read and searched for overlapping themes. Next, they were grouped according to themes of responsibilities (Braun & Clark, 2006). Finally, each category was presented in a table with both how many times the category appears in the material and how often in relation to percentage the category appears.

The questionnaire was administered in July 2020. The identity of the respondents was kept anonymous. The quantitative data collected were analysed using a descriptive statistical analysis in which the qualitative data were summarised, categorised according to themes and the numbers of respondents, and presented according to themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). The results of the study are based on the responses from the sample of directors (166 directors) to the scaled questionnaire (Likert scale of one to five points) and the open-ended question.

All research ethics procedures were followed, including those relating to protecting the identity of the respondents (Žukauskas et al., 2018). The collected data were fully anonymised. The research protocol that explains the nature of the study, the expected role of the respondents, the respondents' rights, and how the questionnaire was documented was discussed in the research team and sent to the potential respondents to look at, enabling them to express their willingness to participate in the study. Those who did not agree did not respond to the questionnaire.

Results

Responsibilities of the Directors in General

Results related to the directors' responses to the scaled questions reflected in seven areas of directors' responsibility as listed in the closed-ended questionnaire. The responsibilities ranked in order from

high to low are related to children (4.53 – very high) and the environment of the kindergarten (4.47), daily routine/administrative work (4.30), parents and community and programmes and activities (4.18 each), and educators (4.14 – about average). However, finance-related responsibility received the lowest level ranking (3.25) (see Table 5.1). Tables 5.2 to 5.8 include details of the responsibilities related to each of the seven areas in the closed-ended questionnaire and Table 5.9 includes the results from the open-ended answers. Finally, Table 5.10 sums up all responsibilities categorised in the four leadership functions of Adizes (1991).

Table 5.1: Responsibilities of ECE leaders ranked in order from high to low.

Ranking	Area of responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Responsibilities related to children	166	4.53	0.54	Very much
2.	Responsibilities related to the physical environment of the kindergarten	166	4.47	0.62	Much
3.	Responsibilities related to daily routine and administrative organisation	166	4.30	0.69	Much
4.	Responsibilities related to parents and the local community	166	4.18	0.74	Much
5.	Responsibilities related to programmes and activities	166	4.18	0.77	Much
6.	Responsibilities related to educators	166	4.14	0.81	Much
7.	Responsibilities related to finance	166	3.25	1.28	Average
Overall	-	166	4.15	0.78	Much

Areas of Leadership Responsibility

There are seven identified areas of responsibility based on the directors' responses to the scaled questions. These are ranked in order from high to low as: children, environment, daily routine work, parents/community, programmes and activities, educators and, finally, finance. Areas of leadership responsibilities are presented in detail in tables 5.2 to 5.8. The findings are discussed in the discussion and conclusion section.

Table 5.2: R1 directors' responsibilities related to children ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Observe what the children eat and buy (food and drinks)	166	4.64	0.80	Very much
2.	Resolve children's behaviour problems	166	4.56	0.62	Very much
3.	Follow the children's files, their growth, and development	166	4.49	0.78	Much
4.	Encourage and invite children to enrol in kindergarten	166	4.42	0.99	Much
Overall	-	166	4.53	0.54	Very much

Table 5.3: R2 directors' responsibilities related to the kindergarten's physical environment ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Make sure there is a safe environment for the children	166	4.82	0.48	Very much
2.	Ensure the cleanliness of the kindergarten health facilities (bathrooms, rooms, halls, offices …)	166	4.80	0.63	Very much
3.	Work towards improving the physical environment of the kindergarten	166	4.43	0.97	Much
4.	Strive for a suitable environment for children with disabilities in the kindergarten	166	3.83	1.52	Much
Overall	-	166	4.47	0.62	Much

Table 5.4: R3 directors' responsibilities related to daily/routine work of the kindergarten ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Follow up problems that occur in the kindergarten and work at resolving them	166	4.74	0.60	Very much
2.	Follow up the practice/implementation of quality assurance criteria	166	4.56	0.80	Very much
3.	Supervise and monitor the web page of the kindergarten	166	4.51	1.08	Very much
4.	Prepare and organise the daily schedule of the kindergarten	166	4.47	0.87	Much
5.	Supervise the daily administrative issues of the kindergarten	166	4.43	1.07	Much
6.	Organise activities for promoting the kindergarten and its programmes	166	4.34	1.10	Much
7.	Attend and participate in symposiums, conferences, and workshops relating to kindergartens	166	4.16	1.29	Much
8.	Enforce rules and regulations to organise routine work	166	4.11	1.03	Much
9.	Submit reports to those in charge/owners or to outside entities with an interest in children and kindergarten affairs	166	3.33	1.75	Much
Overall	-	166	4.33	0.69	Much

Table 5.5: R4 directors' responsibilities related to parents and the local community ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Communicate continuously/regularly with parents and guardians	166	4.56	0.87	Very much
2.	Give feedback to parents about their children's growth and development	166	4.44	0.93	Much
3.	Communicate with formal and non-formal institutes in the local community	166	3.87	1.16	Much
4.	Be knowledgeable about the resources available in the local community and how to benefit from them	166	3.84	1.12	Much
Overall	-	166	4.18	0.74	Much

Table 5.6: R5 directors' responsibilities related to programmes and activities ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Supervise the development of activities and programmes in kindergarten	166	4.55	0.77	Very much
2.	Develop and initiate new professional projects	166	3.81	1.16	Much
Overall	-	166	4.18	0.77	Much

Table 5.7: R6 directors' responsibilities related to ECE educators ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Distribute assignments and responsibilities among educators	166	4.57	0.87	Very much
2.	Furnish educators with guidance and advice on how to deal with children	166	4.46	0.90	Very much
3.	Encourage educators to undertake professional development and facilitate this	166	4.46	0.91	Very much
4.	Follow up educators' daily administrative work	166	4.42	0.95	Very much
5.	Evaluate educators' work in productive, educational ways	166	4.40	0.97	Very much
6.	Enhance the social relationship between the director and the educators and among the educators themselves	166	4.38	0.95	Very much
7.	Have consideration and respect for educators' psychological and professional situation/conditions	166	4.37	0.88	Very much
8.	Follow up educators' daily education work	166	4.30	0.92	Very much
9.	Share social and personal occasions with educators	166	4.10	1.11	Much
10.	Select educators for employment in the kindergarten	166	3.82	1.65	Much
11.	Give incentives (moral and material) to educators to encourage outstanding work	166	3.62	1.50	Much

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
12.	Take decisions to renew educators' contract and continue their work	166	3.57	1.70	Much
13.	Define and supervise educators' and assistants' responsibilities and roles	166	3.31	1.92	Much
Overall	-	166	4.14	0.81	Much

Table 5.8: R7 Directors' responsibilities related to finance ranked from high to low.

Ranking	Responsibility	N	M	SD	Degree
1.	Follow financial issues: buying and expenses	166	4.01	1.62	Much
2.	Seek external financial support for the kindergarten	166	3.01	1.82	Low
3.	Determine the salaries of educators and other staff	166	2.74	2.05	Low
Overall	-	166	3.25	1.28	Low

In responding to the open-ended question, the directors wrote 380 responses related to their responsibilities. These are grouped into 11 areas (Table 5.9). The responses to the open-ended question show 11 areas of responsibility as referred to by the directors themselves. These are, in rank order, related to educators, yearly/monthly and daily schedules, children, ECE facilities, the inside physical environment of the ECE facilities, financial issues, parents, a suitable physical environment, the web page, administration/individuals in charge, and the local community.

Finally, we use Adizes' (1991) leadership framework to categorise the findings regarding the ECE directors' perceptions of their everyday leadership responsibilities and their prioritisation of tasks. In Table 5.10, we have organised the results within the seven domains from the closed-ended questionnaire, with the average score and the open-ended response regarding the most important responsibilities of directors with percentages. All these are categorised within the four leadership functions: producer, administrator, entrepreneur, and integrator.

Table 5.9: Frequencies and percentages of the responsibilities of the directors as stated by themselves in response to the open-ended question listed in the questionnaire in rank order from high to low.

Ranking	Types of responsibilities of directors	F	%
1.	Provide technical and educational supervision of edu-cators' work, follow their pro-fessional development, and give them guidance and support	65	17.10
2.	Prepare yearly, monthly, and daily plans and class schedules, and plan for internal and external activi-ties	56	14.70
3.	Observe the children's needs and their health, psy-chological, and behavioural problems	46	12.10
4.	Oversee the kindergarten facilities: canteens, yards, and classrooms	42	11.10
5.	Organise the physical environment and oversee issues of cleanliness, tidiness, and safety	34	8.95
6.	Oversee administrative and financial matters (prepare reports and organise ex-penditures, fee payments, and daily work)	31	8.20
7.	Follow up with parents: regular direct and electronic communication with parents and engaging them in planning and implementing activities and resolving problems	29	7.60
8.	Secure a suitable environment for children's health and social-psychological situa-tions	28	7.40
9.	Oversee the web page of the kindergarten and pro-mote it using social media	21	5.50
10.	Communicate with those in charge of the kindergar-ten and submit reports to them	15	3.95
11.	Maintain communication with the local community and obtain financial and social support	13	3.40
Total	-	380	100

Table 5.10: All responsibilities with scale ranging and percentages categorised in the four leadership functions of Adizes (1991).

Role	Responsibility	Likert score (1–5) or percentage
Producer	Responsibilities related to children	4.53
	Responsibilities related to programmes and activities	4.18
	Observe the children's needs and their health, psychological, and behavioural problems	12.10%
	Prepare yearly, monthly, and daily plans and class schedules, and plan for internal and external activities	14.70%
Administrator	Responsibilities related to finance	3.25
	Responsibilities related to daily routine and administrative organisation	4.30
	Responsibilities related to the physical environment of the kindergarten	4.47
	Oversee the kindergarten facilities: canteens, yards, and classrooms	11.10%
	Organise the physical environment and oversee issues of cleanliness, tidiness, and safety	8.95%
	Oversee administrative and financial matters (prepare reports and organise expenditures, fee payments, and daily work)	8.20%
	Communicate with those in charge of the kindergarten and submit reports to them	3.95%
Entrepreneur	Responsibilities related to parents and the local community	4.18
	Follow up with parents: regular direct and electronic communication with parents and engaging them in planning and implementing activities and resolving problems	7.60%
	Secure a suitable environment for children's health and social-psychological situations	7.40%
	Oversee the web page of the kindergarten and promote it using social media	5.50%
	Maintain communication with the local community and obtain financial and social support	3.40%
Integrator	Responsibilities related to educators	4.14
	Provide technical and educational supervision of educators' work, follow their professional development, and give them guidance and support	17.10%

In the following section, we discuss the findings in each category in relation to producer, administrator, entrepreneur, and integrator. Further, in these different functions, the findings are discussed in relation to literature and research.

Discussion

Producer

The directors' most important responsibilities from their point of view relate to the children. Responsibilities for children are scored as high as a 4.53 average score. These include responsibility for the children's growth and development, for resolving children's behaviour problems, and also for what the children eat and drink during the day. Further, yearly, monthly, and daily planning and planning on internal and external activities and class schedules are responsibilities that 14.7 per cent of the directors prioritise in the open-ended answers, which emphasises their responsibilities for teaching and learning. In addition to observing the children's needs and their health, directors emphasise psychological and behavioural problems. These findings demonstrate the directors' awareness of their role as pedagogical leaders who—by their actions, speech, or otherwise—promote pedagogical activity (Lahtinen, 2017) and provide a high-quality programme for the children's learning, all-round development, and well-being. Pedagogical leadership in respect of teaching and learning, curriculum, and pedagogy are currently high on the political agenda globally (OECD, 2019). Supporting all children so that they can learn and develop to their full potential is a core leadership responsibility. According to Modise (2019), the most important task a director can perform is the advancement and improvement of the learning context so that it is of a high quality. Several studies state that leadership is a key factor in influencing the quality of ECE and describe how leadership affects the pedagogical functioning of multi-professional staff as well as professional development (Waniganayake et al., 2015). Modise (2019) argues that for current leadership to be evident in ECE, pedagogical leadership must be more precise in its approach. Findings indicate that pedagogical leadership, given its concern with context, children, parents, and pedagogical development, requires a shared understanding of ECE practices in order to be able to enact pedagogical leadership (Heikka, 2014).

Administrator

When we categorised the responsibilities according to the four leadership functions, most of the responsibilities belonged to the administrator category even if they did not get the highest score or percentage. However, several tasks stand out. Overseeing ECE facilities, such as the canteens, yards, and classrooms, and issues relating to cleanliness, tidiness, and safety, as well as organising the physical environment, seeing to administrative and financial matters, coordinating the daily work, and ensuring a suitable environment for the children's health and social-psychological situations, are all perceived as everyday administrative leadership responsibilities. While pedagogical leadership requires a shift from focusing solely on administrative leadership (Modise, 2019), the findings show that there are not always sharp distinctions between these tasks, as administrative leadership refers to leadership operations that facilitate and safeguard appropriate conditions for children's learning, development, and well-being. Also, Douglass (2019) points out that administrative leadership and pedagogical leadership are the most commonly identified leadership functions.

Nonetheless, research has highlighted a concern about the administrative workload (Bøe et al., 2020; Douglass, 2019; Elomaa et al., 2020; OECD, 2019; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). Specifically, these concerns relate to administrative tasks preventing directors from assuming pedagogical leadership. The Palestinian directors' perception of their responsibilities indicates that, in practice, they are highly engaged in administrative functions that require a balancing of competing tasks. Findings from a study of ECE directors in Finland, Japan, and Singapore show that it was difficult to find the time to adequately engage in both administrative and pedagogical leadership tasks because of the multiple demands directors face in their daily work (Hujala et al., 2016). Similarly, Al-Ahmari's (2017) study indicates that directors do their work according to the reality of the centres, the available resources, and the rules and regulations imposed by higher administration. The wide range of areas of responsibility identified in the current study indicates that directors must deal with multiple competing tasks. According to Tengblad (2012, p. 348), everyday leadership is characterised by work pressures and a hectic work pace, uncertainty, ambiguity, and interruptions, where leaders must respond to immediate problems and adapt to the situation. The

findings in this study draw attention to the significance of the reality of leadership and thus suggest a need for further exploration of leadership as social practice.

Entrepreneur

In this category, responsibilities relate to regular contact with parents and the local community. This includes giving feedback to parents about their children's growth and development. As part of the total amount of the workload, the frequency of following up with parents has an average score. This relates to maintaining regular direct and electronic communication with the parents and engaging them in planning, implementing activities, and resolving problems. This category also includes the directors' communication with formal and nonformal institutes locally. According to the directors, their emphasis is on knowledge of the local resources available and how to benefit from them.

An important task in the entrepreneur category is profiling and marketing. Maintaining the centre's web page and using social media to promote it are part of the directors' responsibilities, as is communicating with those who are in charge of the centre and submitting reports to them. These findings coincide with two of the strategies that Børhaug and Lotsberg (2010) found in their study on how Norwegian directors are involved in external leadership: profiling and visualisation of the centre and measures to link parents more closely to the centre. Similarly, a national Norwegian review concluded that there is much to suggest that ECE directors are assuming complex and growing leadership responsibilities and extended these leadership responsibilities to leading relationships with the environment (the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2018) (see also OECD, 2019).

With the acknowledgment (Janta et al., 2016; Melhuish et al., 2015) of the importance of ECE as something beneficial for all children's successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and, later, employability, collaboration with different stakeholders is important to provide resources and structures for pedagogical leadership and development. In this case, Heikka (2014) argues that leadership responsibility should be distributed between different stakeholders at the macro and centre levels as a prerequisite to improvement and the development of efficient pedagogical leadership.

Integrator

It is evident that ECE directors have many responsibilities related to educators, although staff leadership tasks are ranked second lowest. This can be seen in the responsibility for defining and supervising educators' and assistants' responsibilities and roles, as it is scored at just 3.31 (see Table 5.7), which is the lowest except for scores connected to responsibilities for finance. Leadership responsibility in this category varies between defining staff job responsibilities and following up on staff and their professional development. The highest scores are for responsibility for distributing assignments and responsibilities among educators, and for furnishing educators with guidance and advice on how to deal with children. The third highest scored responsibility is to encourage educators to undertake professional development and to facilitate this. Nevertheless, the most frequent responsibility in the open-ended answers refers to the directors as the technical and educational supervisors of educators' work, following up on their professional development and providing guidance and support (17.10 per cent). One way that leadership might improve pedagogical work is through its influence on and support for professional development. Studies suggest that directors' leadership influences a set of practices that may have a positive impact on children's learning, development, and well-being. These practices include supporting staff professional development and learning, engaging staff in decision-making and leading change, and creating structures to enable teachers to collaborate and plan for improvement (Douglass, 2019, p. 23).

Studies from Palestine indicate challenges in the ECE sector in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as ECE teachers are not all specialists and have a low awareness of effective ECE teaching and learning practices (Khales, 2015; Sayma et al., 2022). Many teachers end up in the education sector because they do not believe there are alternative job opportunities. Low salaries and low status mean that teaching is not an attractive profession, leading to a high rate of teacher turnover. Few professional development opportunities exist for individuals who want to become specialised in preschool education and in-service training, which means that most teachers continue to use poor pedagogical methods (Khales, 2015; Sayma et al., 2022). These findings suggest that the leadership of ECE directors plays a central role in developing staff,

building a culture of collaboration and reflection, and improving the quality of teaching by strengthening the existing workforce.

Conclusion

ECE directors in Palestine take on leadership responsibilities for a wide range of areas and functions that are necessary for the effective development of the organisation. The responsibilities reported in this study reinforce existing findings about the importance of leadership to ECE centres and thus fully recognise the director's role in securing and safeguarding the organisation's goals and core responsibilities. Moreover, the study has provided valuable information about how directors perceive their everyday leadership responsibilities, which is of great value in further developing the quality of ECE to support children's learning, all-round development, and well-being. Additionally, to improve quality it is essential to recruit directors and keep them in their job, as well as to evaluate their leadership. According to the evaluation form of ECE directors' leadership responsibilities reported by the Palestine Ministry of Education, key responsibilities are planning, supervision, following up on professional growth, children's education, relationships, and communication (Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2018). Our findings add to this evaluation by suggesting that administrative leadership tasks and following up on staff are everyday leadership responsibilities that form a large part of directors' work. As this is the first comprehensive study on the responsibilities of Palestinian ECE directors, we believe that its results are a useful contribution that will assist other researchers in the conduct of further studies, particularly when stakeholders continue to improve the work in ECE by regulating ECE policies. As this study took place at a time of rapid development in Palestinian education in general and in ECE education specifically, the results of the study will help the ministry in developing the responsibilities of ECE directors based on certain theoretical frameworks that suit the Palestinian context, support ECE supervisors to look at the functions of the directors, support and guide ECE centres directors, and evaluate their functions. It will also be an available reference to students majoring in ECE, to ECE directors, and to educators.

There are no studies without limitations, and this applies to this one too. Our study is limited to descriptive research that depends on

questionnaires, with no face-to-face interviews, either individually or in groups of directors, which could enrich and deepen the results of the study. No observations were conducted as part of the study methodology. Further, the study focused solely on the perspective of the ECE directors on their responsibilities and excluded consideration of how ECE educators, supervisors, parents, and officials perceive their responsibilities. We encourage other researchers to follow up this study both in Palestine and around the world, seeking a deeper understanding of the leadership of ECE directors to acquire greater insights by way of exploring leadership responsibilities using other perspectives and in-depth qualitative methods.

Notes

1 A two-year programme offered after candidates completed high school with grades too low to enable them to enrol in a bachelor's degree programme or where they did not want to study for four years.

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CHAPTER 6

Leadership in Irish Early Childhood Education and Care
In Pursuit of Purpose and Possibilities

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Abstract

In recent years, the Irish government has introduced several mandatory leadership roles for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. This chapter outlines the development, delineation, and [un] intended consequences of such positions and the potential to pursue leadership beyond the prescribed roles. It draws from my research, a social feminism exploration of ECEC leadership, which questioned how leadership is conceptualised and practised in Irish ECEC services. The research involved individual interviews with 50 Irish ECEC participants. The participants argued that leadership was introduced to the sector without discussion, research, or adequate training, and was more concerned with economics and standardisation than with ECEC stakeholders' welfare. This situation had created leadership confusion, and had marginalised practitioner knowledge and weakened their confidence in articulating their understanding of leadership and its purpose. Scholarship in the broader educational leadership field suggests that the purpose of leadership is seldom questioned and often remains ambiguous. While this chapter makes specific reference to the

Irish context, the findings and research approach may be relevant for the wider ECEC community.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, leadership, non-leadership, pedagogy, inclusion, governance

Introduction

Internationally, the growing political and economic focus on early childhood education and care (ECEC) has led to numerous changes in ECEC policies and legislation, and increased accountability and financial constraints (European Commission, 2015; Heckman, 2017; OECD, 2015). These reforms have created responsibilities and challenges for leaders in ECEC settings, often far beyond their training and expertise (Gibbs et al., 2019). Leadership research for this sector is considered sparse, inadequately theorised, and difficult to locate (Nicholson et al., 2018). There have been calls (Douglass, 2019; Modise, 2019) to develop effective leadership training for ECEC staff. There is a paucity of leadership capacity in the sector (Nicholson et al., 2018), and the continued requests internationally to define the roles associated with ECEC leadership suggest leadership may be a confused and challenging activity in settings (Inoue & Kawakita, 2019; Klevering & McNae, 2018; Rodd, 2013; Sims et al., 2018).

In an Irish context, the government has created mandatory ECEC leadership roles, all introduced without discussion with ECEC stakeholders (practitioners, lecturers, and professional organisations), an absence of research, and inadequate training for management/leadership (Moloney & Pettersen, 2017). This chapter outlines the development, delineation, and [un]intentional consequences of mandatory leadership roles and discusses the possibilities for leadership beyond these positions. It draws from my research (Nolan, 2021) on a social feminism exploration of ECEC leadership (Eisenstein, 1979), which questioned how leadership is conceptualised and practised in Irish ECEC services. The study involved individual interviews with 50 Irish ECEC participants. While this chapter makes specific reference to the Irish context, the findings and research approach may have relevance for the wider ECEC community. The chapter commences with background information on Irish ECEC, a summary of leadership development in the sector, and an outline of the research design, and then discusses the effect of the prescribed roles on the participants' concep-

tualisation of leadership. Finally, it explores the purpose and possibilities of leadership beyond the prescribed positions.

Situating the Study

Currently, ECEC in Ireland includes programmes for preschool and after-school care. Programmes can be sessional, full days, specifically for children with special needs, and private or publicly funded. Pobal (2019) estimates that there are 206,301 children enrolled in early years and after-school services and 30,775 staff working in the sector; 87 per cent of staff work directly with children and 98 per cent of all ECEC staff are female.

The 2016 Preschool Regulations introduced a minimum requirement of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for ECEC practitioners, and 94 per cent are now qualified to this level (Pobal, 2019). In 2016, Ireland spent the second-lowest amount on education for three- to five-year-olds in the OECD, as a percentage of GDP (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2020).

The history of Irish ECEC is relatively new; until 1973, there was a limited requirement for ECEC, as there was a ban on Irish married women working. In 1991, the Childcare Act was introduced (DOH, 1991). However, it was not until 2006 that the word 'leadership' appeared in the policy document *Síolta, the Irish Early Childhood Quality Framework* (CECDE, 2006a).

Development of Irish ECEC Leadership

Síolta (CECDE, 2006a) was influenced by the New Zealand Early Education Model Te Whāriki (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011). However, Síolta excluded the idea of leadership as outlined in Te Whāriki. Síolta refers to leadership in the context of management: leaders must ensure 'effective' implementation of policies and procedures, and leaders must 'model what leaders do' (CECDE, 2006b, p. 5). Unfortunately, Síolta fails to explain what leaders do. The terms 'manager' and 'management', not 'leadership', are repeatedly used in policy documents (DES, 2016a). Nevertheless, without consulting the ECEC workforce (Neylon, 2012), a free preschool year for children (between two years and eight months and five years) was introduced for three hours, five days a week, over the 38-week school year (DCYA, 2010).

Similarly, a second free year was announced in 2015. This move was described as 'ill-thought through and deceptive'. It did not recognise the real investment needs of the sector, and 'the populist measure was easy to say but [came] without any rigorous thought on investment in an area in need of substantial reform' (Hayes, see Hilliard, *Irish Times*, 15 October 2015). The free preschool year(s) requirements included introducing a room leader with a qualification of level 6 on the NFQ in each setting. A room leader was a prerequisite to receiving the government capitation for the free year(s) (Walsh, 2018).

In 2013, the government recommended developing leadership capacity in the sector (DCYA, 2013; DES, 2013), and by 2016 the Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) tool was introduced (DES, 2016b). Essentially, an EYEI inspector focuses on the processes and practices relating to the quality of management and leadership for learning (DES, 2018). However, the EYEI policy document states: 'Management within the setting provides for a high-quality learning and development experience for children' (DES, 2016b, p.26).

Similarly, a leadership role was created as part of the ECEC Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). This model was launched to support access to the free preschool year(s) for children with a disability (DCYA, 2016). The model was underpinned by Leadership for INClusion (LINC), a level 6 Special Purpose Award (Higher Education). However, within the LINC document (LINC, 2019), the person undertaking leadership for inclusion is referred to as an inclusion coordinator (INCO). The coordinator is supported by Better Start Access AIM specialists who offer 'expert advice, mentoring, and support' (DCYA, 2016, p. 1). In short, there are now four leadership roles identified for the sector: leadership for learning (DES), leadership for Inclusion (DCYA), room leader (DCYA), and leader/manager to oversee the administration of the universal free preschool scheme and government support for affordable childcare (Tusla, Pobal). This brief outline depicts an ECEC sector that at the commencement of my research (2015) was fragmented and 'scattered … complicated and difficult to navigate' (European Commission, 2015, p. 60).

The precarious nature of the Irish ECEC workforce has been documented by the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) as a 'profession living in poverty … [where] low pay and a lack of basic entitlements predominate', and where '84% are unable to cope with unexpected expenses, like replacing a washing machine. Just 11%

get paid maternity leave from work, even though 98% of educators are women' (SIPTU, 2019, p. 5). There is little leadership research, training, and support for the sector, and there have been calls to develop leadership (cf. DCYA, 2013; DES, 2013). For these reasons, I considered it an appropriate time to explore how leadership was conceptualised and practised in the settings and the supports for leadership. The aim of the research (Nolan, 2021) also included exploring the emancipatory potential of leadership 'to look at what could be' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 373) and how the 'could be' may offer the practitioners the means to address their working conditions.

Research Design

The research (interviews and analysis) supporting this chapter was conducted as part of a PhD thesis (Nolan, 2021). Fifty participants were selected using a purposeful sampling approach (Merriam, 1998). One of the key objectives of the study was to access a broad range of participants (maximum variation sample), looking for participants with specific experiences (critical case sample) and particular expertise in the sector (key informant sample) (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). The participants spanned the sector's layers: practitioners (practitioners, school owners, school managers) (18), representatives of professional organisations (10), lecturers (8), and government representatives (4) (4 government departments overseeing the sector). In this qualitative interview study (Creswell, 2013), the semi-structured interviews were conducted in the interviewees' place of work (except for two, conducted via phone) and lasted an average of 60–90 minutes. Interviewees were questioned on how they understood leadership and its purpose and practice, and the supports in place for leadership in the ECEC sector.

Questions included how to develop leadership in the sector, and how the potential leadership could hold to bring the diverse group of practitioners together to address their working conditions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, manually coded, and coded with the aid of a CAQDA software package—HyperRESEARCH. A socialist feminist perspective—Dual Systems Theory (Eisenstein, 1979)—guided the study and provided conceptual tools for the analysis. It was anticipated that examining the interlocking capitalist class structure and the 'hierarchical sexual structuring of society' (capitalist patriarchy), including the ideologies (the stereotypes, myths, and ideas which

define their roles) surrounding the practitioners and their engagement with leadership, would reveal the dynamic power systems/structures determining their situation and potential emancipation (Eisenstein 1979, p. 115). In contrast, it could be argued that this socialist feminist perspective is over 40 years old and outdated. However, the recent claims that the current 'brutal economic realities of globalization' make it impossible to ignore class and gender (Gordon, 2016, p. 234) and that the time is right for a favourable reconsideration of the socialist feminist perspective (Brenner, 2014; Fraser, 2016) supported the decision to use this approach.

Clarke and Braun's (2013) understanding of thematic analysis also framed the research, and an adaptive approach took account of the existing theoretical framework and any new ideas that emerged. The analysis involved manual coding and using CAQDA software packages, HyperRESEARCH 3.75 and the updated version 4.0., to search across the data set 'to find repeated patterns of meaning' (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p. 85). After several cyclical and iterative analyses of stages of interpreting and making sense of the data, reporting, and displaying (Miles et al., 2014) themes found, six themes were identified. The themes related to leadership (better before), leadership in practice (managerialism), the problem(s) with leadership (gender, class, care), and (the focus of this chapter) the purpose of and the possibilities for ECEC leadership. There is always the possibility of causing harm and stress to the research participants. Consequently, this study adhered to the School of Education (Trinity College Dublin) and their research ethics guidelines (TCD, 2016). There were limitations with this research: the lack of a register of Irish ECEC employees limited the scope of this study and prevented the employment of a mixed-method research design. The difficulty of acquiring documentation on ECEC policy may have resulted in gaps in the policy analysis. Moreover, the most significant limitation was the absence of the parents' and children's voices.

Findings and Discussion: The Delineation of Leadership

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the various categories of participants (practitioners, lecturers, government, and professional organisations) presuppose innate homogeneity within each category. Nonetheless, there was such homogeneity, and this chapter describes

the majority conceptualisation of leadership within each group. Many of the participants in the study considered the assortment and confusing nature of leadership roles to be symptomatic of a fragmented sector. A network of 10+ government departments and their subsidiary organisations, each responsible for some aspect of the childcare sector, all follow different and often conflicting policy agendas (Urban et al., 2017) and leadership requirements. One of the practitioners in the study advised:

> It is the government's understanding of leadership that is the problem. The education-focused inspections talk about leadership, but no one knows what they want—what is their understanding of leadership … no one knows …We need to know what it is before we can do it; we have no job description, no information, there is no actual connection between what the government is asking for and the information on the ground. (Practitioner D1: 3975,4175)

The Irish government's failure to delineate the 'key participants' roles and responsibilities' and to clarify 'what is actually expected of practitioners' (DES, 2016c, p.49) may have contributed to leadership confusion in the sector. Moreover, the non-government participants described the challenge of understanding and engaging with leadership in a sector excluded from the governments' discussion, job description, and objectives (the purpose) for the prescribed leadership roles. This situation may not be unique to Ireland or to ECEC, as the purpose of leadership is rarely questioned in the wider educational leadership field and remains ambiguous (Blackmore, 1999; Kempster et al., 2011).

The Irish government has a tradition of introducing policy (Neylon, 2012; Moloney, 2016), including changing the sector's name (Nolan, 2021), without any consultation with ECEC stakeholders. Urban et al. (2017) have described Irish ECEC as a 'highly fragmented sector with a multitude of actors following diverse practice and policy agendas, and pursuing often contradictory interests' (p. 10). One of the school owners explained:

> We have an individualistic sector, every man (*sic*) for themselves; there is no connection between organisations, government departments, and the schools on the ground. Without connections and communication, leadership at any level cannot thrive. (School Owner D3: 836986,7249)

On the other hand, the government representatives had no difficulty describing the purpose of leadership.

Pedagogical Leadership, Leadership for Inclusion, and Governance

The government representatives described leadership roles as essential to ensure quality learning and affordable, accessible, and inclusive ECEC for parents and children. Pedagogical leadership was understood as a micro phenomenon and an approach to teaching and learning, and is reflected in the literature (Heikka et al., 2018). The absence of the term 'pedagogical leadership' from the remainder of the participants may be symptomatic of the confusion internationally (Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020), where the amalgamation of pedagogy and leadership requires further examination (Male & Palaiologou, 2015). The participants claimed that level 6 was not adequate training for leadership for inclusion (LINC). The one size fits all approach to inclusion neglects children's individual needs and equality of participation (Oireachtas, 2017).

The government representatives claimed that leadership could and should be regulated, and they expressed confidence in leadership for governance; standardisation and accountability would result in transparent governance and a rise in ECEC quality (OECD, 2015). Government Representative A4 stated:

> We are partisan; we have to be forced into doing anything we do, what is best practice—so we are looking at [leadership] inspections to ensure this … Look, you could argue the sector is overregulated; you now have the education-focused inspection, but in all of this, nothing will happen if they are not held accountable for leadership. (Gov A4: 19560, 20005)

This view was at odds with many non-government participants who, in line with the literature, proposed that leadership involved autonomy and was context specific (Hujala, 2013). Government representatives conceptualised leadership as a role with a particular purpose to oversee pedagogy, coordinate inclusion, and manage governance, all of which were considered by the other participants to be more concerned with management and economics than with the child's welfare:

At the end of the day, it's as simple as this, what we think, what we want, and do is not considered important and is definitely at odds with the government. They want quality inclusive childcare that is affordable and can be managed and controlled … let's call it what it is—just more work for a manager, but we need a form of leadership that involves genuine relationships, collaboration, and working towards a shared goal … the care and education of the child. (School Owner D4: 6039,6222)

[Un]intended Consequences of the Leadership Roles

Zhao (2018) refers to the unforeseen negative consequences of government policies as [un]intended consequences. In this vein, the participants described the side effects of the prescribed leadership roles. The side effects included a blurring of the distinction between 1) leadership and management and 2) leadership concerned with economics and leadership for the welfare and development of the child.

The [un]intended consequence of delineating leadership as a generic role or roles, the purpose of which was quality (learning and governance) assurance and value for money, had blurred the lines between management and leadership. One of the lecturers described how 'management is how leadership is now' (Lecturer B8: 26317,26440). Similarly, in the literature, Ozga (2000) explains how managerialism (a mode of governance embedded in the principles of market dynamics, accountability, and enhanced productivity (Lynch, 2014)), had become the 'official version of leadership' (p. 355). The participants perceived a disjuncture between value for money (what counts) and values (what matters)—primarily the care and welfare of the child:

Really, this leadership is just about getting people to do more work; it's more work for us, and really, it's management with a different name. It doesn't involve doing anything that makes the lives of the children and ourselves any better, it's all about getting more work out of us, and no extra pay, and there is nothing in it for the child either. (School Owner D: 8393,8961)

Moreover, the absence of a conversation on ECEC leadership's purpose had enabled the government's conceptualisation of leadership to oversee quality, affordable, and accessible childcare to infiltrate and domi-

nate the sector. The participants (lecturers and professional organisation representatives) proposed that a form of leadership underpinned by research, critical thinking, knowledge, and networking could identify and address the varied issues in ECEC, including the practitioners' working conditions. While the practitioners acknowledged the value of such interventions, they were unwilling to align with the current leadership roles:

> Leadership in the sector is fantasy …You know what it's like. It's all about parents and work. I don't know if anyone understands that babies and toddlers, but especially babies, depend on a caregiver for their safety and security; there is no 'meas' [respect/esteem in Irish] [for] training, paying or helping the early years practitioner to work with this age group and the little ones lose out—it's not right. It is worrying that all they talk about is affordable childcare; this is not what we are about and not what we want to be linked with. (Practitioner D4(a): 7604,7966)

An analysis of the interviews revealed the power relations governing the practitioners' relationship with leadership (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 115) and brought the practitioners' ideas, concerns, and vision to the fore. The government's prescribed leadership roles and their commodified understanding of care (affordable childcare) were incompatible with the practitioners' classed and gendered (Eisenstein, 1979—Dual System Theory) conceptualisation of care. Care (physical, social, and emotional) as a value position was considered necessary for the child and relationships, and essential in developing an active and collaborative process, with a shared language and purpose, underpinned by their experiences, everyday knowledge, and values. The lack of recognition and respect for 'care' as an axiom and fundamental mode of praxis in ECEC had marginalised practitioner knowledge. It had weakened their confidence in articulating and positioning care as central to the purpose of ECEC and ECEC leadership. Furthermore, they considered care to be the antidote to the neoliberal care[less] sector—the missing link in prioritising the child over affordable childcare and highlighting the importance of their work and working conditions:

> Well, we are going to have to look at it all differently, new ways of doing things—the old ones haven't worked—new ways of looking at leadership and new ways of looking at care, we spend all our time looking at education, and we have lost care. Reconsidering care is the way, the only

way we are going to make sure that everybody is looked after, we feel good about our work, and I think it is the way to getting better recognition and respect. (Practitioner E1: 2061,2213)

As such, it was difficult to ascertain whether the practitioners' description of a collaborative process involved leadership, leadership was part of a set of collaborative and participatory tools, or there was a hesitancy in accepting leadership as a distinct phenomenon:

What is leadership? It's all talk, all this talk about it, it's just noise … if you don't know what it means, then how can you do it or how can we even be talking about developing capacity in the area? (Professional organisational representative C2: 1075,1452)

Most of the participants agreed that leadership was a responsibility—a moral act built around the common good, involving purpose, values, care (Bøe & Hognestad, 2016), and beliefs of the organisation (Hujala, 2013)—and was central to the welfare of the next generation (Palestini, 2012; Sergiovanni, 1996; Wright, 2001). The non-government participants, in general, extended beyond the notion that leadership involves an individual or a process of influence over another (Avolio et al., 2004), past a task-oriented leadership and towards a relationship-oriented leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006). However, the participants considered a commitment to relationships and critical reflexivity, responsibility, networking, and new ways of looking at care as a prerequisite and a leadership requirement. These aspirations align with Moss and Urban's (2010) notion of experimental and democratic education, which promotes critical thinking, care, social justice, collaboration, and a 'willingness to … try out new ways of doing things' as 'more of the same is no longer an option' (p. 1). This causes us to ask whether the participants' ideas are generic and applicable to education, advocacy, and social justice and, if so, whether perhaps leadership may not be a distinct phenomenon. Similarly, the practitioners' request for an interactive, democratic, and active process to unite people together with 'a common interest' (Järvilehto, 1996, as cited in Nivala, 1998, p. 53), to develop a shared language and identify what needs to be done currently—a purpose—are congruent with the notion of collaborative communities (Adler & Heckscher, 2018), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and participatory communication (Freire, 1996).

Simultaneously, the lecturers proposed that leadership required what Blackmore et al. (2014) describe as a set of thinking tools and conceptualised leadership as a tool to promote critical reflexivity. This process involved evaluating policy and the capacity to call power relations and hegemonic dimensions into question (Brookfield, 2009). Does it follow that leadership understood as a thinking and sense-making tool could be an occasional, context- or situation-specific dynamic rather than a perpetual state in the relationship? Such a perspective might pose questions about when 'leadership is needed or helpful and not' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 15). Nevertheless, the practitioners' idea of active questioning and analysing advances critical reflection into action and may align with leadership as a purposeful activity (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008).

Kempster et al. (2011) have argued that purpose is central to leadership, and they cite Vaill's (1983) understanding of 'purposing as a continual flow of actions that generate the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment' (p. 29). Could it be argued that the practitioners' understanding of identifying and acting on a shared purpose is ultimately a collaborative sense-making activity? Or could this be, by any other name, leadership? This understanding could begin to align the participants' (practitioners, lecturers, and professional organisation representatives) conceptualisations of leadership and move past the government's prescribed leadership roles—to oversee pedagogy, coordinate inclusion, and manage governance—to a process that brings people together to collaborate, identify, and make sense of their situation, a process of critical 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1996, p. 36). It would seem there were more questions than answers at the end of the research (Nolan, 2021).

Conclusion

The research (Nolan, 2021) explored how leadership was conceptualised and practised, the support in place for leadership, and the potential leadership could hold in drawing together Irish ECEC practitioners to address their working conditions. A socialist feminist perspective informed this research, and 50 ECEC stakeholders were interviewed in a qualitative interview study. The non-government participants found it challenging to articulate the purpose of ECEC leadership in a sector where there were multiple understandings of leadership emanating

from a network of disjointed government departments and organisations. The government representatives described the prescribed leadership roles (pedagogy, inclusion, governance, room leader) as the purpose of ECEC leadership. The remaining non-government participants advised that these roles were primarily concerned with management. This group suggested that managerialism had become the new leadership and that the purpose of ECEC and leadership had become blurred in this neoliberal climate.

The participants proposed that a form of leadership—underpinned by research, critical thinking, knowledge, and networking—could identify and address the varied issues in ECEC, including the practitioners' working conditions. However, the practitioners' classed and gendered conceptualisation of care was the focus of their discussion. They considered 'care' to be an axiom and fundamental mode of praxis in ECEC, necessary for the child and relationships and essential to an active collaborative process with the shared goal of prioritising the child over affordable childcare, highlighting the importance of their work and working conditions. As such, it was difficult to ascertain whether the practitioners' description of a collaborative process involved leadership or whether it had the potential to align with the other participants' understanding of leadership.

The following recommendations may begin the process of answering these questions. I recommend, along with other ECEC researchers (Moss, 2014; Urban & Swadener, 2016), that the ECEC sector and governments (including the Irish government) need to engage in a discussion/debate and establish what we mean by childhood, education, and care, including the 'purpose, goals, and values' of ECEC (Urban et al. 2017, p. 54). This discussion needs to establish what defines and bounds ECEC and (Goffin & Washington, 2019) ECEC leadership as a field of practice. Kempster et al. (2011) have advised that without a discourse of 'leadership as purpose' there is a general tendency for the purpose to become overly preoccupied with economics.

I recommend that a feminist perspective should be central to a discussion on 'leadership as purpose'. Feminist researchers have had a key influence on leadership in higher education, secondary, and primary school institutions (Blackmore, 2010a; 2010b). Yet, feminist research and perspectives appear limited in ECEC literature (Davis et al., 2015). Thus, it seems appropriate to engage with feminist proposals, including Dual Systems Theory (capitalist patriarchy) (Eisenstein, 1979) for

researching ECEC leadership. Bruneau (2018) has described capital-ism and patriarchy as one struggle, and Fraser (2016) asks, might a new form of socialist feminism succeed in breaking up the mainstream movement's love affair with marketisation? Democratising care has been considered a fruitful avenue for developing socialist-feminist politics … and the fight against austerity in the 21st century (Bren-ner, 2014). Correspondingly, Martin et al. (2017) advise that class is a neglected subject in educational leadership research and suggests that class may significantly impact leadership practice and understanding. These insights speak to the potential of a social feminism perspective to underpin and address the limited nature of feminist theory in lead-ership research (Nicholson et al., 2018).

This study was open to the notion of non-leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), not as an act of rebellion nor a signal to end leadership, but as a means to challenge and broaden the analysis and interpreta-tion of the interviews. More recently, 1) Endres and Weibler (2020) have described the relevance of non-leadership phenomena for under-standing leadership in contemporary organisations more comprehen-sively, and 2) the OECD (2021) has called on the Irish government to develop dedicated leadership training, a more explicit definition, ade-quate numeration, and support systems for leadership. These may help mitigate work-related stress, including too much administrative work, and support leaders in balancing their functions. As such, it could be argued that the time is right for all ECEC stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, lecturers, professional organisations, and government representatives) to discuss and reimagine new ways of looking at [non] leadership, as more of the same is not an option.

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Team Leadership and Diversity in Norwegian Early Childhood Education and Care

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Abstract

This chapter presents a theoretical discussion of team leadership and the balance between sameness and difference. It draws upon and extends existing literature on team leadership in general, and team leadership in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Norway in particular. In this chapter, I ask: How does the theory on team leadership handle the balance between sameness and difference in a diverse ECEC context?

To help answer this question, the chapter presents an analytical framework in which to discuss dilemmas of team leadership and diversity. Furthermore, it uses insights from literature on diversity management and discusses dilemmas of difference and sameness in organisations. The chapter highlights two shortcomings in mainstream literature on team leadership: leadership and diversity, and power and conflict in organisational culture. Moreover, the ambition is to contribute to theoretical advancement by introducing an intersectional

approach to the theoretical framework for research on leadership in ECEC in diverse societies.

Keywords: team leadership, diversity management, intersectionality, Norwegian early childhood education and care

Introduction and Background

Norway is an increasingly diverse society, and ECEC institutions are becoming more culturally diverse. In 1970, immigrants accounted for less than 1.5 per cent of the population, whereas in 2021 there were 14.8 per cent immigrants and 3.7 per cent Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in the population (Statistics Norway, 2021). Increased cultural complexity in the population requires more diversity in employees' experience, competencies, and resources (Drange, 2014, p. 1).[1] At the same time, growing attention is being paid to leadership and management in ECEC.[2] The latest White Paper on ECEC in Norway emphasises the importance of leadership at different levels in the ECEC institutions—provider level, director level, and pedagogical leader level—for quality in ECEC (Meld. St. 6 (2019–2020)). Team organising has become increasingly common in Norwegian ECEC (Lundestad, 2021), and team leadership is viewed as a way of enhancing professionalism and leadership in ECEC (Aasen, 2010, 2018; Gottvassli, 2019). However, there is a lack of studies dealing with diversity management in ECEC institutions, and this chapter aims to close this gap by introducing a multidimensional theoretical perspective on team leadership.

The literature that discusses team leadership in relation to diversity describes it as a double-edged sword (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Hjertø, 2000; Bang, 2008). On the one hand, interdisciplinary competencies as well as diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, education, and work background can be positive because team members complement each other with different views and perspectives. Hence, a diverse team may come up with new and creative ideas. On the other hand, a diverse team may lead to less cohesion and poorer communication and coordination, which in turn may lead to poorer cooperation and a lack of results (Bang, 2008). Thus, the balance between sameness and difference in a team is central to creating effective teams.

In this chapter, I ask: How does the theory on team leadership handle the balance between sameness and difference in a diverse ECEC context?

In order to help answer the main research question, I will present some analytical questions that are drawn from the theoretical debate about diversity management (Holvino & Kamp, 2009) and a theoretical model with four approaches to leadership of diverse working groups (Sandal et al., 2013). The approach is mainly theoretical; I will elaborate on these analytical questions and discuss theoretical dilemmas concerning team leadership and issues of diversity in theory on team leadership in general and team literature in the Norwegian ECEC context in particular.

Firstly, I will present the Norwegian ECEC context, literature on team leadership in ECEC institutions, and literature on diversity management. Secondly, I will outline an analytical framework and use the proposed questions to discuss dilemmas of team leadership and diversity in ECEC institutions in a Norwegian context. Thirdly, I will discuss two shortcomings in mainstream literature on team leadership: leadership and diversity, and power and conflict in the organisational culture. Finally, I will introduce an intersectional perspective to supplement the literature on ECEC leadership in diverse societies.

The Norwegian ECEC Contex

In Norway, approximately 40 per cent of employees in ECEC institutions hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.[3] ECEC institutions are staffed by pedagogical leaders who are trained kindergarten teachers or who hold comparable qualifications and by assistants without pedagogical training (or who have four-year vocational training at upper secondary level as childcare and youth workers) (Organisation for European Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2015, p. 62). Leadership structures and leadership roles in Norwegian ECEC institutions have been unclear because of a traditionally flat structure in which pedagogical tasks and responsibilities are performed according to the principle of job rotation, not professional competency or formal position (Aasen, 2018; Gotvassli, 2019). Hence, the kindergarten teacher's professional competency has been rendered invisible. In recent years, ECEC institutions have become larger and are organised more hierarchically (Larsen & Slåtten, 2020), but the culture of not emphasising professional pedagogical competency still prevails (Aasen, 2010, p. 294). Pedagogical leaders may face the dilemma of identifying more closely with their co-workers (with-

out pedagogical training) than with their profession, which may impair pedagogical quality (Aasen, 2010, p. 296). Eik et al. (2015) support this claim and show that ECEC directors and pedagogical leaders do not use professional language because of the traditionally flat structure.

Team Leadership

In their much-cited 1993 article, Katzenbach and Smith define a team as 'a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable' (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 45). Aasen (2010, 2018) has written about team leadership in a Norwegian ECEC context, and she defines team leadership as 'a professional and relational activity that takes place in interaction with others where the intention is to contribute to the achievement of goals through others' (Aasen, 2010, p. 300, my translation). Team leadership is viewed as an opportunity to highlight pedagogical competencies and to use the team's complementary competencies (Aasen, 2010). An important leadership task is to map and take full advantage of the different competencies of team members by coordinating and using them adequately.

   The literature on team leadership in Norwegian ECEC focuses on team organising as inclusive and democratic, and as a way of enhancing professionalism and leadership in ECEC (Aasen, 2010, 2018; Gottvassli, 2019). The emphasis on leadership and the value of professional knowledge has been important in the Norwegian ECEC context because of its traditionally flat structure, which has led to unclear leadership structures and roles. Hence, the literature on team leadership has been a valuable contribution to ECEC. However, the demographic changes in Norwegian society that are leading to a more diverse workforce call for a more nuanced view of difference. In literature on team leadership, diversity is mainly concentrated on differences in competencies, not on other dimensions of difference such as gender, ethnicity, or culture. There is, however, a vast literature on diversity management, and I will turn to that below.

Diversity Management

Diversity management (DM) can be described as a 'strategy aimed to get excluded minorities better represented in employment' (Wrench, 2007). Usually, it refers to ethnic minorities and immigrants and addresses cultural diversity, but it can also include other categories of difference, such as gender and ethnicity (Drange, 2014, p. 3). In the United States, diversity management became part of the organisation and management discourse in the late 1980s, and crossed over to Europe almost 10 years later, arriving in Scandinavia around the turn of the millennium. The introduction of DM was related to neoliberalism, and the business case for DM articulated increasing competitiveness, efficiency, and economic gain as a reason for greater diversity (Holvino & Kamp, 2009). In the Scandinavian countries, with their relatively limited experience of immigration, DM has primarily been conceived of as 'a means to integrate ethnic minorities in the labour market' (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 396).

Diversity management is viewed as a positive approach that includes more than just anti-discrimination; organisations must be proactive and must create equal opportunities for all employees (Drange, 2014, p. 3). In a review of diversity management literature in the Norwegian context, Drange (2014) finds an emphasis on respect and tolerance, as well as on flexibility and openness to new perspectives. In addition, the literature on diversity management reflects a wish to develop a new, inclusive organisational culture. Brenna and Solheim (2018) define diversity management as 'the leader's ability to construct a common identity and a strong, inclusive culture by starting with the commonalities and acknowledge the differences as a strength' (Brenna & Solheim, 2018, p. 187, my translation). Moreover, diversity management is about recognising cultural differences, valuing people's differences, and making practical allowances for such differences. It is seen as an inclusive policy that encompasses the interests of all employees, not just those of excluded or underrepresented groups.

Analytical Framework and Methodology

In the following, I will outline an analytical framework in which to discuss team leadership and diversity in Norwegian ECEC institutions. In order to help answer the main research question—How does the

theory on team leadership handle the balance between sameness and difference in a diverse ECEC context?—I will present some analytical questions below. These questions are sub-questions and operationalisations of the overall research question. My approach is to use insights from the theoretical debate about diversity management (Holvino & Kamp, 2009) and the conceptual framework on leadership applied by Sandal et al. (2013). Existing theory can be used as 'a coat'—a high-level theory—or a 'spotlight' (Collins & Stockton 2018, p. 4). I will utilise the latter approach and propose some analytical questions that can shed light on the theoretical literature on team leadership.

My method is to elaborate on these analytical questions and discuss theoretical dilemmas concerning team leadership and issues of diversity in theory on team leadership in general and team literature in the Norwegian ECEC context in particular. The analytical questions are applied in order to identify strengths and weaknesses (Collins & Stockton, 2018, p. 5).

How is Diversity Legitimised in the Organisation?

What kinds of differences are valued? Milliken & Martins (1996, p. 404) differentiate between observable diversity (such as race, ethnic background, age, and gender) and non-observable diversity (such as education, technical skills, functional background, tenure in the organisation, socioeconomic background, personality characteristics, and value types). They claim that differences between people that are visible are particularly likely to evoke responses that are directly influenced by biases, prejudices, or stereotypes.

What kind of leadership style? Sandal et al. (2013) differentiate between four leadership styles: assimilating leadership, segregated leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and diversity leadership/management. Assimilating leadership entails a low degree of awareness about cultural differences, and the leader expects employees to adjust to the dominant culture. In addition, the assimilating leader prioritises professional background and work experience over cultural background and life experience (Drange, 2014, p. 13). The leader who practises segregated leadership is aware of cultural differences among their employees but does not facilitate cross-cultural interactions. The aim is to avoid potential conflicts in cultural meetings that can impair effectiveness in the organisation. The laissez-faire leader is passive, absent,

and evasive, and the result is the same as for assimilating leadership. The leader who practises diversity management is aware of different cultural backgrounds and facilitates interaction between different employees. This leader values different perspectives and experiences, as well as different competencies.

What Is the View of Power and Conflict in the Organisation?

Individual differences or group differences? A focus on individual differences may individualise inequality (Holvino & Kamp, 2009). The literature on diversity management has been criticised for its lack of a power perspective, as well as for its focus on individuals. The view that we are all different, and that all individuals are unique, however, can lead to a risk of losing structural power differences at group level (Drange, 2014, p. 4).

Focus on harmony or conflict? The double-edged sword discussed in the literature on team leadership and diversity (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Hjertø, 2000; Bang, 2008) emphasises different views and perspectives in diverse teams as positive contributions to new and creative ideas. However, a diverse team may lead to less cohesion and poorer communication and coordination, which in turn may lead to poorer cooperation and a lack of results (Bang, 2008). One might argue that diversity and conflicting views are fine as long as they 'enrich' the organisation, but not if they challenge the status quo. Diversity is regarded as a resource, but managers have the power to define what the problematic sides are, thus 'implying that some elements of diversity will be welcomed and others not' (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 399). The consequence may be that existing privileges and power relations will be maintained (ibid.).

Findings and Discussion

Leadership and Diversity

Team leadership is viewed as an opportunity to highlight pedagogical competencies and to use the team's complementary competencies (Aasen, 2010, 2018; Gottvassli, 2019). An important leadership task is to map and take full advantage of the different competencies of team members by coordinating and using them adequately. Team organ-

ising focuses on differences in competencies, and the goal is to take advantage of complementary competencies in the team in order to reach common goals and contribute to better quality in ECEC institutions. Only the leader—with formal professional knowledge—can lead the work of implementation and evaluation. Co-influence, as opposed to co-determination, is important in teamwork, and all team members have competencies that will benefit the team (Aasen, 2010).

In the literature on team leadership in ECEC institutions, the focus is not on observable diversity, but rather on professional qualifications and roles in the organisation. Thus, cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity driven by demographic changes in Norwegian society are not emphasised. The theoretical concept of team leadership in an ECEC context—with a focus on differences in competencies—seems to be closest to the assimilating leadership style, because differences in cultural background, etc. are underplayed (Sandal et al., 2013). The assimilating leader prioritises professional background and work experience over cultural background and life experience. Hence, assimilating leadership entails a low degree of awareness about cultural differences, and the leader expects employees to adjust to the dominant culture (ibid.). This is in line with previous research on Norwegian leaders in other sectors, which indicates that Norwegian leaders have an 'assimilating' leadership in which cultural differences are seldom addressed (Drange, 2014, p. 60). The results indicate that leaders in Norway highlight professional competency, and that other differences between the employees are a lesser issue (ibid.).

The focus on sameness and on the blind spot regarding demographic differences may be understood in a wider Norwegian (and Scandinavian) context. The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad has described the Norwegian principle of equality as 'sameness'. Gullestad (2006) points to a central value concept likhet, meaning, 'likeness', 'similarity', 'identity', or 'sameness'. Likhet is the most common translation of 'equality', implying that social actors must consider themselves as more or less the same in order to feel of equal value. This logic often leads to an interaction style in which commonalties are emphasised while differences are played down. Other studies also confirm the notion of 'Norwegianness' as a narrow term (Thun, 2013), and the same is found in relation to a narrow conception of 'Danishness' (Holvino & Kamp, 2009).

To grapple with this blind spot concerning sameness, insights from the literature on diversity management can be useful. However, as pointed out by Holvino and Kamp (2009), diversity management, with its focus on difference, can be difficult to apply to a context where 'equality is equated with sameness' (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 397). Accordingly, insights from diversity management can help us gain an awareness about blind spots, but they do not provide the whole answer. Furthermore, diversity management literature also has to handle dilemmas of sameness–difference and of power and conflict (Holvino & Kamp, 2009).

Power and Conflict

The literature on team leadership in the ECEC context places emphasis on the leader's task of coordinating different competencies (Aasen, 2018; Gottvassli, 2019). The emphasis is on a team's complementary competencies, and the team leader is responsible for mapping and coordinating each team member's competencies and for using these different competencies to benefit the team. However, a focus on individual competencies in ECEC institutions may obscure biases, prejudices, or stereotypes at group level and risk reproducing gendered stereotypes as well as cultural stereotypes in the organisational culture. In addition, one can argue that differences in ECEC teams are positive if different perspectives and competencies can complement each other, but that too much diversity may lead to conflict and impede common goals. The underlying assumption is that too much diversity will damage a common organisational culture (Holvino & Kamp, 2009).

According to Adler, Forbes, and Willmott (2007), research on teamwork views diversity in the workforce as a factor that can help or hinder effective teamwork, and if it impedes it, research should address how the problem can be solved.

This blind spot concerning power and conflict in organisational culture can be linked to a functionalist bias in mainstream team management literature.[4] Functionalism is defined as a 'theoretical approach that explains social phenomena in terms of what purpose ("function") they serve' (Vivanco, 2018). According to Sułkowski (2010), functionalism in management leads to the separation of a set of complementary organisational functions, supporting the activity of the whole organisation. The organisation member has a 'function'—a specific activity

in the activities of the whole. Moreover, harmony is the ideal, and the issue of power is undertheorised within this perspective.

In the literature on team leadership in ECEC, there is not an explicit functionalist perspective. However, the legacy of mainstream team literature may imply an undertheorising of issues such as power and conflict.

Shortcomings

The analysis and discussion regarding the balance between sameness and difference above reveals some theoretical shortcomings concerning team leadership and diversity, and power and conflict in organisational culture. Team leadership has been imported from the business context, and one can argue that the conceptual framework has been adopted without reviewing the critical discussions about the literature on teamwork, for instance from a gender perspective (e.g. Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003), a class perspective (e.g. Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998), and more generally from critical management studies (e.g. Adler et al., 2007). In the following, I will explore the concept of intersectionality as a means to grapple with multiple differences and power differences in organisations.

Difference, Diversity, and Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a theoretical approach that addresses the heterogeneity within identity categories and gives us an opportunity to understand the complex reality of multiple differences and inequalities in management and organisations (Dennissen et al., 2018). The concept of intersectionality has not been much developed in studies of organisations. However, according to Hearn and Louvrier (2015), it 'challenges any simple approach to, or prescription of, promoting "diversity"' (Hearn & Louvrier, 2015, p. 63). Intersectionality can be defined as the interaction between multiple categories of difference (Davis, 2008), and an intersectional perspective views gender, ethnicity, class, and other categories of difference as intersecting. Crenshaw (1991) coined the term 'intersectionality', arguing that the oppression of and discrimination against black women cannot be understood by considering gender or race/racialisation alone; the two are intersecting.

An intersectional approach explores how categories of difference are intertwined and mutually constitutive, and how a power perspective is essential (Davis, 2008). In the Scandinavian context, an intersectional approach has been applied in order to explore intersecting social categories and power differences from a constructionist view (Gullikstad, 2013). Categories are seen as dynamic and changeable, not predetermined and stable. Moreover, the analytic approach recognises the power differences in minoritising and majoritising processes (Staunæs, 2003). Thus, an intersectional approach to management and diversity might seek to avoid constructing generalisations about groups such as women or ethnic minorities. Consequently, an intersectional diversity programme would highlight not only gender but also intersections with age, ethnicity, and other differences (Hearn & Louvrier, 2015).

An intersectional perspective can address social categories of difference and inequality because it sees differences as intimately related to existing power relationships in society (Hearn & Louvrier, 2015, p. 64). Accordingly, insights from theories on intersectionality can help us explore issues related to power and conflict and to the difference–sameness dilemma by addressing how differences simultaneously interact in specific contexts, and the connections between individual identities and structural inequalities (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 398). ECEC institutions are not isolated entities; broader societal structures, such as race, class, gender, and other categories of difference play a role in structuring social interactions within the organisation. An intersectional approach can address multiple levels of difference—individual, group, organisational, and societal—and how each of these is embedded in broader contexts from which it derives meaning (Holvino & Kamp, 2009).

Implication

The findings in this chapter point to some theoretical 'blind spots' in the literature on team leadership. Consequently, I have introduced an intersectional approach as a contribution to the theoretical framework for research on leadership in ECEC institutions. This relatively new theoretical perspective in leadership and organisations research may contribute to exploring possibilities for and obstacles to creating inclusive team leadership and inclusive organisational cultures in diverse Norwegian ECEC institutions.

Conclusion

The emphasis on leadership and the value of professional knowledge has been important in the Norwegian ECEC context because of its traditionally flat structure, which has led to unclear leadership structures and roles. The literature on team leadership has been a valuable contribution to ECEC. However, the demographic changes in Norwegian society that are leading to a more diverse workforce call for a more nuanced view of difference. The analysis in this chapter regarding how theory on team leadership might handle the balance between sameness and difference suggests shortcomings concerning team leadership and diversity and power and conflict in organisational culture. I have outlined an intersectional approach to differences as a way to address some shortcomings related to diversity and intersecting aspects of inequality. The aim of this chapter has been to build on previous literature on team leadership in ECEC as well as to develop a theoretical approach that allows for more critical analysis. It is hoped that this contribution will create a space for extending the existing literature on leadership in ECEC.

Notes

1 Kindergarten teachers with immigrant background account for 8.9 per cent and assistants with an immigrant background for 19.7 per cent (Statistics Norway, 2019).

2 Leadership is related to establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring them, whereas management is mainly about planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling, and problem-solving. These concepts can also be used synonymously (Kotter, 1990, pp. 3–6). This chapter refers to different theoretical traditions and will use these concepts interchangeably.

3 https://web.archive.org/web/20220705091735/https://www.bufdir.no/Statistikk_og_analyse/oppvekst/Barnehage_og_skole/Ansatte_i_barnehage_skole/

4 Sułkowski (2010, p. 110) differentiates between two main paradigms in management epistemology: the functional–systemic perspective and the symbolic–interpretative perspective.

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Leadership for Professional Development and Pedagogical Quality

CHAPTER 8

Shadowing Centre Directors as Pedagogical Leaders in Early Childhood Education Settings in Finland

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Abstract

This chapter investigates the implementation of pedagogical leadership by Finnish early childhood education (ECE) centre directors. The study focuses on the key pedagogical leadership responsibilities of three centre directors and how leadership structures and approaches influence the implementation of pedagogical leadership in ECE set-

tings. Qualitative shadowing was employed to investigate the directors' leadership practices on pedagogical leadership in selected settings. The findings reflected three main areas of responsibility for pedagogical leadership: leading pedagogical activities and curriculum work within the centre, leading professional development of educators, and leading pedagogical assessment and development. Furthermore, it was revealed that leadership structures in the municipality and leadership approaches of the centre directors significantly influenced the implementation of pedagogical leadership. This study's findings can inform and promote the implementation of pedagogical leadership and can enhance the preparation and training of ECE leaders who can guide the quality provisioning of ECE programmes that impact children's learning outcomes.

Keywords: early childhood education, pedagogical leadership, centre directors

Introduction

Pedagogical leadership is still evolving within early childhood education (ECE). The present study broadly refers to the concept of early childhood education as both the systemic entity and the pedagogical practices within it, as current conceptualisations are based on understanding ECE pedagogy as a holistic phenomenon in which education and care are integrated (e.g. Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, 540/2018). The concept of pedagogical leadership is connected to children's learning and development but also to ECE professionals' capacity building and to the wider society's values and beliefs about education (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). Research indicates that the functioning of pedagogical leadership determines the quality of ECE (Douglass, 2019; Sylva et al., 2010). It also enhances ECE teachers' commitment to pedagogical development in their child groups (Heikka et al., 2021) and promotes the children's well-being (Fonsén et al., 2022).

In Finnish ECE settings, centre directors are responsible for the implementation of pedagogical leadership at the level of the whole unit. This is a challenging task, because directors usually have multiple services and task areas to operate. It is therefore important to examine the responsibilities of pedagogical leadership of the centre directors and their fulfilment in real leadership contexts.

The aim of the present study was to investigate implementation of pedagogical leadership in three ECE settings. The research questions were as follows: What are the key pedagogical leadership responsibilities of the centre directors in ECE settings? How do leadership structures and approaches influence the implementation of pedagogical leadership in ECE settings? First, as pedagogical leadership entails various aspects of centre functioning, this study investigates the pedagogical leadership responsibilities of ECE centre directors in their settings. Second, as leadership contexts and skills are crucial for pedagogical leadership practice, the study examines how local leadership structures and the leadership approaches of the centre directors influence the implementation of pedagogical leadership in ECE settings.

Theoretical Framework

Pedagogical leadership is highly influenced by leadership structures and strategies. According to O'Sullivan (2009), leaders enable pedagogy and learning by considering different facets of service and relationships within the wider community. In Finland, pedagogical leadership is challenged by complex organisational structures: ECE leadership is distributed between diverse stakeholders, including directors and teachers, in addition to municipal-level ECE leadership and government steering and policies. In such contexts, pedagogical leadership is conceptualised within the framework of distributed pedagogical leadership and teacher leadership to emphasise the situational entity of pedagogical leadership practice. Leadership is enacted separately but interdependently at different levels of the ECE centres' functioning (Heikka, 2014; Heikka et al., 2018; Heikka et al., 2021; Heikka et al., 2020).

Diverse understandings of the concept of pedagogical leadership reflect the different perceptions regarding pedagogical leadership and the professionals enacting it in ECE organisations. More specifically, a pedagogical leader can be understood as a manager of a pedagogical organisation (Soukainen, 2013). This reinforces conventional leadership thinking about the leaders and the followers.

Distributed pedagogical leadership (see Heikka, 2014) instead includes multiple actors enacting pedagogical leadership. For example, the centre directors operate on the whole-centre level, whereas ECE teachers lead pedagogy aligned with their own staff teams. Heikka

and Suhonen (2019) identified functions in distributed pedagogical leadership between the centre directors and teachers and revealed that constructing shared visions and values for ECE in the centre, developing ECE pedagogy, facilitating the learning and expertise of educators, building the operational culture of the centre, and enhancing efficient and participatory decision-making among centre staff reflected interdependence in the enactment of pedagogical leadership by the centre directors and the teachers. The interdependence between the leadership enactments were created between the centre directors and the teachers through shared discussions that were organised regularly and held also in daily encounters. Artefacts, such as curricula and agreements between staff, created interdependence by aligning goals and visions.

Pedagogical leadership of the centre directors is implemented by organising and directing centre-level processes—for example, curriculum work and pedagogical development—by assessing functioning of the staff teams, and by guiding pedagogical practices of the staff, thus driving the centre towards the common vision (Heikka & Suhonen, 2019). Leaders can also participate in and influence curriculum decisions and discussions in the staff teams (Waniganayake et al., 2017). Leading professional work towards organisational goals and visions entails leading the centre's daily pedagogy, following its core values and ethical practices, and also leading pedagogical reflection, planning, and professional development (Corrick & Reed, 2019; Heikka, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2009; Stremmel, 2019). Pedagogical leadership demands well-planned and structured strategies and tools and clear leadership policies (Heikka et al., 2021). Research also reveals that leaders need training to develop their leadership capabilities (Heikka, 2014). The leaders' required competences include both knowledge of ECE and broader leadership skills (Muijs et al., 2004).

Methodology

The study data were collected via qualitative shadowing, where the researcher follows and observes participants constantly in their work with a video camera, like a shadow (Czarniawska, 2007; Gill et al., 2014). Researchers also simultaneously took notes about the participants' actions. Observation and shadowing results in rich and var-

ied data about leadership practices in the ECE context (see Bøe et al., 2016).

Shadowing requires high ethical consideration and sensitivity throughout the data collection and analysis (see Bøe et al., 2016; Johnson, 2014). The process was thoroughly explained to participants on the first day of data collection. Because shadowing is intensive (Johnson, 2014), it is important to maintain a safe atmosphere and ensure a mutual understanding of research aims and the process procedure.

Participants and Empirical Data

Participants were selected first by consulting municipal ECE leaders and then by accepting ECE directors who volunteered. Participants were university-qualified ECE centre directors and had several years of work experience and permanent positions as centre directors. Three directors from three different municipalities in eastern Finland worked in municipal ECE centres. These ECE centres included two to nine child groups; in other words, there were two to nine ECE teams. One participant worked as an ECE director in two ECE centres. Even though this participant usually worked in both centres during the week, the director stayed in just one ECE centre for the shadowing data collection. This could be a limitation of the study, because longer presence in the other centre might have affected the director's actions.

Data was collected in autumn 2018. Each director was shadowed for three days. Bøe et al. (2016) state that long-lasting shadowing can produce ethical challenges when conducting research. In this study, three days were considered sufficient to obtain varied data without burdening participants or creating situations that could affect the participants' behaviour or the researchers' objectivity. However, the timing can also be regarded as a limitation, since shadowing describes situations and tasks in the work of directors that—in other times and with other participants—could manifest differently. For example, development and assessment did not feature significantly during shadowing, but directors referred to them as part of an extensive project and process.

While shadowing, researchers distanced themselves from the participants and stayed quiet to avoid interaction and distraction. Questions for directors were posed only if something needed clarification— for example, if they were working on a computer. However, participants were encouraged to ask questions at any time. The researcher must be

very sensitive when shadowing, constantly evaluating the appropriateness of the recording and being present while observing the situation; in some situations, researchers determined whether it was appropriate to continue recording and making notes. In total, there are 29 hours and 10 minutes of video material from all three ECE directors in situations where video recording was possible.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed by qualitative, inductive content analysis (Kyngäs, 2020). The three researchers shared the video material. First, each researcher analysed videos of one director alone, guided by the following questions: What was the situation, event, or activity in which the leadership occurred? What was the focus of the leadership activity? Who was involved in the situation? What kind of leadership was manifested in the situation and by whom? How was the leadership responded to? First, the videos were watched repeatedly. Next, the researchers organised and narrowed down the data by excluding parts of the videos without pedagogical leadership observations. Then the videos were transcribed into episodes of pedagogical leadership guided by the research questions. Overall, 72 episodes were outlined. An episode was defined as a situation or action in which a certain type of pedagogical leadership activity or model occurred; one video could include several episodes. The transcriptions were carefully studied and
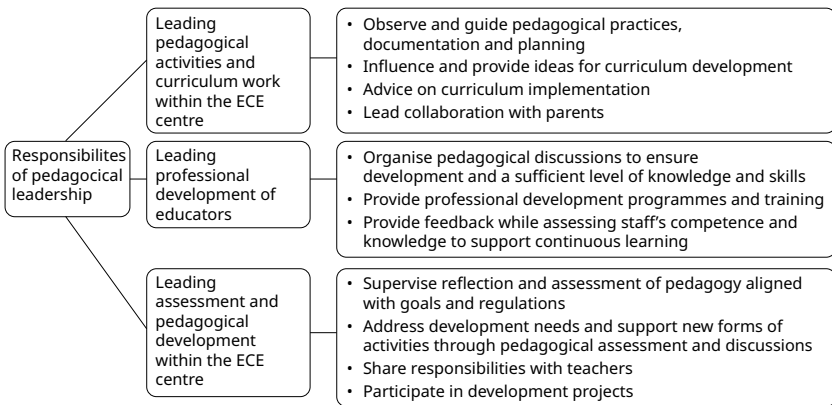
Figure 8.1: Responsibilities of pedagogical leadership.

coded with open codes; then the similarities and differences between the codes were analysed.

The researchers jointly analysed data, discussing the classification and reviewing the analyses, in order to reach consensus and strengthen the transparency and trustworthiness of the study. The following categories were formed: the structures of pedagogical leadership, the guidance of pedagogical activities, and the leadership of competence, as well as the forms of realisation of these categories. Based on this comparison, the sub-categories and main categories were formed for both research questions (Kyngäs, 2020), and theory was utilised in naming these categories. For the first question, three main categories were formed (see Figure 8.1); for the second, the main categories were leadership organisation in the municipality and the ECE centre and leadership approaches used by the centre directors.

The Implementation of Pedagogical Leadership Responsibilities by the Centre Directors

Shadowing reflected three main areas of responsibility for pedagogical leadership of the centre directors: leading pedagogical activities and curriculum work within the centre, leading professional development of educators, and leading pedagogical assessment and development (Figure 8.1).

Leading Pedagogical Activities and Curriculum Work Within the ECE Centre

Leadership of pedagogical activities was reflected in shadowing through various centre directors' practices. The directors provided the educators with guidance on pedagogical activities during daily encounters and meetings and led planning and assessment in the child groups. Guiding pedagogical activities was realised as observing educators and activities of child groups, giving advice, and leading practices documented in the groups' early childhood education plan. When leading pedagogical activities, the directors justified the principles and solutions for the educators and provided advice for the activities. The directors' leadership approaches were positive, encouraging, and supportive; however, some directors were occasionally quite straightforward and expressed confidence in their own views while questioning

how they would support the educators' professional competence and learning.

In one episode, the director went to storage and fetched big foam rubber shapes, which the teachers had put aside. However, the director wanted them for children to use. She speculated that her actions might cause discussion, but stated:

> This is the kind of matter in which you need leadership from time to time … that you will do as you see and then discuss the matter with teachers and explain your pedagogical justification for this action. If we don't agree on pedagogical principles, someone has to make the decision, and in my opinion, that is leadership. (Director 2, episode 8)

Later, the director explained the rationale for her actions to teachers. They did not express disagreement but explained why they decided to put the materials aside, and the director stated her pedagogical justification for bringing them back.

The example of foam rubber shapes is rather complex. The director oversaw the teachers' plans, but on the other hand, she justified her own decision and actions based on pedagogy. However, the director failed to scrutinise the pedagogical premises of the educators; thus, a shared learning opportunity and potential to develop pedagogy were lost.

The centre directors' pedagogical leadership consisted of leading curriculum work within the centre and child groups. Curriculum work included leading the planning of small-group activities and long-term pedagogical goals within the child groups, and implementation of ECE plans, as well as learning environments. Additionally, all the directors enhanced pedagogical documentation in the groups. The following example from shadowing revealed how the director instructed teachers in pedagogical documentation:

> The director ensures that teachers understand that it is important to make documentation of [problematic] issues parents have expressed, so 'they will know what has been done to improve the situation'. Teachers should document and describe for parents those things that have been done during the day and what has been important for the child. (Director 2, episode 12)

This example shows the director enhancing cooperation with parents, which is important in Finnish ECE (Finnish National Agency

for Education [EDUFI], 2022). During shadowing, Director 2 told the researcher that the cooperation is a joint commitment to promoting the growth, development, and learning of children. According to the director, there were diverse forms of cooperation: for example, informing parents, managing children's ECE participation hours, supporting educators in ECE planning, and ECE discussions with parents. However, only some practices were observable during shadowing. Children's daily events and experiences were shared with parents, and the directors stated that messages that encourage and positively describe the child's development and learning are important for parents.

Leading Professional Development

Pedagogical discussions with educators were of key importance in leading professional development. Director 2 told the observer that the municipality holds pedagogical discussions at least twice a year with all personnel. She continued: 'The matters of one's own professional development and pedagogical reflections are raised in discussion' (Director 2, episode 8). Next, one observed pedagogical discussion is illustrated.

> The director asked the teacher for a pedagogical discussion. The teacher raised two matters that she would like to focus on in her professional development. The first concerns implementing the national ECE curriculum, particularly pedagogical documentation, and the other is a training she would like to undertake. The teacher explains her current professional situation and competencies. The director encourages her and enquires whether she would need more support or training for her development. The director asks frequent questions of the teacher, which promotes her pedagogical reflection. The director also shares her own pedagogical premises as she explains the practices of the municipality and issues of curriculum. The director gives the teacher advice and guidance for professional development on pedagogy, as well as positive feedback and affirmation. (Director 2, episode 8)

As noted, the director and the teacher discussed the teacher's professional competencies and her need for further support or training. The director emphasised the importance of pedagogy and the crystallising of one's own pedagogical principles. The director supported the teacher and gave her positive feedback while assessing her competen-

cies and ensuring that she had sufficient knowledge about the centre's and municipality's structures, practices, and pedagogical principles. In individual discussions, the director sometimes noted issues that were important to discuss with other teachers also—regarding planning practices, for example. Thus, the director simultaneously supervised and promoted the professional development of an individual teacher along with the wider community of teachers.

Although the data presented opportunities for discussions for directors and teachers to exchange ideas and narrate pedagogical practices and principles, as well as to plan pedagogical development, leadership approaches and structures were not always successful. In one situation, Director 3 (episode 6) wanted to discuss the centre's window decorations, but no pedagogical justifications were given; thus, the pedagogical potential in the discussion was lost. Another situation entailed unprofessional leadership:

> The teachers have complained to the director about the unprofessional behaviour of a teacher, which they disapproved of. The director starts to ponder with the teachers and another director about the cause of this kind of behaviour and how to best proceed with the situation. (Director 3, episode 6)

As illustrated, the two directors and the teachers discussed how to react to that teacher's unprofessional behaviour, which might compromise trust between employees and directors.

Leading Assessment and Pedagogical Development within the ECE Centre

While shadowing, some of the centre directors' pedagogical assessment and development practices were observed. The directors supervised so that assessments of practices were carried out systematically and so that educators knew what to assess and how. These issues were narrated in the pedagogical discussions and meetings between the centre directors and the educators. Structures for the assessment and development of pedagogy included observation of pedagogical practices in the child groups and pedagogical discussions with the staff teams by the centre directors. It was also noted that the directors actively raised issues for development and shared responsibilities with the teachers to

promote them, and in addition they supervised and supported educators' reflection.

The directors ensured that assessments followed the guidelines of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (EDUFI, 2022). Director 2 (episode 13) said that 'all the observations we do … [are needed] for the basis of assessment, and this will become legally binding for all to conduct [observations] and to assess'. Additionally, the directors and teachers jointly assessed and developed pedagogical activities and sought solutions to factors that hindered them. Directors highlighted the general importance of assessment and gave teachers affirmation on conducting them. For example, Director 3 (episode 5) praised the teachers' development of documenting through pictures: 'As a means of assessment, this is a good way to look at whether some area [of children's learning] has been given less [attention] and now should be paid more attention. That is good! When do you plan to initiate that [practice]?' These examples describe the collaboration between directors and teachers regarding the assessment practices of centres. Pedagogical development was also present in daily encounters between the directors and the educators; for example, during the coffee break, Director 1 and educators discussed how to promote language development for children under three.

The ECE centres' episodes of pedagogical development suggest that it is dual in nature. Firstly, in most episodes, the director and teachers discussed pedagogical development and practices, as previously explained. Secondly, there were several mentions of the centres' development through new projects. Further, some projects seemed to occur at the municipality level, and these focused on developing the municipality's ECE practices. In other projects, developmental processes took place in the centre—for example, by initiating new collaborations, improving the learning environment, or enhancing technology use. In these projects, the directors' role was central in both the municipality and the centre, although some responsibilities were also distributed to teachers.

Leadership Approaches and Structures Framing the Implementation of Pedagogical Leadership

Distributed pedagogical leadership, which included sharing leadership responsibilities between the centre directors and the teachers (see Heikka, 2014), was a common strategy among the centre directors. The teachers' role as pedagogical leaders in their teams was emphasised. According to the directors, leadership structures and tools enabled the functions of distributed pedagogical leadership within the ECE centres. For example, weekly teachers' meetings addressed issues in the child groups, supporting teacher leadership. Pedagogical leadership plans and team agreements also worked as leadership tools for the directors and teachers in distributed pedagogical leadership. These tools were considered important in guiding the distribution of responsibilities and tasks of the educators and assisting in the pedagogical assessment in child groups. In the team agreements, the members wrote their pedagogical overview and responsibilities. Director 2 (episode 12) placed significance on the team agreements: 'These team agreements are for you, but these are done because everyone must understand and think through their own role [in the group].' Furthermore, Director 3 (episode 3) states: 'This [team agreement] is an assessment. I will go every autumn to observe the team, and I will go to assess this team's activity for the second time.' The directors also reminded teachers to document joint decisions on team agreement; they justified its importance in terms of activity transparency, cooperation with parents, and child-related factors.

The findings indicated that the organisation of centre directors' own work and leadership approaches significantly affected the implementation of pedagogical leadership. Their leadership approaches differed in how they facilitated educators' pedagogical discussion and thinking. All the directors visited child groups regularly; however, while one director facilitated many shared pedagogical discussions with the educators, the encounters of the other two directors with educators remained rather shallow and did not strive to promote pedagogical thinking. For example, one director used plenty of time to organise the centre's learning environments and worked in child groups as a peer with educators when needed. However, from the perspective of pedagogical leadership, these situations where the director is working side-by-side with the educators can be identified as 'lost moments' in

pedagogical leadership. The following excerpt illustrates a lost opportunity for pedagogical leadership in a meeting situation:

> The centre director set the planning of the family event as the main goal of the meeting. She asked questions, listened, enhanced discussion, and documented carefully the opinions of the educators on how to promote participation of parents in the event. However, she spent a total of 20 minutes in the meeting to discuss practical details of the event. (Director 1, episode 18)

According to the excerpt, Director 1 struggled to regulate her leadership style; she used plenty of time to negotiate non-pedagogical practical matters with the educators that she could have decided for herself. She also could have prepared better before the meeting to dedicate more time to pedagogical discussion.

The findings indicated that the municipality's ECE strategy, organisation of ECE leadership, and support significantly framed the functioning and enactment of pedagogical leadership by the ECE centre directors. According to Director 2, centralising basic managerial tasks, such as recruiting substitutes in the municipality, has released time for pedagogical leadership. However, municipal structures and local policies also negatively affected the directors' pedagogical leadership. For example, the directors could not always lead discussions in weekly staff meetings because of municipality alignments. For example, one municipality's allocation of human resources was organised such that it significantly affected the weekly discussions with teachers, where time was spent calculating how many staff memberswere needed in each centre for the following week instead of on pedagogical discussion.

Discussion and Conclusions

Results suggest that key responsibilities of pedagogical leadership are leading daily pedagogical activities and curriculum work as well as pedagogical and professional development within the centre. This small case study supports the finding that leading pedagogy can be manifested as pedagogical discussions between the directors and teachers (Waniganayake et al., 2017). The directors led and supervised pedagogical activities and offered guidance and affirmation (O'Sullivan, 2009). Shared pedagogical assessment was also of particular interest

to promote informed decisions on development proceedings. Furthermore, directors aimed to follow the obligations of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (EDUFI, 2022) and the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and to maintain the high quality of ECE (e.g. Sylva et al., 2010).

The results show many positive manifestations of pedagogical leadership, including positive and supportive leadership styles; supporting and appreciating teachers in their pedagogical work; promoting joint planning, assessment, and professional development; and discussing pedagogical principles and responsibilities. However, these manifestations need further consideration. The findings indicated that the directors' pedagogical and leadership skills framed their capabilities as pedagogical leaders, as the study by Muijs et al. (2004) found. For some directors, this foundation helped their pedagogical leadership in many ways—for example, when they fluently explained and justified pedagogical issues to teachers—but others struggled a bit. This became apparent in the spontaneous 'lost moments of pedagogical leadership': some directors failed to deepen educators' pedagogical thinking and enhance professional learning through joint discussion and reflection. Similarly, directors' overbearing guidance could hinder teachers' learning. The findings also revealed some unprofessional and indecisive leadership, which could be overcome by clarifying the directors' roles and responsibilities and by providing support and training in leadership skills (Heikka, 2014). The findings suggest that the directors' knowledge of pedagogical leadership, pedagogy (Muijs et al., 2004), and leadership approaches and skills (O'Sullivan, 2009) are essential in leading the pedagogical and professional development of educators in ECE, and in practice, they shape the enactment of pedagogical leadership alongside the organisational structure.

As in the study by O'Sullivan (2009), pedagogical leadership in ECE centres and the leadership approaches of the centre directors were framed and shaped by the structures of the municipality; thus, pedagogical leadership manifested itself contextually, reflecting the directors' competence in pedagogical leadership, features of the municipality, and the national ECE guidelines. The practical implications of the findings also imply that these structures and their influence on the enactment of leadership should be considered when researching pedagogical leadership, alongside directors' own competence in pedagogical leadership. This calls for further, larger-scale research with different

methods than those chosen in the present study. Moreover, because of this influence of structures, pedagogical leadership requires a commitment from the municipality leaders and decision makers in ECE.

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CHAPTER 9

Pedagogical Leaders' Use of Professional Judgement in Early Childhood Education and Care
A Case from Norway

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Abstract

In this chapter, we discuss the exercise of professional judgement according to the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens in Norway*. Our empirical bases consist of semi-structured interviews with a total of eight pedagogical leaders, who emphasise the importance of practical knowledge and intuition in unpredictable and complex situations. This chapter also illuminates the dangers of the extensive use of professional judgement, and how pedagogical leaders work to ensure that their pedagogical work is in line with sound professional judgement. Arbitrariness, uncertainty, and insecurity in pedagogical work can result from the widespread use of professional judgement in order to maintain children's best interests. Leadership

strategies that pedagogical leaders use to ensure consensus in the employee group around the matter of professional judgement include mentoring, joint reflection, motivation, and support. The extent of professional judgement also depends on the current restrictions and the complexity of the situation.

Keywords: pedagogical leadership, professional judgement, leadership strategies, wicked or tame problems, early childhood education and care

Introduction

Uncertain decision-making situations are one distinctive feature of all types of professional work (Abbot, 1988; Freidson, 2001; Monteiro, 2015). According to Freidson (2001, p. 17), professional performance is so specialised that it cannot be standardised, rationalised, or commodified. As per definition, professional judgement must of necessity be linked to pedagogical work and teaching as a profession (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, pp. 7–9). This is also typical for pedagogical leaders in Norwegian early childhood centres (ECCs); empathy and flexibility are needed to solve all situations that arise. However, the research on the exercise of professional judgement says little about the factors that affect the use of professional judgement. The existing literature also says very little about the possible dangers of using professional judgement in work with children in ECCs.

In this chapter, we discuss the exercise of professional judgement according to the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens in Norway* (Directorate of Education, 2017). It states (p. 16) that 'the pedagogical leader is tasked with implementing and overseeing the kindergarten's pedagogical practices using sound professional judgement'. In Norway, the pedagogical leader is the formal leader of one department of an ECC, typically with 15–20 children and 3 employees, often skilled or unskilled assistants. This position requires a bachelor's degree. The formulation in the Framework Plan implies a great trust and credibility on the part of the profession and of the pedagogical leaders (Førde, 2018, pp. 209–225). Using this as a starting point, we will examine what professional judgement entails, the dangers of the extensive use of professional judgement, and how pedagogical leaders work to ensure that their pedagogical work is in line with sound professional judgement.

Pedagogical Leaders, Pedagogical Leadership, and Professional Judgement

Professional judgement or discretion enables professionals to take contextual considerations into account when making decisions about clients (Freidson, 2001; Lipsky, 2010). It would seem that the use of discretion is unavoidable when professionals need to apply general knowledge in a particular case, and professionals are thus granted discretionary power (Wallander & Molander, 2014). Scholars seem to agree that discretion is desirable as well as necessary to deal with the complexity of social work practice (Møller, 2018). As Zacka (2017, p. 4) also states, frontline professionals are caught in a predicament that calls for them to act as sensible moral agents who are able to 'interpret vague directives, strike compromises between competing values, and prioritize the allocation of scarce resources'.

Pedagogical leadership is a complicated concept that has several definitions, but in the Nordic context the pedagogy of ECEC combines education and teaching, as well as caregiving (Kvistad & Søbstad, 2005; Fonsén, 2013). Exercising pedagogical leadership therefore involves leading the educational work and initiating and leading development processes to ensure quality in the work. Leading the pedagogical work must also take place in accordance with the social mandate, values, and goals set for the organisation (Modise, 2019; Gotvassli, 2019). Like all other professional work, this work is characterised by the fact that one often has to use one's professional judgement as a basis for one's leadership.

Pedagogical leaders' use of professional judgement is rarely highlighted in the research on early childhood education and care organisations (ECECs). However, the topic is indirectly dealt with in works that address the areas of leadership, judgement, and profession (Bratterud & Emilsen, 2011; Åmot, 2014; Blaafalk et al., 2017; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2017; Andersen et al., 2017). Common to these studies is that ECEC teachers develop a sensitivity to working with children; this is described as both a gut feeling and a knowledge-based process. Common to the studies of Ulla (2017), Evertsen et al. (2015), and Eik and Steines (2017) is the idea that employees believe it is necessary to use many professional judgements in their work. Bøe (2016) uses the term 'qualified improvisations' to refer to how ECEC teachers see the complexity of their work and new opportunities in both the work group and the community.

Unpacking Professional Judgement

Discretion or professional judgement[1] is referred to as practical prudence—or phronesis—based on Aristotle's division of different types of knowledge (Gotvassli, 2020). Discretion can also be defined as the area where professionals can choose between permitted alternatives of action on the basis of their judgement (Molander, 2013). The term is related to concepts such as wicked problems, practical reasoning, intuition, tacit knowledge, pedagogical tact, improvisation, and the unforeseen. We will briefly look at these concepts to give an overview of the term.

Professional judgement can be associated with problems faced by professional practitioners. The distinction is between wicked or tame problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973, pp. 161–167; Head & Alford, 2015). Wicked problems are difficult to define. There is no objective correct solution, each situation is unique, the causes can be diverse, a solution can cause new problems to arise, and one problem is often intertwined with other problems. Solving wicked problems certainly affords the use of professional discretion. According to Grint (2008), wicked problems need us to go beyond internally coherent approaches and to adopt so-called 'clumsy solutions' that use the skills of a bricoleur to pragmatically engage whatever comes to hand to address these most complex problems. Tame problems are easy to define. There are clear cause–impact correlations, and it is therefore easier to find a correct solution to the problem.

Grimen and Molander (2008) note that discretion is a practical form of reasoning with weak normative evidence on which to base decisions. It is the exercise of practical reasoning leading up to a choice of action that is based on a situation description in combination with weak evidence of what is best. According to Kirkebøen (2012, p. 7), intuition is a thought process that provides an answer, a solution, or an idea, without effort and without awareness of the process behind it; that is, one cannot account for how one ended up at the result. Mastery of the practice situation therefore requires interpretation and empathy on the part of the actors. Tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1969) is often associated with intuitive processes. Tacit knowledge means that we often think, assess, and act because of knowledge that is either not expressed or cannot be expressed verbally. Stråhle et al. (1989) argue that the following are characteristic of employees who use tacit knowledge in

their work: the abilities of immersion, responsiveness, taking the children's perspective, and being attentive to individual signals.

Pedagogical tact is associated with a complex question without a clear answer (van Manen, 1993). According to van Manen, it is challenging to distinguish between the learned and mechanical educational tact—whereby we interpret things automatically—and the tact that originates in sensitivity and authenticity in the face of the other. Torgersen and Sæverot (2016, p. 20) associate the concept of being unforeseen with phenomena such as judgement, creativity, and improvisation. Events that are unforeseen require improvisation and creativity in terms of how the situation should be handled; this is where pedagogy poses its opportunities and challenges. Oddane (2015, pp. 234–235) argues that unforeseen events often relate to uncertainty, unpredictability, inadequacy, and the absence of control. One way to approach such events is to develop the ability to improvise. Improvisation is about the ability to solve complex, unforeseen problems using the ingenuity of the moment.

Unfortunate Aspects of the Practice of Professional Judgement

The practice of judgement is mentioned as both important and necessary regarding achieving quality in one's work in ECECs. Restricting the use of professional judgement is portrayed as intervening in professional autonomy and as being incompatible with the purposes of ECECs (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2017).

These important points of view affect the responsibility of the profession and the need for a critical voice. At the same time, the extensive use of discretion can also pose a threat to the quality of the work. Grimsæth (2017, pp. 263–265) uses the concept of the burdens of discretion in a discussion about how newly qualified teachers find it difficult to exercise fair judgement.

Goodin (1986, pp. 232–261) points to some dangers related to the widespread use of discretion. He does not link it to work with children, but it is not difficult to see that the points made may also be relevant to the exercise of professional discretion in ECCs. First, the right to discretion carries a high risk of manipulation and exploitation. For example, a pedagogical leader can assign a children's group more employee resources over time and justify it as a need based on

a professional judgement. Second, discretion can lead to arbitrariness in the workplace; it is difficult for others to see what lies behind different decisions and priorities. Such unpredictability can also lead to insecurity and uncertainty among employees and children in ECECs. Goodin's last argument is that discretion affects privacy and intrusiveness. In some cases, for example, the pedagogical leader may go too far in collecting information about the child and the family regarding the child's development and interaction in the family, even though this is done so that the child will receive the best possible pedagogical offer in ECC. On this basis, it is important to stop and discuss the use of professional judgement in pedagogical work—there is both good and poor professional judgement. Studies of decision-making processes (Kahnemann, 2012; Kahnemann et al., 2021) suggest that our intuition may have inherent cognitive strokes such as bias, prejudice, and past negative/positive experiences, which can lead us to fallacy.

Discretion and Leadership Strategies

One question is what leaders can do to ensure that discretion is exercised appropriately and is well considered. Molander (2013, pp. 44–54) presents the terms structural and epistemological mechanisms—or leadership strategies. Structural strategies tend to restrict the scope of professional judgement and/or place restrictions on the behaviour of an individual who has the authority to make judgements, while epistemological strategies seek to improve the basis for and the quality of reasoning that leads to assessments and decisions within the individual's discretion (Gotvassli & Moe, 2019, p. 266). Grimen and Molander (2008) refer to Dworkin's (1977) metaphorical image of professional judgement as a doughnut. The structural strategies form the ring around the hole and consist of restrictions and standards established by the authorities and others. The empty space in the middle of the doughnut denotes the latitude with which the professional must exercise their professional judgement. The question is thus how pedagogical leaders handle the dynamic relationship between structural and epistemological strategies.

Research Methods

We chose a qualitative research design to enable us to delve into a more nuanced understanding of how pedagogical leaders work with professional judgement (Blaikie, 2010, p. 8). The empirical material consists of four semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight pedagogical leaders—seven women and one man—who work across seven different ECECs. Five of the ECECs are in middle Norway, while two are in Arctic areas, and they have between two to six departments each. Four of the individuals have between six and twelve years of experience, and four have between twenty and thirty years of experience. The overall goal of in-depth interviews is mainly to create a situation for a relatively free conversation about specific topics defined by a researcher (Tjora, 2017). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. We created an interview guide whereby we started with some background questions and the following main question:

> The new Framework Plan has the following formulation in terms of responsibility for the pedagogical leader: The pedagogical leader is given the responsibility for implementing and directing educational work, in line with his or her sound professional judgement [this text is displayed]. What are your reflections on this?

In the usual way, we sent an information letter in advance, and informed consent was obtained. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised.

Data Analysis

As an analysis strategy, we used qualitative research as stepwise-deductive induction (Tjora 2019, pp. 27–52). In this type of model, detailed data analysis and generalisation through the development of codes and concepts are central. For this strategy, Alvesson and Skjøldberg (1994, p. 4) suggest the use of the abductive process, which uses both deductive and inductive approaches and moves from empirical to theoretical dimensions of analysis (Lukka & Modell, 2010). Our research process began with raw data, with theories and perspectives drawn in advance. We then summarised the essence of the data material by coding it with empirically close codes. This reduced the amount of material and helped us to generate concepts based on details within it (Tjora, 2019).

We then grouped the codes into distinct thematic groups—for example, the use of training and feedback by leaders. Then, looking at the group codes, we attempted to develop a typology of the pedagogical leaders' work with their staff members' use of professional judgement in various contexts in their services (Tjora, 2017, p. 213).

The selected sources of empirical material are not a statistically representative selection. Nevertheless, they should provide insight into how different aspects of the exercise of professional judgement in pedagogical leadership are viewed by groups of individuals who have extensive experience. Tjora (2017, pp. 195–226) identifies this as a type of conceptual generalisation, while Simons (2009, pp. 164–165) refers to it as naturalistic generalisation. Here, we use earlier research and theories that support the broader application and generalisability of our findings over and above the individual case. Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies this as a way of learning from individual cases that is applicable in many policy and practice contexts. It can be used to encourage professionals to act in relation to the findings of a case or to research their own situations.

Understanding the Concept of Professional Judgement

Several of the pedagogical leaders note that it is difficult to formulate any precise understanding of the concept of professional judgement. Some associate professional judgements with both theory and experience, not to mention intuition. This is illustrated in the following quote:

> I think it is … theory, practice, experience together that constitute good professional judgement, and then you must use a great deal of intuition … (Pedagogical leader F)

The pedagogical leaders associate professional judgement with ethics and morality. One overall theme is that good professional judgement must be considered against what is in the child's best interests.

> Both theory and practical experiences give you wisdom and intuition. The use of professional judgement may feel more challenging for newcomers than for those of us who may have worked more in a lifetime. (Pedagogical leader E)

Furthermore, pedagogical leaders associate the concept of discretion with daring to make decisions, assess them afterwards, and learn from them.

Wicked Problems—What Is in the Child's Best Interests?

The pedagogical leaders associate the exercise of professional judgement with what is in the child's best interests, which can be challenging and difficult to figure out. Even though all our informants have been working for a long time, they still sometimes find themselves unsure of what it is best to do. Very subtle and complex situations can arise where it is not always easy to know what is best for the child.

> It says in the Framework Plan what is 'the best for the child' and so we must consider what the best is for the child. There is no fascination with that, but we need to determine what we believe based on our background with both theory and practice, our wisdom and intuition. (Pedagogical leader F)

Extensive Use of Professional Judgement—A Danger?

In the interview, we asked the pedagogical leaders to reflect on whether they had great freedom to exercise professional discretion. To illustrate this concept, we used the metaphor of either a cage or a ballroom. All the pedagogical leaders reflected that what they experience is more like a ballroom than a cage. Given that the possibilities of exercising discretion are so wide, this can be problematised. One of the leaders says the freedom implies the confidence that they can exercise good professional judgement, which is good. Restrictions related to the exercise of professional judgement, she says, may be too different in the different departments and lead to arbitrariness in the work.

> That is what I'm saying about it, that it can spread too much. It becomes a negative consequence if we are unable to talk together and come to a common understanding of the content … (Pedagogical leader C)

Some of the informants also said that there could be more guidelines regarding what is considered sound professional judgement. The

consequences of the widespread use of discretion can also result in uncertainty and lower quality regarding pedagogical work. Another dilemma related to the use of discretion is the source of power and how it can be difficult to argue against the professional's judgement.

> There is much power behind the word. I have heard this from teachers about assessing students, how to meet the needs of the student and be aware of one's power. It is important to be aware of how you exercise that power. You shall not abuse your power. (Pedagogical leader G)

Leadership Strategies or Customs Used by Pedagogical Leaders

Pedagogical leaders use different strategies when they try to ensure that the work carried out by the staff is done with sound professional judgement. They use involvement, motivation, expectation, clarification, and guidance—which may be termed epistemic leadership strategies. It is important to involve all employees, parents, and children in decisions. Storytelling based on practice, videos, drawings, and other forms of pedagogical documentation are used to stimulate reflection and discussion.

> At meetings, we often have reflection groups where we divide up and are then given an assertion, to which we have to say whether we agree, partly agree, or disagree. Then, we go round, and we must justify our answer before we go into a discussion, so everyone has to say something. (Pedagogical leader A)

The pedagogical leaders further say that it is important to motivate employees by providing them with the challenges they need. This is also about developing and applying the expertise at the disposal of the leaders within the employee group. *Guidance* is highlighted as a situation where professional discretion is largely used.

> I think we use discretion a lot in terms of guidance. Most of the staff are skilled workers, but there are new employees with less experience, and there we need to be able to reflect on discretion in kindergarten. (Pedagogical leader G)

Pedagogical leaders also mention structural leadership strategies to frame the use of discretion. This process is about legislation, frame-

work plans, routines, meetings, and other structures that are essential to ensure proper framing of professional judgement.

Discussion of Concepts in Relation to the Findings

In our analysis of the material, we attempted to search for patterns and typologies. To discern these, we looked at group codes or main topics from the material we had gathered in the previous stage, keeping relevant theories (such as the use of leadership strategies) and other research in mind. We can discern that the work of the pedagogical leaders to make good use of professional judgement must be viewed in light of the context—a context that can limit or enhance the use of professional judgement. Including staff in discussion and reflection is important in leadership. However, doing so is complex, and requires ongoing work with the staff to strengthen their professional judgement. It also involves balance, with many situations not providing much opportunity for staff to engage in professional judgement.

It is not always easy to discern the best way to deal with complex pedagogical situations, but leaders identify two different axes they consider to be important in their efforts to encourage professional judgement among their staff: 1) the degree of complexity—namely, how wicked or complex the situation is; 2) the requirements for procedural accuracy and documentation. For example, there may be procedures and rules that should be followed or there may be great freedom to find different solutions and decisions. We will look at some typical examples of how the pedagogical leaders themselves explain how they try to manage the dimensions of complexity in each situation and the level of requirements for certain procedures, documentation, and structures.

Detailed rules and routines, which leave little room for professional discretion, are often linked to the safety of children. One explanation, which is a very illustrative example, is the following:

> The weapon in the office we use when we are on a trip, even if we are just going up to the church. If we are going on longer trips, e.g. out on the fjord, we must bring armed polar bear guards. (Pedagogical leader A)

We also have examples where the exercise of professional discretion is within certain limited frameworks—linked to structured pedagogical programmes, for example.

> We have used some programmes, but there are relatively firm require-
> ments for how they should be used. (Pedagogical leader B)

Many of the informants believe that they work from day to day with a great degree of professional discretion and accompanying professional responsibility:

> Most of the things we do in the ECEC are very complex and often require the use of theoretical insights and experiences and you dare to trust your gut feeling. (Pedagogical leader C)

A typical example of freedom to use professional discretion in limited specific activities is:

> Regarding the meal with fruit snack, etc., it is a matter of getting to it within the there-and-then situation, and it can vary regarding how much discretion it requires. (Pedagogical leader E)

The use of professional judgement is often related to how unclear and complex the situation is—what we have referred to as wicked or tame problems. This division means that exercising professional discretion is something that the pedagogical leaders must see in the context in which it is to be exercised. If it is not done, one may end up needlessly curtailing one's professional discretion or allowing more discretion than is professionally justifiable.

These findings are important for policy and practice in the sense that pedagogical leaders need to think carefully about the situations in which it is productive to use a lot of professional judgement and those in which it is important to reduce the use of professional judgement. It is also important to discuss this with the other staff in the work-place. Policymakers must also make it clear that the use of professional judgement is something that must be high on the agenda in pedagogi-cal discussion in ECECs.

Limitations

The limitation of our findings lies primarily in the fact that a small sample of educational leaders were interviewed. Our study sheds some light on how pedagogical leaders perceive the concept of professional judgement and how they work with professional discretion. However, much more research is needed to gain more secure knowledge. It would

also be interesting to delve into situations in which pedagogical leaders feel confident about their discretion and those in which they are more uncertain. It could also be interesting to gain knowledge about how the rest of the staff in the ECEC experience their own professional discretion in working with children and parents.

Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to determine how pedagogical leaders understand the concept of sound professional judgement, the challenging aspects of discretion, and how their work as pedagogical leaders is in line with sound professional judgement. The concept of professional judgement as explained in the literature is what can be called an eclectic term, that is, it is stretchable (Røvik & Pettersen, 2014, p. 61) and rarely precisely defined. The pedagogical leaders associate the term with unpredictability and complexities that require intuition and empathy and are linked to an assessment of the child's best interests. This can be difficult in many situations and requires a combination of experience and theoretical knowledge. The room allowed for professional discretion is perceived as large, with few limitations. Interestingly, many such leaders also suggest that the excessive use of professional discretion can cause too much variety and lack of transparency in pedagogical work. This arbitrariness can thus lead to insecurity in the children.

One important finding is that our informants primarily use epistemic leadership strategies such as guidance, common reflection, and motivation to ensure broad consensus within their employee group regarding pedagogical practices and the use of professional discretion. In their pedagogical leadership, the extent of professional judgement depends on the complexity of the situation and the limitations of the use of professional judgement. Complex problems require broad understanding; thus, different types of knowledge are used in the exercise of professional judgement.

This requires the skills of a bricoleur to pragmatically use whatever comes to hand to address these most complex problems (Grint, 2008). At the same time, it is important to frame professional judgement when necessary—for the safety of the children, for example. Leading pedagogical work that is in line with good professional judgement is

a vote of confidence and something with which one must work constantly and consciously.

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Notes

1 We use both professional judgement and professional discretion to refer to the same concept.

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CHAPTER 10

School Leaders' Attitude Towards the Use of Digital Technology in the Early Grades

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Abstract

Technology is changing the way we learn in the 21st century. It has found its way into schools at an increasing pace. This study seeks to examine the attitude of school leaders towards the use of technology for teaching and learning. The study was conducted in a district in Gauteng. A qualitative case study involving methods such as interviews and document analysis containing notes was examined through the lens of the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge model. The data gathered showed that school leaders supported the use of technology. School leaders were more focused on 'reading, writing and arithmetic', which are known in South Africa as the '3Rs'. Most leaders did

not see the importance and necessity of technology in the early grades. Managers indicated that they were reluctant to allow staff to use technology because of theft and lack of training. Many cited their schools did not have the infrastructure and connectivity to support the use of technology. It was recommended that school leaders should be capacitated in the use of technology. The Department of Education should ensure that all schools have the necessary infrastructure in place before technology is introduced and that stricter security measures are put in place to prevent the theft of equipment from schools.

Keywords: school leaders, Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge model, digital technology, attitudes, challenges

Introduction

The introduction of technology for teaching and learning needs a major transformation in schools. This complex, difficult, and non-linear process requires commitment and support from all stakeholders (head teachers, heads of department (HoDs), teachers, learners, parents, and the Department of Education). The Department of Education (DoE, 2004) introduced the e-Education policy intending to transform teaching and learning for the development of 21st-century skills. This policy placed an obligation on educators to use educational technology to deliver on the expectation for quality education for economic growth. This caused problems across public schools in South Africa, with various reasons cited. Johnson et al. (2016) and Vandeyar (2013) agree that there is a lack of systemic support and that there is resistance to the implementation of technology, and this has given rise to differing attitudes from school leaders and teaching staff. This study focused on the attitude of school leaders towards the use of technology in the early grades as mandated in the e-Education policy. The following primary research question guided this study: What are school leaders' attitudes towards the use of digital technology in the early grades? Kayalar (2016) states that our lives revolve around technology and its continuous use. According to Venketsamy and Wilson (2020), it is used daily in some form or another to simplify our daily activities, thus making it inevitable that digital technology has become part of the teaching and learning process.

Digital technology integration into the classroom can be described as the process by which digital technologies are used as tools to support

the process of teaching and learning (Sung et al., 2016; Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020). This process involves the construction of learning programmes that are best suited to incorporating digital technologies as teaching tools into the curriculum to enhance and provide a meaningful learning environment for all learners (Sung et al., 2016).

School leaders (head teachers and HoDs) are at the core of the technological shift in education systems (Richardson et al., 2013). Mahoney & Khwaja (2016) reiterate this by stating that school leaders play a significant role in providing leadership and vision. Digital technology and the expeditious growth thereof increasingly place pressure on schools, school leaders, and teachers to adapt, improve, and streamline teaching and learning programmes (Richardson et al., 2013). Richardson et al. (2013) further state that the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of digital technology in teaching and learning programmes depend solely on the adaptiveness and innovativeness of the leadership team in a school. Ugur & Koç (2019) indicate that it is extremely important that both school leaders and staff share the same vision when it comes to the use and implementation of digital technology.

School Leaders' Attitudes Towards the Use of Digital Technology in Teaching and Learning Programmes

School principals hold the positions of policymaker and leader, and thus play a crucial role in determining to what extent digital technology is implemented in the curriculum and in learning procedures in the school (Mahoney & Khwaja, 2016). Ugur & Koç (2019) support this by stating that the attitude school leaders have towards digital technology implementation plays a significant role in the attitudes of teachers when they have to implement and make use of digital technology in teaching and learning programmes (Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020). Johnson et al. (2016) and Richardson et al. (2013) both agree that effective school technology leadership and the navigation thereof by school leaders remains a field of investigation where limited research has been done. Still, it is perceptible that without a collective vision of how technology should be implemented in teaching and learning programmes—among school leaders and staff—effectiveness and efficiency cannot be achieved (McLeod, 2015). Creating immense challenges, these disruptive changes call for a reexamination of all ele-

ments in teaching and learning programmes (Richardson et al., 2013), which should be led by school leaders.

As stated by Ugur & Koç (2019) and Venketsamy and Wilson (2020), school leaders recognise the importance of digital technology and its use in teaching and learning programmes, but many factors influence the process of integration and implementation. One such example is tradition and school culture. School leaders take great pride in upholding traditions and the fundamental culture of their school. In some cases, this ideology of tradition and school culture prevents development and adjustment in teaching and learning programmes to best suit the academic needs of learners (McLeod, 2015), thus preventing digital technology from being used in a transformative manner in future classrooms. This may result in the misconception among teachers, school leaders, and parents that digital technology utilisation in teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase is ineffective (McLeod, 2015).

Ugur & Koç (2019), however, have found that some leaders advocate for change in their schools. This process of transformation and growth is sometimes restricted, as some teachers and staff are reluctant to change, and they resist the implementation of digital technology. Mahoney and Khwaja (2016) support this statement, saying school leaders choose not to advocate for the implementation of digital technology in their schools because of staff attitudes and lack of knowledge and understanding of the use of technology. One of the challenges includes the effectiveness of teacher training, which according to Mahoney & Khwaja (2016) is not considered to be successful. This places considerable pressure on teachers when they must use digital technology in teaching and learning programmes. To avoid such situations, some school leaders choose not to use digital technology in teaching and learning (Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020), but rather focus time on teaching young learners the 3Rs—reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Venketsamy and Wilson (2020) state that it is not only teachers that have been found to lack the relevant knowledge to successfully use digital technology in teaching and learning programmes. According to Mahoney & Khwaja (2016), this lack of knowledge is also evident among school leaders. Richardson et al. (2013) state that in situations where most school leaders lack basic competency in technology, their ability to understand various policies and planning issues associated

with the effective implementation of digital technologies in teaching and learning programmes is effectively impeded. Furthermore, even though school leaders have a positive attitude towards the use of digital technology in teaching and learning programmes (Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020), they are also under the impression that it is not essential for them as leaders to develop their technological skills (Ugur & Koç, 2019). In contrast, Yurdakul et al. (2012) stress the importance of both teachers and school leaders developing technological pedagogical knowledge so that they have a better understanding of learners' needs and so that they can equip learners with 21st-century skills. As such, school administrators and leaders need proficient pedagogical content knowledge to establish a holistic view of how technology influences the development of learners (Richardson et al. 2013). For school leaders, according to McLeod (2015), the fear of the unknown and of being learners again impedes the process of digitalisation in teaching and learning programmes. McLeod (2015) further states that if school leaders do not pilot the implementation of digital learning programmes in their schools, little to no success will be effectuated in developing technological skills among teachers and learners.

Yurdakul et al. (2012), Venketsamy and Wilson (2020), and Wilson (2017) assert that the biggest barrier to technology integration is the lack of knowledge and competency of school leaders to implement and manage the use of technology in the classroom. According to Hennessy et al. (2015), school leaders are often not consulted regarding the use of digital technology. They are given policies and requested to implement them. According to Wilson (2017), school leaders are the key component in the effective development and implementation of digital technologies in the 21st-century classroom (Kayalar 2016), making it imperative that their experiences and perspectives on the use of digital technologies in the classroom are considered. According to Hennessy et al. (2015), teacher education and professional development have been neglected, especially in African countries. As a result, the focus has been diverted to the capability of a single technological device and not to the holistic integration of the device as a support tool in the education programme (Philip & Garcia, 2013; Wilson, 2017).

The use and implementation of digital technologies in learning programmes and classrooms can be effective in creating a successful learning environment for all learners. Unfortunately, implementation is easier said than done (Philip & Garcia, 2013). The partici-

pants' voices in the findings and discussions highlight the challenges they experience in the implementation of digital technologies in their teaching and learning.

Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge Framework

The Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) conceptual framework has been introduced in the field of education (see Figure 10.1) and is used as a framework in this chapter (Wilson, 2017). This model, developed by Koehler and Mishra (2006), focuses on Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK) that support school leaders in the implementation of educational technology in their schools in the early grades (Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020; Wilson, 2017). The model encompasses the interaction and collaboration between the three basic building blocks of knowledge—technology, pedagogy and content—and interconnects with the basic assumptions of the application of suitable teaching content with appropriate pedagogical methods and technology (Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Koehler & Mishra, 2006). Although the model emphasises the crucial role technology plays in teaching and learning, the attitudes of school leaders towards the implementation of technology are of concern. According to Celep and Tülübaş (2014), there is a significant correlation between school leaders' attitudes and teachers' enthusiasm for implementing technology. They found that in schools where leaders were averse to the use of technology, teachers also became nonchalant. The TPACK model strongly promotes the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning (Archambault & Barnett, 2010; Chai et al., 2011).

Hannaway (2019) clearly outlines the seven components of the TPACK framework as shown in Figure 10.1 (Wilson, 2017). The first component of this model by Koehler and Mishra (2006) is Technological Knowledge (TK). According to Wilson (2017), in this study the focus of TK includes the school leader's basic knowledge of the various technologies, from pencil and paper to interactive whiteboards and digital technologies such as computers, the internet, and other software. The second component is Content Knowledge (CK), which pertains to subject matter knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2006) —the content that school leaders need to understand so they can sup-
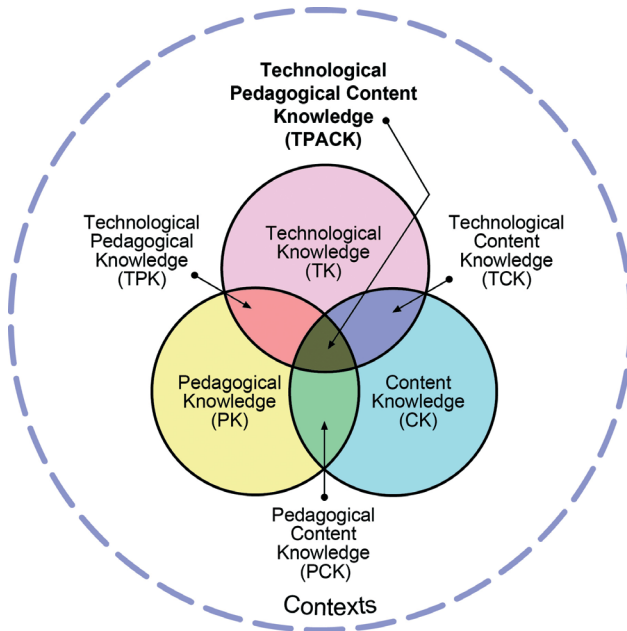
Figure 10.1: The TPACK model (Koehler & Mishra, 2006). Reproduced by permission of

port teachers to deliver the expected or prescribed content. The third component in this model is known as Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), which pertains to the strategies and techniques of teaching, learning assessment, lesson planning, methodologies, and classroom management. As instructional leaders of curriculum, school leaders should be familiar with this aspect to provide the necessary support and guidance. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is the fourth component, and refers to content knowledge about the process of teaching. PCK differs for individual content areas, as it is a mixture of content and pedagogy to improve teaching practices in the different content areas (Howell, 2012). The fifth component of the TPACK model is Technological Content Knowledge (TCK). TCK refers to how specific content can be presented effectively using technology (Schmidt et al., 2009). School leaders need to be aware that the use of technology changes the way teachers can support learners to comprehend concepts with a specific knowledge content area. Technological Pedagogical Knowledge

(TPK) is the sixth component, and highlights the application of different forms of technology that can be used in teaching. Wilson (2017) further states that school leaders should have a sound understanding of TPK to promote the implementation of technology in their schools. Finally, the seventh component of this model is known as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). TPACK is associated with the knowledge that school leaders and teachers need to have for technology and teaching to converge in any given knowledge content area.

Research Methodology

The researcher applied a qualitative research approach to investigate the attitude of school leaders towards the use of digital technology in early-grade classes (Wilson, 2017). Qualitative research assists researchers in understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' point of view (Mogashoa, 2014). This approach also attempted to unravel the school leaders' attitudes, challenges, and personal views in relation to the implementation of digital technologies. The sampling method was purposive. Six participants were included in this study from two schools in Gauteng. Two head teachers and four Foundation Phase HoDs participated in focus group interviews. In South Africa, Foundation Phase refers to learners who are in Grades R–3. The age cohort of these learners is between five and nine years old. Separate interviews were held with the head teachers and HoDs. The head teachers each had over 20 years' teaching experience and more than 10 years' management experience. The HoDs had more than 8 years' management experience in the Foundation Phase. Data collection strategies included in-depth and focus group interviews. The unstructured questions probed the attitudes, challenges, and views of school leaders in relation to implementing technology for teaching and learning in the early grades.

Data analysis was inductive. This means that the researchers used the raw data that was collected during the interviews to identify categories and themes. To structure the process of gathering and analysing data, the researchers adopted a process suggested by Creswell (2008) that sees data analysis as a spiral, moving from a narrow perspective to a broader one towards the end.

The trustworthiness of this research was addressed by posing the broad question of whether the researchers as inquirers would actually hear the meaning they thought they heard (Maree, 2020; Wilson, 2017). The researcher compared multiple data sources in search of common themes. The ethical consideration included obtaining informed consent from the university and maintaining anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and avoidance of betrayal and deception to meet the requirements of the ethical code of conduct (Wilson, 2017).

Ethics approval was granted by the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria (EC16/06/01) and the Gauteng Department of Education. All participants were formally invited and signed the consent forms agreeing to participate in the study willingly. They were further informed of voluntary participation and were not obliged to remain throughout the study. All participants consented to participate in the face-to-face interview at their school. They were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality in their participation. They were also informed that no names would be used during the reporting phase of the study.

Findings and Discussion of the Empirical Data

The attitudes of school leaders towards the use of digital technology in the early grades were categorised into two broad themes:
- School leaders' knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards technology
- Factors that limit the use of technology

Verbatim and paraphrased quotes are used as evidence in the results. The codes H1 and H2 refer to the head teachers, and HoD1–4 refers to the heads of departments. This is to ensure the anonymity and privacy of all participants.

Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Richardson et al. (2013) state that school leaders need to possess the knowledge, skills, and understanding of the use of technology if they are to prepare teachers for the 21st century. They need to keep abreast with and recognise the importance of technology for teaching and learning. Technology is gaining impetus in every sphere of education. When school leaders were asked about the importance of technology for teaching and learning, there was agreement regarding the use

of technology. This is articulated in the responses of H1, HoD1 and HoD2 that we are moving into the 21st century and everything around us is about technology, with young children using laptops, iPads and cellphones for learning. HoD1 went on to state that 'if we need to use technology for teaching and learning, then we must start immediately, otherwise we will be left behind.' H1 also indicated that '[w]e needs to encourage our young children to use technology'. HoD2 shared her view by stating: 'At my school we know technology is important and we should embrace it, but there is a big challenge. Many of us still don't know how to use some of the technologies, especially interactive whiteboards and desktops.' There are teachers and HoDs who have technology in their classrooms that is not used or is not used as much as it might be because of factors such as technical problems, lack of training and support, or the attitude of staff towards the use of technology. Mihai (2020) proposes that suppliers of technologies to schools should demonstrate to all staff how to use the technology effectively. Furthermore, there should be ongoing continuous support for all staff members.

Hennessy et al. (2010) state that many school leaders understand the importance of technology for teaching and learning, but that they lack ICT-related knowledge and understanding. Although the resources are available, there is inadequate knowledge of specific technology, technology-supported pedagogy, and technology-related classroom management. This phenomenon is voiced by HoD3, who stated that 'although we have all this high-tech equipment in schools most of the teachers do not know how to use [it]'. HoD4 and H2 also shared a similar view when they stated that the department has not trained teachers on how to use the equipment. All the participants agreed that resources are available; however, they believe their staff lack the appropriate knowledge and skills to implement the technology.

Powers and Blubaugh (2016) agree that a vast majority of school leaders and teachers have some experience using computers but lack the knowledge, understanding, and opportunity to use them as a learning resource. Ramorola (2013) states that technology can be a frightening concept and experience for many school leaders (head teachers and HoDs) who did not grow up with computers or the internet. When school leaders find technology overwhelming or frightening, it is unlikely that they will encourage its implementation. This view is aptly voiced by HoD3 and HoD4, who said that the Department of Educa-

tion wants them to use computers in their classrooms, but that they (the Department) do not understand or know how scary it is for some of them. H1 and H2 also agreed that some of their teachers are often embarrassed to use technology. H2 stated: 'One of my seasoned grade 1 teachers told me that her learners know more about computers than she does. She has to ask the children how to use certain programmes and the children often laugh at her.' This phenomenon is prevalent in most schools. Children are exposed to technology from a very young age, and most of them are confident and competent in using technology. Ebner (2017) agrees that it is a daily classroom reality that students often know more about technology than teachers do, which often terrifies teachers. She proposes that teachers need to change their attitudes and thinking about technology in order to overcome these fears. She states that school leaders and teachers should note that many technology tools are not as scary or intimidating as they might seem. It is not possible to know how to use every single resource available, and technology tools are going to come and go. When school personnel internalise this idea about technology, then the use of technology becomes much easier and less intimidating.

Ugur and Koç (2019) state that the decision on whether and how to use technology in the curriculum ultimately depends on school leaders and the attitudes they hold towards technology. According to the TPACK model, it is crucial that school leaders are appropriately capacitated with content knowledge about the use of technology and how to support the use of technology for teaching and learning (Venketsamy & Wilson, 2020). Shulman argues that appropriate content knowledge enhances a deeper understanding of the learning subject. Furthermore, Koehler and Mishra (2006) mention that it is crucial that school leaders have a firm understanding of how technological knowledge relates to pedagogical and content knowledge to ensure effective teaching and learning. The attitude of the participants towards the use of digital technology in the early grades was ambivalent. Participants indicated that they did not mind teachers using technology in the early grades, and that they should at least have the knowledge and skills for using it. H1 stated: 'I would like my teachers to use technology, but my teachers don't have the appropriate skills to implement technology effectively.'

All the participants agreed that in South Africa there is a high rate of illiteracy and low achievement in mathematics. They agreed that

technology is important for the future, but as HoD1, HoD2, and HoD3 said, they consider the 3Rs to be equally important. They stated that they must still teach their children how to read, write, and do arithmetic (mathematics), that computers cannot help their learners to form letters and write words properly, and that writing is a skill that has to be taught practically. H1 and H2 also agreed with the low literacy and numeracy levels. They both referred to the system evaluation, which showed that learners cannot read and do mathematics properly. They therefore feel that their teachers should spend more time teaching children how to read and do mathematics rather than playing games on the computer. HoD4 mentioned: 'Instead of spending one hour on the computer playing games, I want my teachers to spend that hour teaching children basic computational skills.'

From the discussion above, it is evident that school leaders agree on the importance of technology, but that their priority is to ensure that learners can read, write, and do mathematics. There is an emphasis on strengthening the 3Rs in the early grades. HoD2 and HoD3 suggested that learners could start using computers when they are in grade 4, and that so long as they master the basic skills in the Foundation Phase, they can learn how to use computers later.

Factors that Limit the Use of Technology

Lack of Resources, Maintenance and Technical Support

Data obtained from the participants revealed that their schools did not have sufficient computers, printers, scanners, mouses, mousepads and updated internet connections. According to the participants, this posed a major challenge to them as school leaders. Both schools have large class sizes and few computers. Learners are forced to sit in groups of five around one computer. H1 and H2 indicated that the use of digital technology in the early grades is challenging because of the limited resources. This resulted in participants facing major challenges in classroom management. All HoDs agreed that teachers cannot manage their learners in the computer lab, as there are few computers and children are constantly fighting with each other to use the computers. HoD1 said: 'In every computer lesson, teachers are sending learners or calling me to maintain discipline. I have to manage the discipline of learners in the computer room because children are just fighting to gain access to the computer. Learners often become unruly and

bored.' HoD2 and HoD4 both agreed that more computers and large computer classrooms to accommodate all the learners should be provided by the department. All participants agreed that when teachers take learners to the computer room there is no internet connection and there are software problems or vandalism. They said that teachers waste more time taking the learners to the computer room and that they should just stay in the classroom and focus on reading, writing, and mathematics.

Another major challenge is maintenance and technical problems. Many teachers are unfamiliar with the use of technology, and technical problems exacerbate the situation. Teachers feel helpless with a rowdy class of learners. Schools do not have qualified technicians to assist teachers in a timely manner. Schools must employ technical support from outside services, since the Department of Education does not provide this service. Because of maintenance and technical problems, lessons are often disrupted. HoD2 stated: 'Every time a teacher goes to the computer lab, they always find computers not working. Since the entire school uses the same computer room, items such as the mouse and computer cables are often found missing. This is a big problem for early grade teachers.' To minimise the loss of equipment, it is recommended that schools should mark all properties, keep an inventory of items in the computer room, and purchase insurance against theft (Spracklen, 2019). The researchers believe that values in education play a significant role in inculcating respect for other people's property, trust, and honesty among all learners. This can be done through the life-skills programme in the early grades. When learners internalise these values, there is a greater possibility of learners emulating good values.

Poor Support from the Department of Education

Factors outside the school are another challenge to school leaders. There is a lack of support from the Department of Education, and this is articulated by both H1 and H2, who said that they must call the district office for support with their computers, and that while the office takes their calls, they don't send anyone to help them, so their biggest need is to have a technical support person on site. H2 stated: 'At least the department should take one staff member and train them on computer support.' HoD1, HoD2, and HoD4 said that when the Department of Education or the circuit managers are unsupportive in rela-

tion to their challenges, they often tend to lose interest in promoting the use of technology for teaching and learning. Effective technology planning is a process. The Department of Education did not consider the supportive structures that are required from the district and provincial levels. The urgency in encouraging schools to use technology has created a support gap in the Department. There is a lack of capacity at the district level and thus many teachers do not receive adequate and timely support with technological issues. According to Headstart (n.d.), it is important to establish leadership and support teams at all levels of the education system. Schools should be able to access support and resources within a short space of time to motivate teachers.

Risks and Security Problems

Theft and vandalism are other challenges school leaders need to manage. Computer equipment is often stolen. HoD1 and HoD2 said that learners stole computer equipment such as flash drives, mouses, and mousepads. H2 stated that 'most of the time our computer lab is broken into during the weekends and school holidays.' H1 mentioned that 'theft is a big problem. If people in the community know you have a computer device in your school or classroom it gets stolen very quickly.' According to Ramorola (2013), this frequent theft of equipment often leaves the school without any equipment. H1 and H2 agreed they serve as gatekeepers and safety officers of the computer centre because of theft and vandalism. Mbusi (2020) states that break-ins and vandalism are not new in South Africa. Schools have become more vulnerable to crime as they are increasingly equipped with ICT devices. He proposes that community involvement and protection of the school environment are pertinent. Schools should ensure that they are fitted with security gates and alarm systems linked to security companies. In this way, there would be an immediate reaction if there were any form of vandalism.

Teacher Development and Training

Teacher training and development in the use of technology are important. 'My schools do not have any qualified teachers in technology and this is a big challenge,' said H2. H1 and HoD2 indicated that as school leaders they are not trained in computer education. They are called to a workshop but describe this as very theoretical. In the workshop, the presenter usually tells them about the importance of technology,

but there is very little hands-on practice. When the participants were asked whether they felt they were sufficiently trained to support the implementation of digital technology in their schools, all indicated that they were insufficiently trained to support the use of technology and therefore cannot encourage teachers to use it. Most school leaders leave workshops feeling incompetent because of a lack of understanding and hands-on experience. This enhances their negative attitude towards technology implementation at the school level. According to Archambault and Barnett (2010), the TPACK model is helpful for understanding, developing, and improving the use of technology for teaching and learning. Koehler and Mishra (2006) emphasise the importance of making technology available to all teaching personnel and claim that as soon as teachers are familiar with the use and value of technology they will show enthusiasm and eagerness to implement it in their teaching and learning. It is therefore important that school leaders share equal passion and enthusiasm with their staff to promote technology purposefully (Powers & Blubaugh, 2016).

For the successful implementation of technology in schools, there should be ongoing staff development programmes for school leaders as indicated in the *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT and Training* (DoE, 2007). School leaders need to understand the value of technology for teaching and learning. According to Koehler and Mishra (2008), professional development in technology should take into consideration the fundamental knowledge fields described by the TPACK model, and facilitators should build on each knowledge field.

As cited by Vandeyar (2013) regarding the lack of support services, it is envisaged that schools should be given ongoing support from district and technical support staff in the Department of Education. This support should include technical support whereby technology hardware is regularly serviced and kept in working condition. Software support is also essential. Staff should be able to consult with professionals on technological programmes best suited for specific grades. With the appropriate training and capacity-building programmes, support from the Department, adequate infrastructure, and hardware and software support, it is envisaged that school leaders will develop a more positive attitude towards the implementation of technology in their schools. They will see the value of technology for teaching and learning in the

early grades and for preparing young learners for the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the attitudes of school leaders on the use of technology in early-grade classes. Given the importance of the new information technologies in the creation of knowledge, schools are seen as suitable and relevant places in which to equip learners with the necessary skills. Despite introducing new technologies at school, not all school leaders have embraced them. School leaders in the early grades believed that their focus is to prepare young learners to read, write, and do mathematics before using technology. Their learners' performance in international assessment and in the Department of Education's systemic evaluation provides key indicators to school leaders of the need to focus on improving learner performance in the 3Rs rather than focusing on technology in the early grades. They also believe that learners will be able to learn to use technology in later grades when they are competent with the basic 3Rs. To ensure that learners are competent in the 3Rs, school leaders have increased teaching and learning time in the 3Rs, encouraged extra classes, and developed a 'bridging class' to help learners master the 3Rs.

While school leaders may be against any form of transformation, especially the integration of technology into teaching practices in the early grades, their learners are using technology wherever and whenever possible for learning. According to Sithole et al. (2012), learners whom they refer to as the Y-generation are competent with sophisticated technology and media learning, are independent problem-solvers, and value teamwork and engaging in multitasking.

According to Mukhari (2016), given the nature of contemporary social structure and the type of workforce required in the global economy, school leaders must be part of the network society and engage in lifelong learning. The global economy expects school leaders and teaching professionals to facilitate pedagogical activities to produce 'self-directed' learners who will be skilled in executing ICT-related activities and capable of being employed in jobs that do not yet exist.

Limitations

This study was limited to the attitudes of school leaders regarding the use of technology in the early grades for teaching and learning. The study was further limited to Gauteng Province. The researchers believe that the study would yield different results if it were undertaken in all nine provinces in the country. Further exploration of the use of technology in the early grades should include larger samples across several provinces in South Africa. As a course for further studies, the researchers recommend that there is a need for an in-depth investigation of the use of technology from the perspectives of teachers and early-grade learners within the South African context. It is believed that the findings may surprise researchers, considering the cadre of prospective teachers who have been using technology at tertiary levels. The COVID-19 pandemic was an eye-opener to schools, where teaching had to take place online. This posed a major challenge to quality teaching and learning.

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Peer Mentoring as a Means of Leader Support in Early Childhood Education and Care

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Abstract

Mentoring has become a valuable tool in supporting professionals. However, despite the benefits of mentoring, mentoring in early childhood education (ECE) has been paid only limited attention. The chapter is based on a research project focusing on peer mentoring as a means of leader support in Finnish ECE. The purpose of the project was to implement a peer mentoring programme to develop mentoring for leaders. During the programme, 21 leaders working in ECE were trained to start working as peer mentors for leaders in ECE. Learning activities during the programme required participants to start peer mentoring in their own professional contexts. The study investigates peer mentors' experiences of peer mentoring related to their mentoring process with their mentees. Qualitative data were obtained through focus group interviews investigating the peer mentors' experiences of the peer mentoring. The findings show that peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECE. Peer mentoring provided a safe space to discuss professional issues and dilemmas and is characterised by collegial and

reciprocal relationships. The results enhance our understanding of peer mentoring from the perspective of the peer mentors.

Keywords: peer mentoring, peer mentor, leader, early childhood education

Introduction

Leaders in early childhood education (ECE) develop their professional competence within increasingly changing policies, complex functions, and practices. In Finland, recent years have seen a rapidly changing field and work environment in ECE (Halttunen & Waniganayake, 2021; Hjelt & Karila, 2017). Working life is moreover being increasingly characterised by multiple uncertainties and time pressures (Kupila et al., 2018; Pascal & Bertram, 2018). Leadership in ECE has a long tradition, but it varies in its implementation (Hujala et al., 2013; Strehmel et al., 2019). Many of the demands, changes, and challenges of the work environment may confuse and influence leaders' professional identity construction processes.

Hujala (2013) argues that in practice leadership has been a fairly elusive phenomenon. Moen and Granrusten (2013) define four functions that must be taken care of in early childhood education (ECE) centres, namely pedagogical, staff, administrative, and strategic leadership functions. Halttunen (2013) defines elements that should be considered in the determination of leadership in ECE organisations. These elements include employees' individual needs for leadership, the role of the teams, and how the leadership is arranged at the municipal level. The study in Finland, Japan, and Singapore (Hujala et al., 2016) revealed that the tasks of ECE leaders in all three countries are similar—the two most important leadership tasks being pedagogical leadership and human resource management—although implementation of tasks varied according to the cultural context. Waniganayake (2013) affirms that although there is widespread agreement on the necessity for leader preparation, the appropriate ways to cultivate ECE leaders are decidedly debatable.

Building a career as a leader is an ongoing process (Waniganayake, 2013). In its current state, ECE needs leader support (e.g. Karila & Kupila, 2010). Mentoring has become a valuable tool in supporting professionalism and professional development throughout the teaching career (see Geeraerts et al., 2015; Hudson, 2013) and mentoring

programmes in ECE are proliferating. However, despite the benefits of mentoring, the nature and extent of mentoring in ECE are still ill-defined, and mentoring in ECE has been paid only limited attention in Finland. Thus, research on improving mentoring in ECE practice is still in its infancy. In addition, the term 'mentoring' has multiple meanings.

This chapter is based on a research project focusing on peer mentoring as a means of ECE centre leader support in ECE. The purpose of the project was to implement a peer mentoring programme designed to develop peer mentoring as a means to support ECE leaders. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate peer mentors' views of mentoring related to their peer mentoring process with their mentees. The research question was how peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECE.

Peer Mentoring as a Framework for Mentoring

Mentoring can be viewed as a considerable professional development process in ECE, and as a valuable means of facilitating learning, cultivating skills, and promoting career development (Aubrey, 2011; Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2015). Wong and Waniganayake (2013, p. 163) define mentoring as 'a facilitated process involving two or more individuals that have a shared interest in professional learning and development'. Mentoring is also emphasised as an aid to the development of professional identity (e.g. Rippon & Martin, 2003). Besides, mentoring is claimed to facilitate the mentee's induction into the culture of the profession (in this case, leadership) and into the specific local context (here, ECE) (see Hobson et al., 2009). Further, mentoring is seen as a part of socialisation to leadership roles (Daresh, 2004) and has also become part of quality assurance (Braybrook, 2019, p. 46). As a process, mentoring is defined as a dynamic interpersonal relationship (Wong & Waniganayake, 2013). Braybrook (2019) found that developing professional networks outside of the workplace was effective in increasing professional confidence.

Many efforts have been made to emphasise the importance of peer support in the field of educational administration (Daresh, 2004). In this chapter, mentoring is specifically framed in terms of peer mentoring. Research has shown the value and relevance of peer mentoring and of peer mentorship as a form of mentoring (Doran et al., 2018;

Kupila & Karila, 2018). In a peer group, a mentor is assigned to a small group of mentees. In the context of leadership in ECE, the peer group may be a focus group composed of leaders. As such, peer mentoring involves participants who are relative equals in terms of institutional hierarchy or position (see Angelique et al., 2002). The group members are at a similar stage in their professional development and serve as peer mentors to each other while working on common interests and professional issues (e.g. Angelique et al., 2002). Peer mentoring is a means to support leaders' well-being at work and the working community (see Certo, 2005). It is also important to consider how the mentoring is incorporated within the ECE centre's management structures besides explicit leadership responsibilities (Braybrook, 2019).

In peer mentoring, all participants usually have something of value to contribute and gain from each other (Angelique et al., 2002; Kupila & Karila, 2018). Exchanges with peers may thus be experienced as less threatening, and more open and authentic relationships may be formed (Johnson, 2007). Jipson and Paley (2000) argue that collaboration and mentoring are often closely intertwined. Thus, the theoretical concept of peer mentoring emphasises it as being a shared and reciprocal activity (Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008; Pennanen et al., 2015).

Geeraerts et al. (2015) define the peer-group mentoring model as based on the ideas of socio-constructivism, dialogue, and knowledge sharing involving integrated self-regulative support, peer support, mentor support, and expert support (Geeraerts, 2015, p. 363). Today, mentoring is increasingly used to refer to collaboration and dialogue (Heikkinen et al., 2012). Dialogue is associated with the requirement for equality; the participants in parties to the dialogue treat each other as equals. Individuals are equal as human beings, even if they are unequal in terms of expertise. In a dialogic relationship, no one has a better or more valid perspective than any other, but both acknowledge the incompleteness of their perceptions (Karjalainen et al., 2006).

The challenge for the mentee is not to expect ready-made instructions and advice from the peer mentor. Meaning and interpretation are built together with the mentor. Mentees should not expect mentors to do anything on their behalf but should take responsibility for their own development (Karjalainen et al., 2006). The peer mentor also learns through discussion with the mentee (Kupila & Karila, 2018).

In a mentoring relationship, leaders in ECE can structure and clarify their responsibilities and peer mentors can help leaders to focus

on their professional future, and likewise on how leaders can move their subordinates forward. During the agreed meetings with the peer mentor, issues related to professional skills and special competencies are discussed. Mentoring has also been found to be important in the construction of stakeholder structures. In ECE, the peer mentor can be a support in pedagogical leadership. Braybrook (2019) emphasises that more attention is needed for mentoring of new graduates and establishing national guidelines for mentoring.

Study Context

This sub-study is part of a larger research project entitled Mentoring and Learning Partnership in Early Childhood Education and Care 2017–2020, where mentoring was developed to support the professional development of ECE professionals at different stages of their working lives. The project aimed to create a peer mentoring model suitable for ECE environments and was created in cooperation with the worlds of education and work. Partners from the work field include the six municipalities and their respective ECE centres. The purpose of this sub-study is to investigate the experiences of peer mentoring among 21 peer mentors also working as leaders in ECE. Particular focus was directed to the question of how peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECE.

All participants worked as leaders in ECE. The size of the units they led varied. Participants' work experience ranged from 3 years to 18 years. The average work experience of the participants was 9 years. Two of the mentors were men and the rest were women. Participants came from six municipalities of different sizes. Municipalities represented administrative organisations of various sizes as well as regional diversity.

During the mentoring programme, leaders were trained to work as mentors and started to work as peer mentors in ECE in their respective municipalities. The mentor training consisted of nine seminar days and learning tasks. These tasks required participants to reflect on material presented. Mentor training was based on the dialogue and reflection components. These components were supported by peer group activities and by feedback given by trainers. Mentors were also supposed to start peer mentoring with the mentees in their own professional context or municipality. Peer mentoring with the mentees was

to start while the training was ongoing, and the mentees were leaders or deputy leaders in the ECE context. Peer mentoring practices were explored in the groups of mentees (max. four persons) or individually. The steering group of the programme was structured in such a way that its representatives were from the six municipalities in which the participants were employed.

Method

Qualitative data were collected from the peer mentoring programme process. Thus, 21 peer mentors took part in 6 focus group interviews. Each focus group consisted of three to four peer mentor leaders. The focus in the interviews was on the peer mentors' experiences of working as a mentor, mentoring progress, and the development of the process. The interviews lasted approximately 70 minutes. They were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data were analysed thematically (Roulston, 2001). Thematic analysis is a method for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Being thematic, the analysis seeks to identify important themes emerging from the description of the phenomenon. The analysis consists of different phases: first, familiarisation with the data; second, generating initial codes; third, searching for themes; fourth, reviewing the themes; fifth, defining and naming the themes; and last, producing the report (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In this study, themes were used to capture important aspects of the data in relation to the facilitators and benefits of peer mentoring, its contribution to leadership, and its characteristic defining features in the process of mentoring (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis attempted to describe the essential details of the mentors' experiences of the peer mentoring process with their mentees. Thematic analysis reports experiences, meanings, and the reality of the phases of peer mentoring progress. The characteristics of the working context were also examined. In order to gain insight into the data as a whole, all interview transcripts were read and studied several times.

This study has potential limitations. The number of participants was small, but the richness of the data was enhanced by the fact that the participants came from six different municipalities. In addition, the aim of the research was to increase understanding and describe the nature of the peer mentoring process and how peer mentoring can

support ECE leaders, rather than being generalisable. The study was also conducted at a particular time when the creation of mentoring practices in the study municipalities was in its infancy.

Ethical Considerations

The issue of mentoring touches on sensitive issues, and the author is aware of the possible repercussions of writing about leaders' peer mentoring and work experiences. A guarantee of confidentiality was therefore given to the interviewees, stating that all personal information would be treated in strictest confidence, that no actual names would be used to ensure adequate protection of privacy, and that no ECE centres would be identifiable in the reporting. All research data would be stored securely and would be password protected. Participation in the research was essentially voluntary. Participants were seen as subjects with rights. Merrill and West (2009, p. 168) emphasise that the researcher has to treat research subjects as 'full human beings: knowing, creative subjects in their own right, rather than as repositories of "data" to be extracted and understood by researchers alone'.

Findings

This study used the frame of peer mentoring to explore how peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECE. During the focus group interviews, the peer mentors discussed and assessed their activities as peer mentors and also the peer mentoring process they led for their mentees. The findings show that peer mentoring facilitates leadership and indicate the potential of peer mentoring to support the work of an ECE leader. First, peer mentoring supports leaders' professional identity and also assumes the leaders' position in supporting emotional aspects in the process. Peer mentoring also offers a safe space to discuss pedagogical leadership and shared leadership. Peer mentoring is part of human resource management and well-being at work. Mentoring addresses everyday activities and seeks solutions to these. Second, in the peer mentoring relationship mentors and mentees are co-learners in a collegial relationship. Peer mentoring is important for both novice leaders and more experienced leaders. Further, peer mentoring provides mentees with peer support but is also meaningful for the peer mentors themselves.

Supporting Professional Identity

Peer mentoring discussions support the construction of a mentee leader's professional identity. In the peer mentoring discussions, the mentees examine their position and positioning as leaders; they reflect on how to find their roles in the ECE work community and among its staff. Most of the mentees also have experience as ECE teachers working with groups of children, and this also confuses professional identity and assumes a position. Together with their peer mentors, the mentees form and enhance their own personal understanding of what defines them as leaders. Peer mentoring discussions involve making their skills and professional abilities known not only to themselves but to others involved in the peer mentoring context. The mentee and peer mentor together identify the elements of the role of the leader, and likewise the responsibilities and obligations. During the peer mentoring conversation, it is possible to verbalise, describe, analyse, and assess leaders' (mentees') professional actions. The following excerpts illustrate the basic premises of a multifaceted approach to leadership as follows:

> I bring out really strongly the reflection on my own way of doing work, my own being, my own communication … but as getting to know yourself [mentee]. How you act in different situations and how you react, so that just by getting to know yourself, you are able to develop yourself. It [mentoring] could open gates to getting to know yourself. (Leader mentor 19, F C 6)

> … confirmation of leadership that you [mentee] now have this position, and you yourself make it your vision. (Leader mentor 3, F C 1)

> … with my mentee, her own role and identity is where she desperately needs support, and encouragement to face different situations, take on situations and speak up. (Leader mentor 12, F C 4)

Exploring professional identity also entails reflection and constructing one's own leadership culture and finding one's own position in other administrative teams in the operating environment. Peer mentors believe that attachment to leadership can be supported by mentoring. Below, a peer mentor describes identity development in this context:

> Professional identity develops all the time and by discussing and mirroring thoughts to another person's thoughts, that [identity] is constantly maintained. (Leader mentor 10, F C 3)

The topics of the peer mentoring discussions also concern leaders' job description, managing and prioritising one's own work, work organisation, and time management:

> … use of time and when there is the time and what those tasks are during that time and whether they are urgent tasks or those that are not tied to schedules. (Leader mentor 2, F C 1)

The emotional elements encountered by leaders in their work and their professional development are also present in the mentoring discussions:

> Those quite human emotional states that you scare, excite, get angry, annoy others, and the differences between our employees and co-workers. They [mentees] desperately wanted confirmation … and to believe that over time everybody grows into it, and you can't be ready right away. And that it is just as challenging and amazing for us who have done this job for decades. (Leader mentor 2, F C 1)

Creating an ECE centre culture is seen as one of the leader's tasks and is discussed with the mentees in the peer mentoring sessions. A peer mentor describes this as follows:

> Even if we have unified guidelines, each community still has its own style and way of doing it and those people will make it their house. So, it [culture] was considered and it would still be a good thing to discuss. (Leader mentor 3, F C 1)

Shared leadership and pedagogical leadership are also topics in peer mentoring. Discussions include practical perspectives, like discussion on pedagogical assessment methods, but the mentees also discuss the basic nature of these leadership paradigms. With their peer mentors, the mentees define their views of pedagogical leadership, as seen in the next excerpt:

> While we discussed the job description, my novice [mentee] stressed that she realised that pedagogical leadership really includes everything she does now. She was worried of the time, when she ensures how much pedagogical leadership she can give and then we discussed it, and we

also discussed the planning and drafting shifts, how they, too, are essential parts of pedagogical leadership. So, it emerged sharply from my novice [mentee], she somehow saw the pieces that formed the whole picture. (Leader mentor 3, F C 1)

Human resource management is another topic that arises in mentoring. Human resource management includes team building and ideas on how to support good teamwork, besides discussion of the methods for assessing teamwork and team development. It also entails arranging staff shifts. Further, it comprises complex perspectives on work community interaction as seen in the following excerpts:

A lot of issues related to the interaction within the work community arise; it is the kind of topic that a mentee discusses. (Leader mentor 18, F C 5)

New leaders have wondered how much is required and expected from the leader, and … challenging work … has been debated … how diverse individuals there are in the work community, and how these different individuals are led. (Leader mentor 13, F C 4)

Mentees also raise everyday problems in the discussions, including challenging client situations:

At his [mentee's] wish, we discussed how to face a challenging person in the work community. We reflected on his expert role as a leader, reinforced it, and endeavoured to find in him the courage to show more of his expertise in a constructive way. (Leader mentor 17, F C 5)

Further, peer mentoring is seen as an opportunity for preventive action for well-being at work that serves coping and empowerment.

Co-Learners in a Collegial Relationship

The mentees are both novices and experienced leaders, but the topics they discuss are equally important to both, and both groups benefit from peer mentoring:

My mentee [experience] was very modest, she would have had every opportunity to bring out her experience and skills, but she didn't do so at all. She set herself on almost the same line as these novices. She said many times that she hadn't thought about that thing from that angle, or

> that this is how this should go or how this should be done. And it does her good to think about these things again. (Leader mentor 2, F C 1)

The mentees develop shared knowledge in the mentoring relationships in the peer mentoring group. The relationship is based also on shared community interests. In the peer mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees are co-learners in collegial relationships. Having the same professional status as a leader, the peer mentors and mentees are aware of their common ground and of the diversity of practice in ECE. They share the same professional interests, which facilitates interaction. When faced with a problem, professionals view the situation from the perspective of their own profession (see Wenger, 1998). The representative of the same profession is better able to take issues into consideration.

Peer support is an essential part of the interaction, and the mentees also exchange a lot of ideas with each other. Peer mentors describe this as follows:

> The very fact that a matter can be said out loud with someone else, and even if there is no solution to it, the important matter is to be aware of it together and then think about how we could somehow cope with it. In other words, mentoring is also a hugely important part of problem-solving, to speak out. (Leader mentor 10, F C 3)

> It is the fact that you can think with your peers, so your own thoughts get support and become clearer, or the perspective expands. When you have to make decisions that sometimes have your own world of values in conflict, or you have to emphasise, as we all have an emphasis on financial matters, and then you are not able to act as you would like to act, then mentoring is most supportive. (Leader mentor 10, F C 3)

> A small group is good because they [mentees] have a great need to get peer support and absorb ideas from others. (Leader mentor 16, F C 5)

> They have the idea of holding peer meetings in the future by themselves. (Leader mentor 20, F C 6)

> … exchange of know-how or tools. (Leader mentor 4, F C 1)

> You can share things and hear the views of others on the same thing. (Leader mentor 20, F C 6)

Mentors themselves learn a lot in the mentoring process. Peer mentoring is also a significant learning experience for the peer mentors. The peer mentor becomes a 'co-learner' in the process. The mentors themselves feel that they receive different perspectives, which broadens their thinking. The fact that in the peer mentoring group the mentor has the opportunity to discuss matters with a younger colleague is also rewarding:

> I found it interesting that the younger mindset and world opens up because we have different ages in the work community. I've got a lot from the discussions with younger colleagues, I have got new ways of thinking, you have to have an open mind to share things. (Leader mentor 11, F C 3)

> … I reflected [on] my own leadership quite strongly, and I got a lot from them [mentees]. (Leader mentor 14, F C 4)

> For once, it's time to think and discuss, there are no discussion forums for leaders or opportunities to share thoughts and experiences. It is probably a problem for all cities and municipalities and for all their leaders that there is no time for such a common free debate. (Leader mentor 15, F C 4)

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the focus is on peer mentoring. It explores how peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECE. The results yield an understanding of the peer mentoring process from the perspective of the peer mentors. The findings reveal that peer mentoring supports leaders' professional identity and the importance of leaders' collegial relationship and the idea of working and developing as a co-learner.

Meaningful peer mentoring takes place within supportive mentorship, where leaders are given space to construct their professional identity and reflect on the role of being or becoming a leader (see also Geeraerts et al., 2015). Boerema (2011), for his part, points out that leadership is a personal task and that leaders need to be concerned for their well-being and given encouragement. Developing confidence as a professional leader in ECE can be seen as one of the key benefits of peer mentoring. Mentoring creates an opportunity to support leadership and strengthen leaders' professional identity and competence,

and likewise the development of competence in social change and the prevailing work situation. As seen in the findings, issues raised in the discussions are also linked to the strategic issues of the organisation, not only the individuals' goals or issues.

The research contributes to the understanding of peer support for leaders in ECE. The results show the reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship. Reciprocity calls to mind Le Cornu's (2005) observation that each person is at the same time a learner and a facilitator of the other person's learning. The results of the study show that effective peer mentoring also entails interaction between practitioners of different ages and professionals of different generations. As in Kupila and Karila (2018), the older professional generation will also benefit from engaging in peer mentoring relationships. Peer mentoring does not, therefore, merely involve the orientation of a young employee under the supervision of a senior colleague, as mentoring has traditionally been perceived (see Pennanen et al., 2015).

Daresh (2004) points out that mentoring must be respected and given value as a legitimate approach to learning, otherwise it will not be successful. In light of the findings of this study, peer mentoring is a promising means of supporting and improving ECE leader practices. In ECE, it is important to create the structural and organisational structures and conditions in municipalities in which leaders' peer mentoring is possible. In future research, it would be important to explore how to develop peer mentors and what kinds of policies support mentoring processes.

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CHAPTER 12

Does Leadership Matter? A Narrative Analysis of Men's Life Stories in Early Childhood Education and Care

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Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and early childhood centres (ECC) vary across countries and are embedded in their wider social and cultural contexts. However, difficulty with workforce gender balance, and in recruitment and retention of men to ECEC, is a worldwide issue. The ECEC workforce is a female-dominated workforce, with women averaging 98 per cent of the staff. The lack of men can be regarded as a democratic, developmental, social, and quality problem. Previous research points to leadership as central to issues of retention and recruitment in organisations in general and to ECEC in

particular. However, there is still a lack of knowledge on how leadership relates to men's career choices. In this chapter, we take a narrative approach to the life stories and graphic storylines of men working in ECEC in Australia, Norway, and Ireland. We investigate if, where, and how leadership is made relevant in their narratives and whether leadership influences the presence and retention of men in the sector. A narrative approach allows us to draw out the more subtle leadership practices embedded in interactions, relationships, and meaning making. We find that leadership can operate as a push- or pull-factor but may not be the only factor.

Keywords: gender balance, leadership, early childhood education and care, narrative analysis, male educators, inclusion

Introduction

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a feminised workforce globally. Much research has been conducted into the factors that influence the trajectories and experiences of the comparatively few men in ECEC (Brody, 2014; Brody et al., 2021; Cameron et al., 1999; Watson & Woods, 2011). Workplace leadership has a direct effect on the employee's job satisfaction and well-being (Ljunggren et al., 2021; Yukl, 2008). However, research on men's experience of leadership in this feminised environment is very limited. Examining men's experiences may provide insight into the reasons they stay or leave ECEC. Taking a literary narrative approach (Czarniawska, 2004) and utilising data collected in Ireland, Australia, and Norway as part of a larger collaborative project (Brody et al., 2021), this chapter analyses six storylines and interviews from men who work or previously worked in ECEC to explore the relevance of leadership to the men's decisions to stay or leave.

We explore the link between men's experiences of leadership and their meaning making of their careers in ECEC by narrative analysis using traditional storytelling tropes of tragedy and romance (Czarniawska, 2004). By doing so, we elaborate from a different analytical angle the role of leadership in male narratives of their careers. Previous research has documented the 'pull-factors' (where men are drawn to the sector) and the 'push-factors' (where men are deterred) of occupational leadership (Hard & O'Gorman, 2007; Ljunggren et al., 2021). Going from a theme-based analysis, we now argue that a literary-inspired narrative analysis will give better insights into how

men themselves construct the role of leadership in making sense of their lives. Thus, their agency is explored in more depth. As such, the chapter also speaks to more general debates in narrative leadership research on the follower–leader interaction in terms of meaning making and the potential of leaders to form follower realities or whether they themselves are the object of follower construction (Collinson, 2006). We explore the following research question: How are the leaders' roles constructed in the men's narratives and do we see constructions of 'push-leaders' and 'pull-leaders' by these men?

Leadership, Meaning Making, and Narratives in Organisations

Leadership in organisations is highly related to collective and individual meaning making, as pointed to by Weick (2001). Organisations are regarded as social systems in which meaning making is taking place. The role of leadership in these processes is discussed. Some point to the potential of leaders to form the social reality of others, as found in Smircich and Morgan's (1982, p. 258) definition of leadership as a 'process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others'. This connects to follower self-identity theory, where leadership is understood to act on followers' self-understanding to elicit their best performances (Fairhurst, 2007). Others have questioned the leadership potential to frame and work on employees' self-understanding. In their narrative analysis of charismatic leadership, Kempster and Parry (2013) argue that this rather personalised trait must be seen constructed in followers' narratives. The point drawn from this is that leaders and leadership are also constructed in employees' narratives. Thus, the power relation between leaders and employees might be explored and also challenged in narratives.

Organisation and leadership research has therefore pointed to the role of narratives in organisations to shed light on meaning making (Czarniawska, 2004; Hernes, 2016). Narratives, in terms of storytelling, are a way that individuals make sense of otherwise independent and random events and occurrences. In the narration, these events and actors are organised by the storyteller to make sense of their own life. We align with experience-centred narrative analysis (Squire, 2013) and focus on the meaning-making nature of personal narratives.

Experience-centred narrative research operates on the basis that narratives are reconstructed rather than translated and mediated by the context in which they are being told (Squire, 2013). The context in this research considers the men's under-representation in ECEC globally, the national context of the countries in which the men's experiences are situated, and the local level in the individual workplaces in which their own individual trajectory is experienced. It is then reconstructed (in that the men make sense of the experience) in their telling of it to the researcher. By performing such an analysis, the men also construct the meaning and impact of leadership in their career life stories.

The countries for this research represent the contexts of the researchers and the men interviewed from those countries. Australia and Ireland have similar contexts in that they have low male participation rates in their ECEC sectors at 2.4 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Pobal, 2019) and a largely absent discussion around gender balance in the workforce. By contrast, 9.4 per cent[1] of ECEC workers in Norway are men. There have previously been state-sponsored measures to increase the number of men in ECEC, but there is no current active strategic plan for this. In all three countries currently, the focus is primarily on workforce development in terms of rights, qualifications, remuneration, and quality (Education Services Australia Ltd, 2012; Department of Education and Skills (Ireland), 2019; Gotvassli, 2020), though the most recent Workforce Development Plan in Ireland has a stated commitment to address the gender balance of the workforce (Government of Ireland, 2021).

Methods

The process of collecting data for this research formed part of a larger international collaboration on men's career trajectories in early childhood education and care (Brody et al., 2021). Three men from each constituent country were interviewed. Men were recruited based on their employment status in the ECEC sector, with the aim to interview men who have remained in the sector (persisters) and men who have left (dropouts). The process included a narrative interview: inviting men to tell the story of their trajectory in ECEC, an illustrated storyline indicating the high and low points of their journeys, and semi-structured interviews. For the purpose of this chapter, we selected six of the nine men from each of the countries of the authors: Australia,

Ireland, and Norway. This was to allow for understanding of local dialects, turns of phrases, and nuances by native researchers. It also meant that the interviews had been conducted by us and therefore formed part of a co-construction of the stories analysed (Squire, 2013). The men have had a range of experience in length of service and roles varying from two to twenty-five years, assistant to directors. We analysed their narratives and storylines to create a picture of how and where leadership is made relevant in the men's narratives and whether leadership influenced their presence and retention in the sector. Storyline analysis allows us to understand how the men see their career paths over time (Brody & Hadar, 2018), recognising critical moments and interactions that influenced their journeys and how they make sense of them (Brody & Hadar, 2018; Şahin-Sak et al., 2021). Upward end points are interpreted as fitting the romantic genre as—despite some obstacles (dips) along the way—they have happy endings from the men's perspectives. Conversely, downward end points depict negative experiences that led to tragic outcomes in men's career decisions to leave the sector.

Each researcher initially began looking at each whole individual interview from her respective country to ask: How is leadership made relevant in the stories of the men? The term 'stories' here is relevant. We have taken a storytelling approach to analysing the men's narratives, investigating how they are told consistent with traditional story tropes (Czarniawska, 2004). Taking each individual's story and analysing it in depth through an iterative process of explication and explanation (Czarniawska, 2004), for genre (tragedy, romance, comedy, or satire), through the characters, the chronology, and the feelings they describe in their construction and sense making of their narrative (Czarniawska, 2004), we then moved back out one step and considered the themes across their narratives and experiences to understand the impact of leadership on their experiences and decisions. We find the genres of romance and tragedy in our narratives. Romantic stories depict a hero who overcomes hurdles that include villainous intent by an antagonist, leading to a happy ending (Czarniawska, 2004). In tragic tropes, the protagonist is at the mercy of fate and circumstances outside of their control, unable to overcome the hurdles in the path.

Analysis

Tragedy

Leadership plays different roles in the represented narratives following the plot of the tragedy. It can be a contributory factor in negative experiences or can offer positive support in an otherwise difficult situation. We find that it is often seen as a negative force in the stories following the plot of the tragedy. The research showcases this in the stories of Nils from Norway and Anakin from Australia. In the story of Patrick, we see the leader as a positive force but insufficient to retain Patrick in the sector. In the three tragedies represented in this material, the hero exits the ECEC sector.

Contributing to the Tragedy

In these tragedies narrated by Nils and Anakin, the men position the leaders in active roles as the villains in the stories. This is depicted through bad leadership practices such as exploitation of labour, lack of fair division of responsibility, and power abuse. Let us take a closer look at these tragedy narratives, where the leadership villains are the central forces in the plot making it hard for the men to stay in the ECEC sector.

Nils, Norway

Nils ruined his health working too much/being exploited as a truck driver and changed to ECEC. He experienced positive feelings in his first job (storyline point 8, [Figure 12.1](#)), where he felt he could practise the pedagogy he wanted with a good male colleague: 'It was very good, I worked with a male colleague, and we got to open an outdoor department where we decided everything for ourselves … we got good feedback from the parents.' Nils' tragedy began when he became a victim of circumstances outside his control when organisational restructuring reduced his professional latitude and his male colleague quit. He then faced trouble as a leader motivating the other staff, and the feeling of being alone with the responsibility for the children in a dysfunctional staff group caused him stress. He portrays leadership as villainous in his story, as he did not receive support even when he asked for assistance:
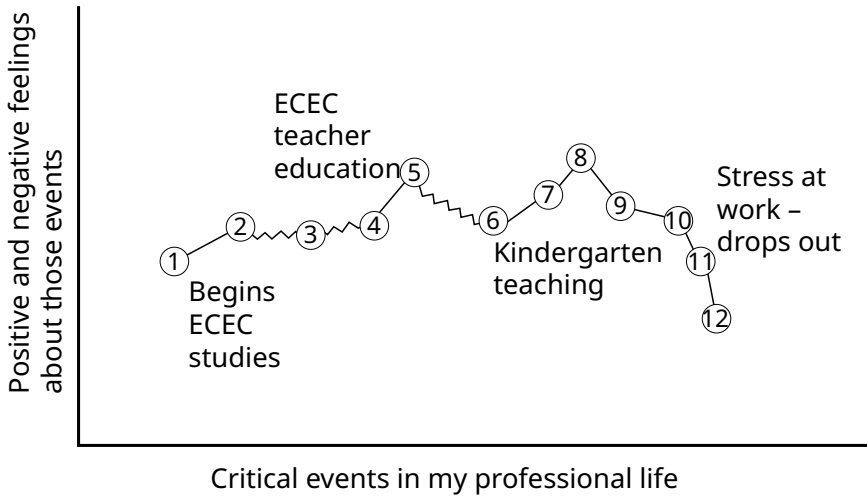
Figure 12.1: Nils' storyline.

> I was told to delegate tasks and trust the staff, but when the staff did not follow my instructions, then it became my responsibility if something happened. I had to work for two anyway. [The job of two people …] it affected my health.

This period is illustrated in the storyline as a steep downward trajectory (storyline points 8–12), representing bad working conditions inflicted upon him by leadership. He then left ECEC and returned to working as a truck driver, coming full circle in this tragedy.

Anakin, Australia

Throughout his long career in ECEC, Anakin experienced many negative incidents involving leadership that contributed to his up and down experiences (storyline points 2, 5, and 9, [Figure 12.2](#)). He easily casts leadership as the villains in his tragic career story—for example, in how his heroic attempts to support his colleagues resulted in punishment for him.

> I remember one moment where I was challenging, ethically, some things that were happening and also trying to defend some of my [staff] … I came back here and my office, all the stuff had been unpacked out of it and just put outside. So that was their way of saying, 'Look, we're not happy with you questioning our things.' So that was a bit of a hit as well.
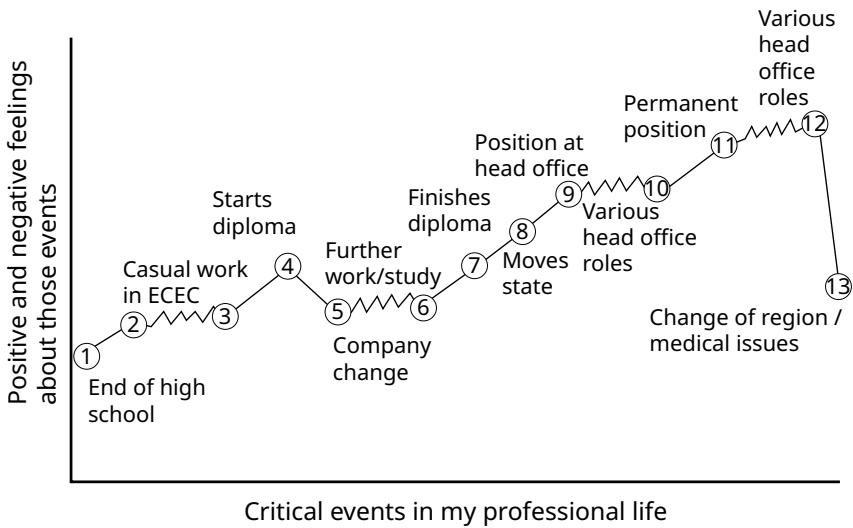
Figure 12.2: Anakin's storyline.

One of Anakin's first tales of leadership was of his mentor telling him to 'suck it up' when a mother threatened a fabricated abuse accusation after taking exception to him asking her to pay her childcare fees (storyline point 2). This mentor told him it came with the territory of being a man in ECEC. However, the major push-factor for Anakin was the lack of support and communication with him about changes while he was away on medical leave (storyline point 12). When he returned, the changes made doing the job difficult and painful for Anakin and the company did not try to help or support him (storyline point 13). For Anakin, leaving ECEC is undoubtedly a tragedy, as he loved the work: 'I mean, if I won the lotto [lottery] tomorrow, I'd pretty much just probably go and work in the kindergarten room. That would be my dream.'

Mitigating Against the Tragedy

In the tragedy told by Patrick, leaders played a positive role, making the tragedy less painful (Figure 12.3). Supportive leaders play the role of allies who aid the hero in his struggle. However, they are seen as

insufficient to counteract the tragic outcome where Patrick is a victim of circumstances.

<div align="center">Patrick, Ireland</div>

During his time in the sector, there was not sufficient opportunity to secure Patrick a permanent and consistent position in ECEC, despite the encouragement of leadership. So, when the job market improved and work became available at his previous employment outside of ECEC, he moved on reluctantly: 'Yeah … it was hard, it was hard leaving like to say … cos you know you grow attached to them and … you have to go.' Patrick was drawn into the sector by another male educator who offered encouragement and support for his training and provided placement opportunities but could not offer a more secure position. 'I got work experience with Pat and … [he] would give me hours then … paid hours … so I stayed in [town 1] for a while and then Pat put me in touch with [town 2] which is very near me too.' Patrick's initial employment was through an employment scheme designed to stimulate jobs, 'but again, it was a decision I had to make, I had to, financially'.
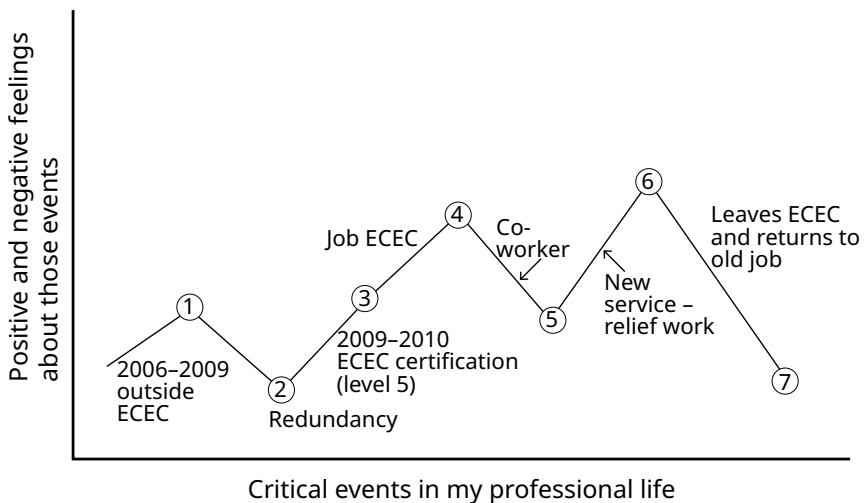
Figure 12.3: Patrick's storyline.

<div align="center">*Romance*</div>

In the romantic genre, we see leadership as a positive force. Leaders are the ally to the hero and can enable positive professional development, a positive sense of self-mastery, and a joy in working in ECEC. A male leader may act as a role model with a unique appreciation and understanding of the experience as a male in ECEC. The three narratives below have been classified as romance based on the protagonists' happy ending, with their having overcome obstacles with the help of leadership.

<div align="center">Norbert, Norway</div>

> I had a very good headmaster at the school, and I got the same headmaster as my leader when I started working at the [centre]. There have been some male role models during my education and working life.

Norbert identifies his early experience of the male headmaster as part of the positive experiences which gave him a good first impression of the work of taking care of children (storyline points 1–2, [Figure 12.4](#)). Unfortunately, parental expectations of getting a 'real job' and national service pushed him away from ECEC. However, those experiences lacked the meaning he sought, and he returned to ECEC, pulled back
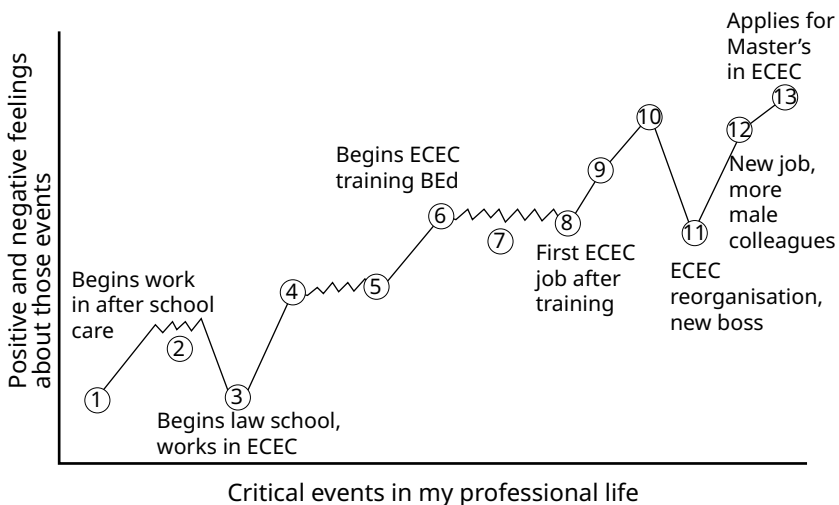
Figure 12.4: Norbert's storyline.

by his early encounter with the headmaster. During this time, a change of leadership in his centre created new obstacles, which he was able to overcome, like the hero of a romantic story. Interpreted in terms of the trope, the first headmaster is a support or an ally, giving positive meaning to the work with children. This allowed Norbert to focus on overcoming the obstacles created by the change in leadership, rather than being beaten back by them. The way Norbert describes leadership as an ally reflects the 'kindly elder' character we see in romantic tales that guides the hero through their trials.

Dylan, Ireland

Dylan identified key people along his career pathway who supported him. These characters in his story—the career guidance teacher who pointed him in the direction of ECEC, his parents, the lecturing staff in his education programme, and the friends he made along the way— are all supporting him in his quest. The low points in Dylan's journey were not completely negative (storyline points 3 and 5, Figure 12.5). He describes a tension between loving a job and finding the wage insufficient to support him. Dylan elaborates on his experience in the city crèche, emphasising the support he was given by the manager as instrumental to his journey when he first joined:
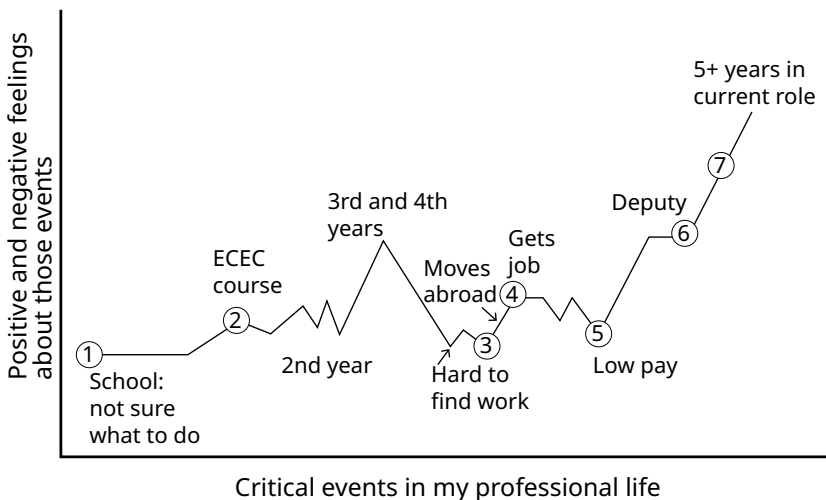
Figure 12.5: Dylan's storyline.

> In the very first job I got in [City], when I started, it was actually her that
> gave me, and we'll say my break. It was lovely. So, I think that be in the
> current job I swear to God, she couldn't do enough for you d'you know,
> there's courses, there's any further training you want to do, d'you know
> or if anything happens, they're there for you, like it's really supportive
> and that just makes you kind of stay there, d'you know what I mean?

The characters Dylan identifies along the way and their function in his narrative support his decisions, providing information at critical moments, aiding in the conquering of the hurdles in his career journey. In particular, there is a leader who as Dylan describes 'gave me my break' and encouraged him in practice and in continuing professional development, followed by a leader who identified him as worthy of a deputy manager position that improved his situation in material terms. These points begin the final steep upward trajectory (storyline points 6 and 7) in Dylan's storyline to the conclusion of his romantic narrative with an uncommon and coveted position in a pre-school service with shorter hours and paid holidays.

Herbert, Australia

Centre and organisational leadership were prominent characters in Herbert's career romance story. His centre director, tertiary lecturer, and organisational manager all had parts to play in supporting Herbert's growth and development in ECEC, being situated as allies by him as he tells his career story. Firstly, the director of his centre positively affirmed Herbert's place as an educator (storyline point 3, Figure 12.6), repeatedly legitimising his decision to work in ECEC.

> Well, the director that I had initially at the start was amazing. She loved
> to have me there and she noticed, I guess, the passion that I have and
> really tried to push me on and to grow … She was so encouraging.

Then Herbert's supervisor for his diploma took interest in him and in his career path (storyline point 6). He had problems with feeling excluded and discriminated against with his vastly female classmates. He felt like the others were unhappy to have him in their group whenever there was group work, as they felt he would not pull his weight. As a result, Herbert worked extremely hard to ensure he proved them all wrong. As with any good romance story, Herbert had a good character come to help encourage him on the 'right' pathway. His supervisor

actively engaged and supported him throughout his studies, helping to nourish that dedication he displayed.

> She was a massive support … and she encouraged me … She knew the passions that I had and the changes that I wanted to make to be a difference and all that. So, she just really understood why I was there and wanted to see me excel.

Herbert's diploma supervisor also brought his work to the attention of the organisation manager, who then contacted him to encourage his passion for ECEC and help him expand his horizons (storyline point 7). This particular piece of work was on the culture of the early childhood centre and the issues with teamwork Herbert had experienced both first hand and as a spectator. '[S]he got in contact with me and she's like, "Yeah, this is really amazing. You've done really good work."' Although Herbert has had obstacles throughout his career path, usually relating to the team environments on which ECEC is based, he was able to emerge triumphantly as the hero with the help of a few good allies along the way. The contribution from leadership as the story's good characters make this journey fit firmly in the romance trope. Herbert is still working in ECEC and studying towards becom-
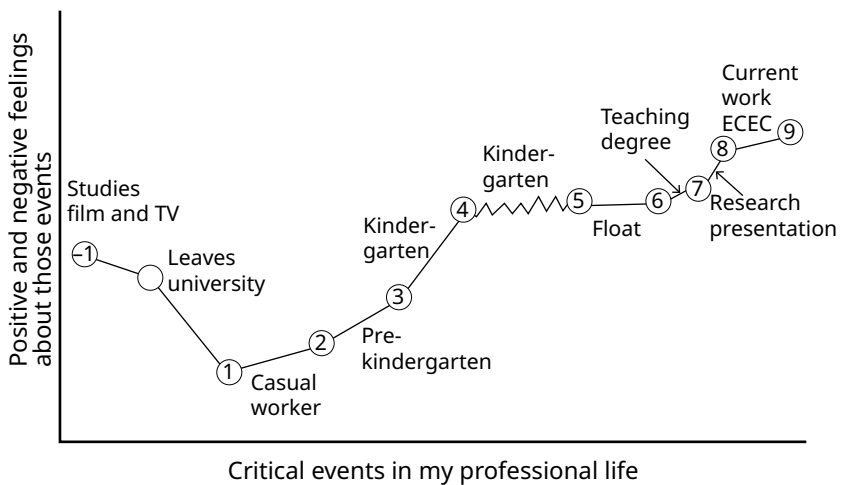
Figure 12.6: Herbert's storyline.

ing an ECEC teacher. His stories of these leaders, each in different sections of his organisation, clearly demonstrate the relationship between his career trajectory and leadership support.

Literary Genres

From our analysis, we can see that the men's experiences in ECEC took on either romance or tragic literary tropes. In the tragedies such as Nils and Anakin, their experiences with leadership characters were too much to overcome and they exited the sector. In the case of Patrick, the leadership character in his story was supportive, but other factors such as inconsistent work and insufficient remuneration were insurmountable, leading to his exit from the sector. In the romantic tropes of Norbert, Dylan, and Herbert, their leadership characters and the traits those characters displayed supported them along their ECEC journey.

Discussion

Our analysis of the storylines and narratives of the men suggest that they actively constructed leadership positions and related leadership to their narrative through their storytelling. This supports earlier research on followers' meaning making of leadership through narration (Weick, 2001). Our data show the life stories following familiar plots of the romance and the tragedy tropes, where the men cast themselves as main characters. The leaders are cast to different roles in these plots by the men, either as 'villains' or 'allies'. Whether they are constructed as allies or villains/antagonists is related to the way they practise their leadership and their leadership style (Czarniawska, 2004). This approach from the men is relatively uniform across all three countries where data were collected. Leaders practising leadership more in terms of support and mentorship are seen as allies in the men's stories (and thus are pull-factors in men's career decisions) as expressed by Norbert, Dylan, and Herbert in their romantic narratives. Indeed, Patrick in his tragedy also found an allyship in his centre management, but it was insufficient to counteract other negative forces. For Nils and Anakin, the villainous leaders were instrumental in their career decisions (push-factors), with the behaviour of the leaders creating insurmountable hurdles.

The men might also frame the position of the leader in their career stories dependent on the men's perspectives at the time of the interview. Across all the countries they seem more likely to position the leaders as villains in the leaving stories. However, some leadership may be limited in their influence on staying or leaving, as in the case with Patrick. That is, leadership plays only a small subordinate role when they are making sense of their career stories, and other factors play a greater part in driving the plot towards a happy or unfortunate ending. This also illuminates the process of the leadership role in how leadership is made to play a part in these men's career decisions (Hard & O'Gorman, 2007; Ljunggren et al., 2021).

Expressions of power and agency can be seen as factors in the stories illustrated. In some, the exertion or abuse of power by villainous leaders can lead to untenable situations where the worker decides to leave, ending their story as a tragedy, as in the cases of Nils and Anakin. But ultimately, this still showcases the man as the hero, as they are taking back power by making this decision to leave. In romantic stories, the men succeed in spite of hurdles cast in their way, and with the help of an ally, overcome their adversities. As in all good literary tropes, the hero interacts with those characters of good intentions from time to time throughout his journey (Czarniawska, 2004).

Strengths, Limitations, and Implications for Practice

Ultimately, we see that power and leadership can influence men's experiences of working in ECEC and their decisions to leave (Collinson, 2006), but that allied leadership may not be sufficient in a sector with limited opportunities (Ljunggren et al., 2021; Yukl, 2008). The organisational context of leadership in the sector must be taken into consideration. There is further research needed to shed light upon how neoliberal and austerity measures, as well as the role of ownership and leadership competence, affect men's experience of working in ECEC. We also suggest further elaboration on how leadership styles (Bass, 2015) relate to narratives. Additionally, the authors acknowledge that this is a unique way to analyse the data provided and is perhaps subject to our own positionalities. By collaborating and working on the data together, we (three) authors allowed for movement of perspectives between us given our different expertise and countries. We also

recognise the need to move beyond binary constructions of men and women, and move to focus on the intersections between gender, class, culture, background, and race. This research provides a new perspective on the way in which men construct the role of leadership in their work and careers in ECEC, showcasing the follower–leader interaction (Weick, 2001). This study presents a more in-depth exploration of the educators' meaning making and understanding of themselves. We see here that whether leadership was portrayed as villain or ally, the platforming of these men as the heroes of their stories was consistent. While leaders may frame the reality of the worker in terms of their self-identity, the leader also becomes the object of the meaning making of the male educators (Collinson, 2006). This chapter has direct implications for gender inclusivity and leadership training in ECEC that—if done well—should have positive ramifications for all educators of diverse backgrounds. Leaders need to know that the followers are also making stories and narratives that define them as leaders.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Own calculations based on numbers from Statistics Norway: https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/barnehager

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PART III

Governance and Policies in Leading ECEC

CHAPTER 13

Early Childhood Development Centre Managers' Provision of Comprehensive Quality Programmes: Policy Implementation

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Abstract

The establishment of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP) in 2015 aimed at defining a national comprehensive early childhood development (ECD) programme and support with identified essential components inclusive of national, provincial, and local spheres of government. This study's purpose is to explore ECD centre managers' understandings of how provision for comprehensive quality early childhood development programmes can be made in their centres with specific reference to the aims of the

NIECDP. Using Wenger's Communities of Practice theory, this study focuses on ECD centre managers' experiences of providing integrated programmes that are aligned with the policy's expectations. The study was conducted in 10 community ECD centres located in rural and peri-urban contexts in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Five ECD centre managers from each province were purposefully sampled for the study to interpret their understandings of provisioning of comprehensive quality programmes in their ECD centres. An interpretive qualitative case study methodological design was adopted. Semi-structured interviews and structured observations were used to generate credible and trustworthy data that were beyond generalisation. Findings revealed that some ECD centre managers lacked knowledge of the NIECDP. As a result, no provisioning of comprehensive quality ECD programmes that were overarched by multi-sectoral bodies as per the framework were implemented. ECD centre managers from underprivileged rural and peri-urban contexts worked in silos, as it was evidently clear that there was no collaboration with other provincial departments in ensuring the provision of a comprehensive quality ECD programme.

Keywords: early childhood development centre managers, collaboration, comprehensive quality early childhood development programme

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from a large-scale research study funded by the European Union (EU) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The study was conducted in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces. The significance of early childhood development (ECD), its management in collaboration with other sectors, the professionalisation of the sector, and the spaces used for learning can never be overemphasised. The ECD sector is a global phenomenon that is becoming increasingly popular (Shioji et al., 2017; Department of Social Development, 2015; Atmore, 2019). It is a priority area within the South African context and is supported by legislation, national policies, and strategies (Meier & Marais, 2012).

The literature reviewed on the phenomenon indicates that the ECD sector is characterised by various attributes that describe its existence and operation by many involved in it. Although ECD's significance

is typically adopted globally, its existence is rapidly taking its toll on education provisioning (van Niekerk et al., 2017; Atmore, 2019). As a result, various attributes are associated with it and with the evolution of policies that aim to regulate the sector. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the government has developed policies including the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development, White Paper 5, and the laws that acknowledge children's universal right to early childhood development as well as the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP). In light of this, Vargas-Barón (2014, p. 1) affirms that the latter policy should be multisectoral and include 'education, health, nutrition, sanitation, and protection'. In elaboration, it should 'provide a general framework for operational planning, including the vision, mission, goal, core concepts, objectives and strategies' for ECD. Douglass (2019, p. 6) maintains that 'research shows that children learn, grow, and thrive in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings when those settings are characterised by high quality interactions and relationships'.

The study's purpose was to explore ECD centre managers' understandings of how provision for comprehensive quality ECD programmes can be made in their centres with specific reference to the aims of the NIECDP (Department of Social Development, 2015). The NIECDP aimed to redress inequitable access to early childhood education by ensuring that access is available through an integrated national system that has a basis within a coherent legal framework that identifies, enables, and entrusts ECD roles and responsibilities relevant to role players. In effect, there was an establishment of organisational and institutional arrangements necessary to monitor the provision of ECD services and support (Mbarathi et al., 2016; Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018; Harrison, 2020). Meanwhile, ECD centre managers are the drivers of quality programmes (Douglass, 2019).

Within the process of policy implementation, this research study sought to respond to the research question: What knowledge do early childhood development (ECD) centre managers have about the implementation of the NIECDP of 2015 for the provision of comprehensive ECD programmes?

To answer the above research question, the initial part of this chapter presents the literature review on the evolution of ECD policies in South Africa post-1994 and the ECD managers' roles and responsibilities for the provision of comprehensive programmes and services.

Thereafter, the theoretical framework, research methodology, and methods used for data generation are comprehensively presented. Results from the engagement with the ECD centre managers and discussions of findings are consequently provided. Finally, the culmination of this research study is marked by the implications for practice and concluding contemplations regarding the phenomenon of ECD.

The Evolution of ECD Policies in South Africa Post-1994

The establishment of the pioneer Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (DoE, 1996) immediately after democracy in South Africa relates to children aged 0 to 9 years and promotes the holistic development of the child, emphasising interdepartmental collaboration. Subsequently, White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001) placed an emphasis on the importance of early childhood education. Its goals were to ensure that every child receives at least one year of preschool education before formal schooling. The National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS) were later published as a curriculum-related policy focusing on children's early learning needs from birth to four years (DoE, 2009). The South African government identified the need and aimed to increase access to ECD and to enhance the quality of ECD programmes and services, specifically for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018). The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP) was ultimately developed in 2015. The policy aimed at defining a national comprehensive early childhood development (ECD) programme. This policy was the first multisectoral plan of action, specifically targeted at early childhood development and all national departments' services. These services included birth registration, child and maternal health, nutrition, immunisation, referral services for health and social services, early learning programmes, and water and sanitation (Department of Social Development, 2015).

In that same year, the National Curriculum Framework (DBE, 2015) was established to address early learning development areas (ELDAs) of the child's first 1000 days and to provide guidance for those developing programmes and working with babies, toddlers, and young children. With ECD often viewed as the most critical stage of any child's development, Desmond et al. (2019) maintain that investing in

children's education has the potential to generate benefits across their lifespan and broader society. Ultimately, the government recognised the sector as a critical enabler for attaining sustained economic development (Republic of South Africa, 2015). This effort was applauded by many involved within the sector, most notably the Department of Social Development (DSD), as it was tasked to be the custodian of the sector.

ECD Centre Managers' Roles and Responsibilities for the Provision of Comprehensive Programmes and Services

The initiative to conduct this research study was prompted by the challenges experienced by ECD centre managers located in underprivileged contexts. According to the Department of Social Development (2015), centre managers are responsible for several management tasks to achieve a thriving ECD centre, including the knowledge and understanding of policies that regulate the sector. Along with these declarations, ECD centre managers, in particular, were tasked with implementing the NIECDP in their centres, as they were regarded as the parties that focused on designing programmes, performing the leadership tasks of an ECD centre, and working with people effectively (Meier & Marais, 2012; Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018). In this regard, ECD centre managers should be well informed on education policies (Langford, 2007).

ECD centre managers' roles and responsibilities include, amongst others, enrolment duties and supervision of the curriculum. They are responsible for physical assets and equipment and are in charge of finances, staff relationships, providing leadership in parent involvement and education, planning for health and safety, and building and maintaining good community relations (Department of Social Development, 2015; Mbarathi et al., 2016). Literature reveals that most ECD centre managers, regrettably, are tasked with undoubtedly complex and multifaceted roles (Meier & Marais, 2012), and for several centre managers these complexities are exacerbated by their level of qualifications and training (Langford, 2007). Douglass (2019, p. 8) upholds that 'centre leaders may play a role in fostering positive workplace relationships, a culture of learning and improvement, shared decision-making, and staff professional development'.

Research studies prove that ECD centre managers have failed to provide comprehensive ECD programmes as per NIECDP (2015) requirements (Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018; Desmond et al., 2019). In accordance, Atmore (2019) confirms that ECD centre managers' failure to provide comprehensive ECD programmes in most instances is exacerbated by their lack of knowledge of the policy and its content. Ultimately, different training organisations came on board to capacitate ECD centre managers with knowledge and understanding of the sector's policies. For example, the Ikamva Labantu was a non-profit organisation (NPO) that aimed to support ECD centre managers in understanding the importance of stimulation for children and in focusing on managing ECD centres as a business. Van Niekerk et al. (2017, p. 4) attest that 'principals' leadership and governance abilities were enhanced to enable a more effective management'.

Conversely, the exercise in some instances proved futile, as most ECD centre managers from underprivileged contexts were disregarded. Such occurrences are per Surty's (2011) statement on rural education and its implications on education. The author states that the government itself neglects teachers in typically remote and relatively underdeveloped areas.

Fundamentally, most ECD centres in underprivileged contexts remain unregistered with the DSD because they failed to meet the DSD's standards. These standards relate to the quality of infrastructure, safety and health in the learning environment, sanitation, water, and electricity (Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018). Hence, the unregistered status of most of these ECD centres remains a problem, which in most instances further aggravates marginalisation. Besides, the failure of centres to register denies them the right to apply for needed subsidised government funding (Atmore et al., 2012).

Concerning the provision of a comprehensive quality ECD programme as per government directive, the study seeks to understand ECD centre managers' understanding of the NIECDP (2015) to provide comprehensive ECD programmes and universally available and equitable ECD services (DSD, 2015). The presentation of an aspirational statement in a policy is provocative. The policy further indicates that it aims to strengthen delivery and equity of access through the design, location, and integration of services into a diversity of delivery models. Subsequently, an essential component of this package that will be delivered includes ante- and post-natal health; birth screening and

nutrition services; social services such as free birth registration, social grants and child protection services; parenting support; and opportunities for early learning (DSD, 2015). According to the policy, all services were to be integrated into and delivered across the full continuum of care settings, starting in the home with the parents, and moving to out-of-home childcare arrangements, community-based programmes (non-centre based), and facility- or centre-based programmes (DSD, 2015; Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice theory (CoP) underpinned this study. The theory further helped in understanding the knowledge that ECD centre managers have regarding the provisioning of comprehensive ECD programmes that complement the multisectoral nature of ECD. Wenger's CoP theory galvanises clusters of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who learn how to do it better as they regularly collaborate (1998). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 4) further elucidate that 'communities of practice share a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis' (p. 4). They share a common goal, expertise, and passion for a joint enterprise. In context, the NIECDP (2015) advocates for the collaboration between different sectors engaged in ECD. It further states that all services will be integrated into and delivered across the full continuum of care settings, starting in the home with the parents, moving to out-of-home childcare arrangements, community-based programmes (non-centre based), and facility- or centre-based programmes. Therefore, such a directive calls for mutual sharing and learning based on the common interest that exists within the parties involved (Lesser & Storck, 2001). Accordingly, the chosen theory helped in understanding the three characteristics necessary for a community bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Therefore, it was selected to understand how ECD managers participate in meaningful learning experiences for policy implementation with others involved.

Wenger's (2009) characteristics of a functional CoP are domain, community, and practice.

Domain

According to Smith et al. (2017, p. 211), the domain is basically 'the area of knowledge that brings the community together, gives it its identity, and defines the key issues that members need to address'. In this context, the domain is the ECD sector, which is earnestly concerned with the holistic well-being and development of babies, toddlers, and young children.

Community

According to Smith et al. (2017, p. 211), 'community is the group of people for whom the domain is relevant, the quality of the relationships among members, and the definition of the boundary between the inside and the outside'. Authors further purport that for a group of people to constitute a CoP, its members must come together around ideas or topics of interest (the domain) and interact with each other to learn together. In context, ECD services and their multisectoral nature call for collaboration within all the departments involved (Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Social Development, and Department of Basic Education), researchers, academia, parents, community members, and leaders (DSD, 2015).

Practice

According to Smith et al. (2017, p. 211), practice is 'the body of knowledge, methods, tools, stories, cases, [and] documents, which members share and develop together to address recurring problems in their specific contexts'. In context, the practice entails how the multisectoral elements bring synergy to the ECD sector in ensuring the provision of comprehensive ECD programmes and services. However, this will come to fruition only if the multisectoral elements possess the required knowledge of methods, tools, documents, and engagement within the ECD sector.

Research Methods and Design

Petty et al. (2012, p. 1) define research methodology as 'the theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their

implications for research practice and the use of particular research methods'. Following the authors' articulation, the researchers adopted an exploratory multiple case study methodological approach. The multiple case study (MCS) approach assisted the researchers in experimenting with more robustness with the conclusions that were to be reached (Yin, 2018). The study was framed within the interpretivists' lens. The interpretive researchers believe that there are sets of realities or truths about the world (Creswell, 2013) that can best be interpreted by the occupants of that context. Therefore, 10 ECD centre managers from community ECD centres in rural and peri-urban contexts located in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces (South Africa) were purposefully sampled to elicit credible data. To be precise, five ECD centre managers from each province were purposefully sampled.

ECD centre managers received the least assistance and had barely any form of communication with different government sectors such as the Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Health (DoE), or Department of Home Affairs (DoHA). These ECD centres had no resources or very minimal resources, and infrastructure that spurs young learners' learning and parental involvement was also absent. This is believed to be unexceptional in most underprivileged ECD centres. These circumstances often result from a lack of funds and sponsorship from different stakeholders and provincial departments (Ebrahim & Pascal, 2016).

Data were generated through the use of semi-structured interviews and structured observations. A three-month data production process was undertaken by the Project for Early Childhood Education Policy Analysis (PECPA) research assistants based in two provinces—KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Eastern Cape (EC). During the data generation period, all 10 ECD managers (5 from each province) were willing to share their experiences regarding the knowledge they had about implementing the policy.

Research participants employed by PECPA engaged in face-to-face conversations with the ECD centre managers to understand how they interpret their real-life situation of managing the ECD centres in rural and peri-urban geographical settings. It was apparent that the sampled participants experienced numerous challenges related to their geographical zoning and knowledge of the policy. Medina and Arcila (2013, p. 28) corroborate the existence of challenges for practitioners

in underprivileged contexts by affirming that 'teachers who work in rural areas face adverse working circumstances and are immersed in conditions of under-qualification, inadequate support and poor remuneration'. In both provinces, PECPA research assistants also conducted structured observations during their visits to the research sites. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 2018) and Petty et al. (2012) substantiate a need for observing live settings through structured observations instead of relying on second-hand accounts. Generated data were analysed and arranged thematically to avoid distortion, as Denzin states (2018). Denzin (2018) also suggests that analysing data thematically helps present trustworthy and credible data with avoidance of generalisation. As a result, the authors used a manual colour-coding strategy to identify the codes that later gelled into themes. This entailed the process of grouping data from the semi-structured interviews and structured observations as Denzin (2018) suggests.

The ethical clearance to conduct this large-scale PECPA project was obtained from the University of Fort Hare, Eastern Cape, South Africa, which served as the project's leading institution (REC-270710-028-RA Level 0).

Results and Discussion

The impetus to conduct this study was driven by a critical research question: What knowledge do early childhood development (ECD) centre managers have about the implementation of the National Integration Early Childhood Development Policy of 2015 to provide comprehensive ECD programmes? Thus, findings presented in themes are a result of engagement with ECD centre managers purposively sampled. Research participants' codes were utilised to distinguish the participants (ECDC Manager 1–10 and an abbreviation for the province's name were used).

Theme 1: ECD Centre Managers' Lack of Knowledge of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015)

The participants' foremost concern was that they do not have any knowledge of the NIECDP and its content. It was evident that the few individuals who did were unable to implement it accordingly in their

ECD centres. Such findings were realised and unfolded in accordance with the conduct that was observed from the participants' regular management of their centres. Modise (2021) suggests that it is unfortunate that most ECD centre managers find it difficult to understand national and international legislation and regulations regarding children's rights and protection. From the questions that were asked concerning their knowledge of the policy, the participants said:

> It is my first time hearing about that policy. Never … I don't know it. (ECDC manager 1, KZN, rural)

> The policy document was delivered here, but I have never read or used it because I do not know how to. (ECDC manager 1, EC, rural)

> The policy is very long, I do not have time to read all that is written there. I suggest that the department sends people to train us on this policy and also teach us how to apply it. (ECDC manager 4, EC, peri-urban)

Findings revealed that ECD centre managers commonly do not know the ECD policies at all. Accordingly, Nores and Barnett (2010) state that ECD services' variable dispensation and the incomplete fragmented legislative policy framework for ECD result in uncoordinated service delivery. Data further revealed that ECD centre managers were concerned that they were not receiving appropriate training to understand their centres' policies and professional management. According to van Niekerk et al. (2017), many centre managers set up their ECD centres because of a need in the community and their love for children, although they often do not have the business management or leadership skills to manage the business side of the ECD centre effectively. Notably, the authors' proclamations respond to the participants' response to outsiders' overreliance on training them in ECD management skills.

Theme 2: Non-Implementation of Comprehensive Quality ECD Programmes

The study established that generally there is non-implementation of comprehensive quality ECD programmes in most ECD centres located in marginalised contexts compared with their affluent counterparts. Baloyi and Makhubele (2018) are concerned about the mushrooming

of ECD programmes, particularly in rural areas, resulting in the disregarding of competency issues by both authorities and ECD centre managers. There were various validations from the participants that complemented the occurrence.

> I was once invited to attend the centre managers' meeting, but those people from the government failed to explain to us how we have to implement it in our centres. (ECDC manager 5, KZN, rural)

> I have never implemented the policy, but I know that in this centre we offer quality ECD programmes. (ECDC manager 3, KZN, peri-urban)

> We have minimal space here. All children, irrespective of their age, are in one room. (ECDC manager 5, EC, rural)

Regrettably, non-implementation of policies becomes the case in most ECD centres located in underprivileged settings, as they fail to attract appropriately qualified practitioners who will understand ECD policies and implement them accordingly (Surty, 2011). From the observations done, it was evident that some ECD centre managers endeavoured to offer quality ECD programmes amid challenging conditions. Atmore (2013, p. 156) corroborates that 'quality teaching and learning is essential for effective early development'. Therefore, a good teacher can provide a learning environment in which a child can develop optimally and in a holistic manner despite adverse conditions.

Theme 3: ECD Centre Managers Working in Silos

This theme emerged as a result of expressions of frustration from the participants. As maintained by Wenger (1998, 2009), communities should share a concern or a passion for something they do and should learn how to do it better as they regularly collaborate. From the question that was posed, it was crystal clear that there was a lack of collaboration among ECD centre managers, communities, and stakeholders. This was perpetuated by numerous challenges, including a lack of commitment, a lack of confidence in the profession, and the execution of duties by teachers working in underprivileged contexts (Surty, 2011).

> No one is prepared to come closer. They say this is my thing. (ECDC manager 2, KZN, rural)

> Parents here are interested in getting paid when they have assisted us with some maintenance tasks, not in their children's well-being. (ECDC manager 3, EC, rural)

> Health workers sometimes come here to check whether learners have done their routine vaccinations. (ECDC manager 2, EC, rural)

> Department of Home Affairs has never visited our centre to assist those children who have problems with their birth certificates. This is very difficult because if they do not have birth certificates, they can't receive the social grant. (ECDC manager 4, KZN, rural)

From the findings, there seems to be a lack of collaboration between different sectors involved in the ECD sector. The findings are therefore in contrast with the idea that 'communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 2009, p. 1).

Literature reveals that most ECD centres in underprivileged communities experience low living standards that stem from the historical neglect of people living in underprivileged contexts, which has resulted in severe social inequalities (Rudolph et al., 2019; Ebrahim & Pascal, 2016; UNESCO, 2014). Such low living standards and inequalities contribute to a lack of synergy between stakeholders and prompt ECD centre managers to work in silos.

Theme 4: ECD Programmes that Support Children's Holistic Development

According to Baloyi and Makhubele (2018), ECD centres must be monitored by a social worker or other official employed and authorised by the provincial DSD for two years. However, in ECD centres located in underprivileged contexts, this has not proved to be the case. The participants said:

> We teach whatever we feel like teaching because some classrooms have children of different ages combined. So as a teacher, you look after 1-year-olds and 4-year-olds at the same time. How am I going to help these children if combined? (ECDC manager 1, KZN, rural)

No one comes to us to check whether what we are teaching is in line with the ECD curriculum. (ECDC manager 1, EC, rural)

> Most children here are orphans, and others are coming from child-headed homes … we do not get any support at all. (ECDC manager 5, KZN, rural)

It is shocking that such ECD challenges are still prevalent approximately 20 years since the establishment of White Paper 5 in 2001. Nevertheless, 'the South African government has reiterated its commitment to implement social development programmes that are considerate of children's needs (Baloyi & Makhubele, 2018, p. 10779). Data reveals that despite the South African government's commitment to ensuring that ECD programmes support young children's holistic development, the quality of much provision is still lacking (Atmore, 2013).

Implications for Practice

Successful implementation of a comprehensive ECD programme in ECD centres (affluent and underprivileged) demands collaboration amongst different stakeholders. The then DSD minister and the Cabinet agreed in 2015 to combine a range of services that contribute towards ensuring that infants and young children thrive; are healthy through good nutrition and food security; have access to social protection; have opportunities for early learning and development free from violence and abuse; and play and have fun amongst others. These were to be steps in the right direction towards addressing the ECD issues in South Africa (DSD, 2015). The government's obligation was to provide a comprehensive ECD programme and services including 'health care, food security and nutrition programmes', 'social protection programmes and parent support programmes', water, sanitation, refuse removal and energy sources, and 'play facilities, sport, and culture'. However, the rhetorical interrogation is how such interventions could be successful if there are indications that ECD centre managers' training programmes were not uniform across the contexts. As personnel tasked with policy implementation in their respective centres, ECD centre managers are obliged to understand the policy and its content. The achievement of the policy's goal depends solely on its effective implementation and synergy from all parties involved. A tough call for the involvement of different stakeholders is needed. Subsequently, the concerned departments have to train ECD centre managers continuously on the policy's expectations. To improve the quality and manage-

ment of comprehensive ECD programmes that focus on early learning and development, all national departments need to collaborate and ensure the involvement of all concerned as provided in the NIECDP, using the innovative and evaluative model.

Conclusion

The NIECDP's primary purpose to define a national comprehensive ECD programme and support with identified essential components inclusive of national, provincial, and local spheres of government was explored. We concluded that there were no means to provide comprehensive quality ECD programmes overarched by multisectoral bodies as per policy in most underprivileged ECD centres. Basically, ECD centre managers from these contexts worked in silos. Therefore, the lack of collaboration adversely affected children's holistic early learning and the delivery of quality ECD programmes. The quality ECD programmes that are associated with interactions and the provision of learning opportunities for all children's development is compromised. Therefore, ECD centre managers are expected to organise environments that embrace collaboration with all relevant stakeholders for the provision of comprehensive quality programmes.

Ethical Considerations

For ethical considerations, applications to conduct the research study were submitted to the relevant bodies. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Fort Hare's higher degrees and research office and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Anonymity was assured with pseudonyms for the research sites and participants.

Acknowledgements

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Supervising Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland

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Abstract

The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care takes a stand on premises, learning environment, qualification of personnel, aims, quality assessment, and supervision. Pursuant to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a national regulation that provides guidelines for the national steering of ECEC. On a governmental level, supervision is very important when it comes to management, and in addition to that, assessment and supervision of the supervisory authorities are a part of the ECEC director's tasks. Supervision is a part of strategic leadership. From the beginning of the year 2020, the Regional State Administrative Agency has implemented a supervision programme in which the focus is to check that there is adequate staffing throughout the day. There is a systematic sampling of children's and personnel's presence in early education centres of the municipal ECEC. By examining the adult–child ratios, senior officers in the Regional State Administrative Agency judge if the situation is satisfac-

tory. The study was conducted to see whether municipalities are complying with the law. A low ratio affects the quality of early childhood education and care. The supervisory authority may issue an admonition for future operations to the organiser of ECEC. The sampling is ongoing, but the results so far show that municipal ECEC follows the ratio very well. During 2020, the Regional State Administrative Agencies supervised 1596 municipal day care centres. The adult–child ratio overrun percentage was only 0.45 per cent.

Keywords: municipal early childhood education, supervision programme, adult–child ratio, the Regional State Administrative Agency

Introduction and Background

In Finland, many changes have occurred in recent years concerning early childhood education and care (ECEC). The management of ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Culture and Education from the beginning of 2013. On 1 August 2015, a new law—the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care—came into force. This has resulted in some changes. For example, the adult–child ratio was lowered ('fewer adults per children') from 1:7 to 1:8 in groups of children aged 3 and over (Government Decree on Early Childhood Education, 753/2018). In addition, the child's right to ECEC was limited to 20 hours per week.

In Finland, the law relating to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 2015 was totally updated in 2018, and it came into force on 1 September (Act on ECEC, 540/2018). Subsequently there have been small changes. On the 1 August 2020, the adult–child ratio (1 adult to 7 children over 3 years of age) and the so-called subjective right were restored (Soukainen, 2018). In addition to the aforementioned changes in ECEC, there have also been changes on governmental level. The reform of the regional state administration was introduced in 2010. Two new authorities emerged: the Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVI) and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment (ELY). The Regional State Administrative Agencies are responsible for ensuring the legal rights of citizens and businesses. Officers see to this by processing complaints, rectification requests, and permit applications. The Regional State Administrative Agencies monitor, supervise, and assess the accessibility of basic services. The actions of public administration affect the lives of everyone

and the activities of companies in many ways, and it is important to ensure that public authorities function properly and legally (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020a, Soukainen, 2018.)

The Regional State Administrative Agency and the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) supervise ECEC in the public and private sectors. Municipalities also supervise private ECEC services. The Regional State Administrative Agency monitors problem areas in ECEC and intervenes based on reports of grievances (Act on ECEC, 540/2018). ([Figure 14.1].)

As far as the quality of ECEC is concerned, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) plays an important role. It has defined indicators for the quality of ECEC, and it also carries out external
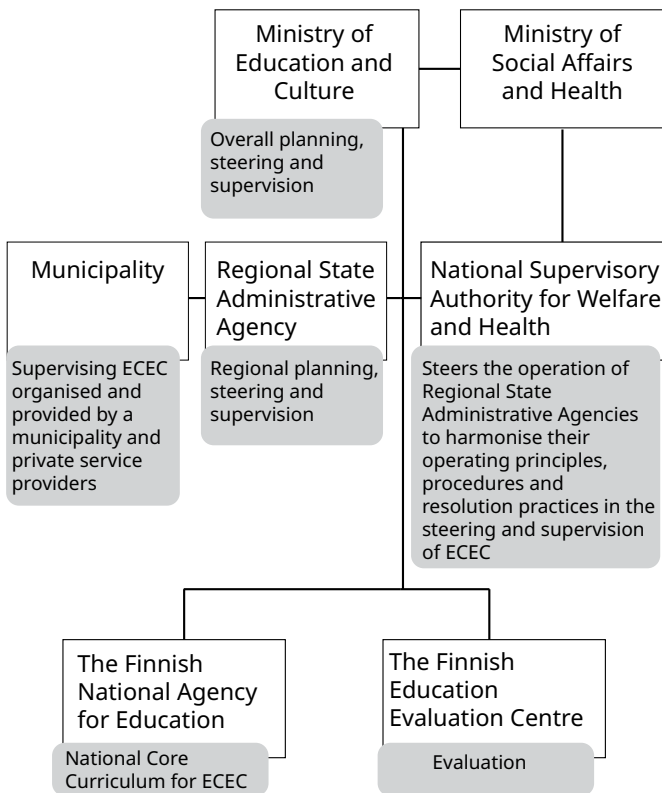
Figure 14.1: Central government steering system (Aluehallintovirasto, 2019).

evaluations of the quality of ECEC. Heikka et al. (2021, p. 21) write that '[d]iverse ways of regulating and measuring ECE quality is based on different ways to refer to ECE as an economic investment for the future benefits in societies'. Quality is more than just an economic investment for the future. High-quality ECEC supports children's well-being. National standards for high-quality ECEC, quality assessment, and supervision of ECEC enable uniform quality throughout Finland. Quality standards set the boundary conditions for ECEC, in which the best interests of the child must be considered as a matter of priority.

In the Regional State Administrative Agencies, information steering of educational and cultural services has increased because of some legislative changes. The need for proactive guidance has increased because of, among other things, amendments to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. During 2019, information steering and in-service training focused in particular on amendments to the Library Act and the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, three-tier support and demanding special support, and themes related to safety and well-being. In the Regional State Administrative Agencies, ECEC is situated in the division of education and culture. In addition, there are education, libraries, sports, and youth work (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020b). As well as the provision of proactive guidance, the supervision of ECEC has been intensified. This chapter examines the first results of the ECEC monitoring programme launched in 2020.

Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland

According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (Act on ECEC, 540/2018), municipalities shall organise the ECEC referred to in that specific Act within the scope of and in types of activity that meet the needs in the municipalities. A municipality or a joint municipal authority may produce the services by organising the services themselves or they may procure them from another service provider on the basis of a contract. Service vouchers may be issued to the users of ECEC. Table 14.1 shows the changes between 2017 and 2019 in terms of organising and participating in ECEC. The data in the table have been compiled by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

Table 14.1: Statistics on ECEC in 2017 and 2019.

Category	2017 December	2019 January
Municipalities as organiser	299*	300
Private ECEC	in 169 municipalities (57%)	in 159 municipalities (54%)
Private care support	in 155 municipalities (52.5%)	in 140 municipalities (47.5%)
Service vouchers	in 68 municipalities (23.1%)	in 92 municipalities (31.2%)
Private day-care centre service providers	501 providers	468 providers
Private day-care centres	907 day-care centres	993 day-care centres
Municipal family day-care childminders	5200 persons (2016) (including family day-care centres)	4611 persons (including family day-care centres)
Private family day-care childminders	1542 persons (including family day-care centres)	1601 persons (including family day-care centres)
In municipal day-care centres	187,547 children (68.1%)	192,918 children (70.9%)
In municipal family day care	23,111 children (8.4%)	18,529 children (6.8%)
In municipal open ECEC activities	20,057 children (7.2%)	10,732 children (4.0%)
In private ECEC	Total: 44,850 children (16.2%) of which •private care support: 17,254 children •purchasing service: 5752 children •service vouchers: 21,844 children	Total: 49,748 children (18.3%) of which •private care support: 14,318 children •purchasing service: 4898 children •service vouchers: 30,532 children

*295 municipalities in mainland Finland in 2017, response rate 100% (Karvi, 2020a, 2020b).

The total number of children participating in ECEC has decreased: since 2017, the change is 3638 children. The total number of children participating in municipal ECEC has also decreased (8536 children). By contrast, participation in private ECEC has increased since 2017 by 4898 children (Karvi, 2020a, 2020b).

The Role of the Regional State Administration Agency

There are six Regional State Administrative Agencies in mainland Finland. In Åland, the corresponding operator is the State Department of Åland. The task of regional administration is to promote people's rights, well-being, and security. The Regional State Administrative Agencies ensure the legal rights of citizens and businesses by processing complaints, rectification requests, and permit applications. The Regional State Administrative Agencies come under the Ministry of Finance, but other ministries steer the activities of their own administrative branches. The Regional State Administrative Agencies' tasks are regulated by several laws concerning various industries. The areas of activity of the regional government agencies are based on the division of provinces. Areas of responsibility are the following: basic public services, legal rights and permits, education and culture, occupational health and safety, environmental permits, and rescue services and preparedness. The agencies' tasks and operational objectives are always linked to the current government programme (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020a).

As can be seen in Figure 14.1, the role of the agency concerning ECEC is regional planning, steering, and supervision. In 2018, many grievances concerning care for the elderly were filed. Also, the families among ECEC became more aware of rights and quality in education. At the same time, private ECEC increased in volume—more children participated in private ECEC, though the total number of children participating in ECEC has decreased (since 2017 to 2019, the change is 3638 children). Participation in private ECEC increased by 4898 children from 2017 to 2019 (Karvi, 2020a, 2020b). The shortcomings in care for the elderly and ECEC became the subject of exceptionally wide media attention in the early part of 2019. Media contacts and the number of requests for information increased significantly (Aluehallintovirasto, 2019).

The need for proactive guidance in educational and cultural activities increased with amendments to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, among other things. The aim was to increase proactive guidance, self-monitoring, and risk-based supervision, and to deepen information management. However, this was not possible, and the focus remained on ex post control. With increased human resources

in ECEC in the Regional State Administrative Agencies, the opportunity for proactive guidance improved. At the end of 2019, there were nine senior officers to steer and supervise ECEC in the Regional State Administration Agencies (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020b, 2020d).

Cooperation between the regional administrations was increased during 2019 to harmonise the agencies' working methods and to promote a flexible use of resources. The forms concerning private ECEC were updated. The development of the ECEC registration procedure occurred in every regional government agency so that changes could be made to the procedure in accordance with the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), which came into force on 1 September 2018. In-service training for teaching staff and ECEC guidance is handled regionally, but with a uniform content. Every other year the Regional State Administrative Agencies assess access to basic services (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020b).

During 2019, the focus in the Regional State Administrative Agencies was on guidance and the supervision of activities related to the legal security of social and health care and ECEC, as well as patient and customer safety. The guidance emphasised the operators' self-monitoring and the municipalities' primary responsibility for control over the services they procure (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020a).

Table 14.2: Number of municipalities in different Regional State Administrative Agencies' areas. Source: avi.fi.

Regional State Administrative Agency area	Number of municipalities
Eastern Finland	44
Lapland	21
Northern Finland	38
Southern Finland	62
Southwestern Finland	44
Western and inland Finland	85
Total in mainland Finland	294
In addition, Åland	16

Western and inland Finland also contains a Swedish-speaking section, which operates in Swedish-speaking municipalities. As can be seen in Table 14.2, the number of municipalities differs considerably. Although there are only 21 municipalities in Lapland, the geographical area is large. The differences influence the work of senior officers when it comes to supervising ECEC (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020a).

Supervision Programme from the Beginning of 2020

Parliament responded to the government's proposal to Parliament regarding the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, as well as some related laws (67/2018), with the requirement to implement some priority tasks. Parliament demanded that the government supervise and assess the effects of the reform of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care on the equal provision of adequate ECEC services and the consideration of the best interests of the child throughout the country and in all demographic groups. If necessary, the government was also to take measures to implement the objectives of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (Eduskunta, 2018).

Parliament also demanded that the functionality and effectiveness of the provision on staff sizing in day care would be monitored in future. If necessary, adequate legislative arrangement should be made to ensure the best interests of children (Eduskunta, 2018).

As a result of the above, the Regional State Administrative Agencies and Valvira have jointly developed an ECEC supervision programme. Supervision under the programme was introduced on 1 January 2020. The programme describes the principles and annual priorities for the supervision of ECEC. The aim is to create harmonised operating models for the guidance and supervision of ECEC and to clarify the roles of supervisory authorities (Aluehallintovirasto, 2019).

The premise of the supervision programme is that the supervisory authorities primarily carry out proactive supervision of ECEC. The implementation of the programme is supported by organising various regional events, education, and steering in municipalities and ECEC centres. Versatile guidance and counselling ensure high-quality ECEC, and they also reduce grievances (Aluehallintovirasto, 2019).

According to the supervision programme, the focus during 2020 was on the sizing of personnel (adult–child ratio). In 2021 and 2022,

the supervision of ECEC was to focus on the realisation of group sizes in ECEC centres as well as compliance with staff qualification requirements.

The key principles of the supervision programme are: the Act on ECEC; the best interests of the child; nationally harmonised supervision; primary guidance and counselling; clarification of the responsibilities and tasks of the supervisory authorities; defining annual priorities, also risk-based; and systematic monitoring of the implementation of the supervision programme (Aluehallintovirasto, 2019).

As the data in this research have been collected from the ECEC supervision programme, the research question was: Is the adult–child ratio being realised in municipal day-care centres?

Method

Section 35 ('Number of staff in early education centres') in the Act on ECEC (540/2018) states:

> Early education centres shall have a sufficient number of staff for tasks in upbringing, education and care relative to the number and age of children in early childhood education and care and the time the children spend daily in early childhood education and care, and these staff members shall be qualified as teachers, social pedagogues or child carers in early childhood education and care as laid down in this Act. Further provisions on the number of staff are issued by Government decree. The decree can set separate ratios for children aged three or older and for those aged under three years of age, and separate ratios for children aged three years or older who spend a maximum of five hours a day in early childhood education and care and for those who spend more than five hours a day in early childhood education and care.

Government decree has defined the ratio in such a way that the ECEC centre must have at least one person—with professional qualifications provided in sections 26–28 of the Early Childhood Education Act (540/2018) in upbringing, teaching, and care duties—for a maximum of seven children who participate in ECEC for more than five hours a day and are over three years of age. For children under three years of age, the adult—child ratio is 1:4. This decree came into force on 1 August 2020. Earlier, the ratio with children over three years of age
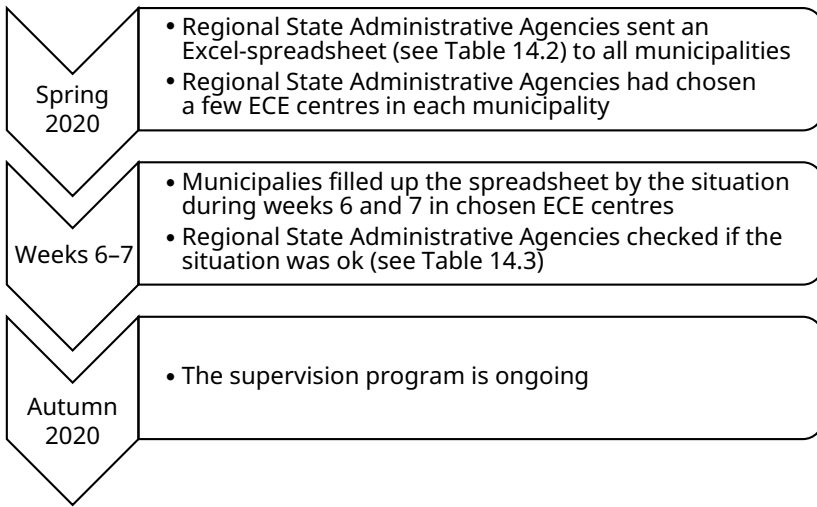
Figure 14.2: The process of survey.

was 1:8. The supervision programme began on 1 January, so the first results were collected under the old ratio (1:8).

Personnel sizing is monitored through surveys conducted in municipalities (Figure 14.2). The surveys determine the number of kindergarten staff in relation to the number of children. Also, the Regional State Administrative Agencies carry out unannounced and announced inspections according to the regional situation. During the spring of 2020, the survey covered weeks 6 and 7. Senior officers sent Excel spreadsheets to the chosen municipalities. The dates (3.2.2020–16.2.2020) were marked beforehand on the Excel spreadsheet (see Table 14.3). Every ECEC centre had its own sheet on which the director wrote the numbers of children and personnel. The Excel spreadsheet counted the ratio automatically after the numbers were typed. If the ratio was over 8, the number became red.

Table 14.3: An example of the Excel spreadsheet.

Early Childhood Personnel Supervising Control Form					
Municipality			N.N.		
The name of ECEC centre			Strawberry		
ECEC in shift (yes/no)				no	
Date	Under 3 years	Over 3 y, ≤5h	Over 3 y, >5h	Personnel	Ratio
3.2.2020	14	3	100	24	5.41
4.2.2020	16	2	104	25	5.49
5.2.2020	15	2	105	25	5.45
6.2.2020	17	1	106	25	5.62
7.2.2020	8	2	86	25	4.12

This type of supervision system is an ongoing one. The Excel spreadsheet is updated to match the new ratio from the beginning of August. During the autumn, there is no specific week, so every senior officer may choose the suitable two-week period for surveillance. The data of each survey are collected into the same file. By doing so, the results are easy to see.

Results: There Are Enough Personnel in the ECEC Centres

By 1 September, senior officers had investigated 137 municipalities (46.6 per cent). In the larger municipalities, not all ECEC centres have been included in the survey. The data contain the information for 635 ECEC centres in mainland Finland. The ratio was overrun on 21 days. This means that the percentage of overrun adult–child ratio is 0.33. (Aluehallintovirasto, 2020c).

Table 14.4: An example of the answers.

Early Childhood Personnel Supervising Control Form					
Municipality			N.N.		
The name of ECEC centre			Strawberry		
ECEC in shift (yes/no)			no		
Date	Under 3 years	Over 3 y, ≤5h	Over 3 y, >5h	Personnel	Ratio
3.2.2020	14	3	100	24	5.41
4.2.2020	16	2	104	25	5.49
5.2.2020	15	2	105	25	5.45
6.2.2020	17	1	106	25	5.62
7.2.2020	8	2	86	25	4.12

As can be seen in Table 14.4, the Excel sheet was very easy to complete. Except for the days that the ratio was overrun, the readings were low. In the ECEC centres where ECEC was organised in shifts, the ratio was at its lowest: only 1—of course, if there is even one child present, the ECEC centre must also have staff.

Findings and Discussion

During the spring of 2020, the Regional State Administrative Agencies supervised 732 municipal day-care centres in total; 116 of them were day-care centres providing ECEC in shifts. The result was that the ratio was overrun on only 26 days of the total inspected 7784 days. During the autumn, the inspection covered 9296 days, with the ratio overrun on 52 days. The ratios were low. For example, the ratios of two towns varied between 1.38 to 3.38 and from 2.17 and 6.25, when it could have been 7 (Aluehallintovirasto, 2021).

The purpose of the quality indicators defined by the FINEEC is to lay the foundation for nationally consistent policies and principles in accordance with which the evaluation of ECEC can be carried out. At a pedagogical level, the indicator for adequacy, availability, accessibility, and inclusiveness of ECEC is that '[t]he leader of the day-care centre ascertains every day that a sufficient number of staff as required by

law and considering the number of children is present, ensuring that the children's safety and the permanence of interactive relationships can be guaranteed, and the objectives set for early childhood education and care are reached' (FINEEC, 2019, p. 13). Based on the results, this indicator has been well implemented. However, it should be noted that this is only one quality factor that has been relatively easy to assess by carrying out a survey in municipalities. Do the results really indicate that ECEC is of high quality throughout Finland?

The results of the supervision programme have been criticised. According to the trade unions, good results cannot be true. The trade unions are contacted in situations where an employee says that they have been alone with a large number of children. The ratios are considered for the whole ECEC centre and for the whole day. Shift planning plays a big role. It's important that the providers and parents understand the importance of telling when the child comes to an ECEC centre and when they are going to bring the child home. After all, the ratios were low. It means that there have not been as many children present as there could have been.

Conclusion

What do the results of 'the first loop' of surveillance tell us? Do they tell us that the chosen weeks were somehow abnormal? Senior officers in the Regional State Administrative Agencies reviewed the results and concluded that the needs of children have been considered, and that is why the ratios were so low. Another cause of the low ratios may be that the municipalities had already prepared for the future change that took place in August. Or some municipalities may never have changed the ratio from 1:7 to 1:8. That was possible when the government decree changed last time on 1 August 2016. One conclusion could be that ensuring the right ratios is the first step on the way to high-quality ECEC. Then it is an economic investment for the future. The better the ratios, the better the interests of the child are considered.

In any case, the reasons for the low ratios may remain a mystery. Surprisingly, the personnel express their resilience. On visiting ECEC centres, there is a sense of oversized groups. The personnel feel tired. Could this be due to a lack of expertise or have the changes taken place too rapidly? Before the year 2017, there was no norm for the contents of ECEC. The Finnish national agency for education ordered the first

core curriculum for ECEC in 2016. The municipality, joint municipal authority, or other service provider had to prepare and adopt a local curriculum compliant with the core curriculum on 1 August 2017 at the latest. In many municipalities, the introduction for the curriculum was not realised. The personnel should have had more time to discuss the pedagogy described in the curriculum. The new curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, and all the new operating models need time and a strong leader. Directors of ECEC centres should have a plan for implementing the curriculum among the personnel.

Also, there are still some issues to be considered at the national level. For example, more instructions are needed in relation to organising the shifts in ECEC. Planning the shifts for the personnel is challenging because of the unpredictable attendance of children. Also, the option of choosing a weekly or monthly time for the child leads to changes in groups of children. There are some children who are absent for two days a week, for example, and other children take their place. It is almost amusing how the Act on day care (36/1973) did not change for 40 years, and then the changes came with no end to be seen.

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CHAPTER 15

Owners' Governance of Directors' Mentoring Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in Norway

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Abstract

This chapter draws on data from semi-structured lifeworld interviews with seven directors in early childhood education and care centres (ECEC) in Norway with both public and private owners. The research questions for the study are: 1) What kind of role do owners have in directors' mentoring of staff in ECEC centres in Norway? and 2) Does owners' governance influence the quality of mentoring practices? Mentoring is understood as a learning process where the intention is that staff reflect individually and collectively on pedagogical practice. The study shows that directors believe owners see mentoring as important to ensure the quality of the pedagogical work, and that they expect directors to organise mentoring of staff. However, few owners have written guidelines or strategies beyond systems for mentoring of newly qualified early childhood teachers. Owners seem to

govern more through support and dialogue than through authoritative rules. Owners also offer pedagogical capacity building at meetings for directors at owner level, in the form of mentoring in which the directors themselves participate. Directors are positive towards being given autonomy in mentoring for staff, but they ask for more financial resources and time to do mentoring.

Keywords: early childhood education and care centres, director, owner, mentoring of staff, governance, pedagogical leadership, personnel leadership

Introduction

In a report from an expert group on the early childhood teaching profession in Norway, it is argued that owners of early childhood education and care centres (ECEC) need to be seen as part of the leadership in the organisation (Ministry of Education and Research (MER), 2018, p. 150). While 46 per cent of the around 5800 ECEC centres in Norway are owned by municipalities, 54 per cent are privately owned (MER, 2019, p. 9). In formal terms, the owners of the municipal centres are the politicians elected to the municipal councils. In practice, however, there is often a superior at a middle management level in the municipal leadership and management hierarchy. Depending on the size of the municipality and the number of ECEC centres, there might be more staff at this middle management level. Private owners can vary from one private person owning one or two centres to large commercial owners with more than 200 centres. Some municipal and private owners in Norway have become so large that they can both support and make demands of the pedagogical work to a much greater extent than before (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2016, p. 206).

The directors of Norwegian ECEC centres are heads of the staff (MER, 2019, p. 9). The Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergarten (NFP) states that directors have day-to-day responsibility for pedagogical, personnel, and administrative matters (MER, 2017, p. 16). The framework plan also says that good pedagogical and administrative leadership requires good cooperation with the owner, who is made legally responsible for the quality of the pedagogical work (MER, 2017, p. 15). The director should also cooperate with the pedagogical leaders who are at the leadership level under the director, and lead the daily work for a group of children together with col-

leagues (MER, 2019, p. 9). The Norwegian framework plan also states that the ECEC centre is a learning organisation, where staff should reflect on their own values, keep themselves updated on recent literature, and be role models (MER, 2017, p. 15). Mentoring of staff can be seen as a tool for owners and directors in achieving the goal of being a learning organisation (Senge, 2006, p. 3).

Previous research on mentoring in the director's role has to a small extent looked into the owner's role and involvement. While a study by Mørreaunet (2019) examined two directors' mentoring practices when they led mentoring of staff, another Norwegian study examines whether directors' orientation in mentoring with newly qualified teachers in ECEC centres is individually or organisationally oriented (Klages et al., 2020). In a study by Lundestad (2021), directors state that mentoring is a very important part of their leadership practice, as it brings them closer to their staff groups and the situation in the pedagogical work. None of the studies discusses the owner's role.

Internationally, Wong & Waniganayake (2013) unpack the conceptual evolution of mentoring in ECEC as a top-down model to a collegial model and examine findings of research from 2000 to 2012. That examination could not locate peer-reviewed publications on international comparisons of mentoring in early childhood despite extensive research (Wong & Waniganayake, 2013, p. 174). In the chapter, the owner's role in mentoring is not discussed, but government and employer interest in establishing mentoring in early childhood workplaces is said to be driven by the recognition of the benefits of mentoring (p. 174). Nuttall et al. (2018) critique the usefulness of double stimulation—a key concept of Vygotskian analyses of human development—in fostering sustainable leadership practices in early childhood education. The work environment in ECEC is described as a field with high staff turnover, where resources for individual coaching and mentoring are extremely limited (Nuttall et al., 2018, p. 83). Even though the article presents ECEC policies in Australia, and programmes for sector reforms, the owner's role is not discussed. Thornton (2015) discusses the similarities and differences between the concepts of mentoring and coaching in the ECEC field, and states that mentoring has been used in New Zealand to support beginning teachers and in leadership development programmes. Thornton (2015, p. 7) also discusses internal and external mentoring roles, but not the role of the owner.

As there seems to be little research on the owner's role and governance of directors' mentoring practices, a study of seven directors in ECEC centres in Norway with both public and private owners has been conducted to contribute to international comparison.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study presented in this chapter are: 1) What kind of role do owners have in directors' mentoring of staff in ECEC centres in Norway? and 2) Does owners' governance influence the quality of mentoring practices?

Theoretical Perspectives

In Norwegian, the word 'veiledning' is used in professional settings, meaning 'leading to find a way'. English-language equivalents could be supervision, mentoring, consultancy, advising etc. (Lauvås & Handal, 2014, p. 47). Although directors have a supervisory function in evaluating the quality of pedagogical work, the main purpose of 'veiledning' is to encourage staff to reflect on their pedagogical practice for developmental purposes. I have therefore chosen the term mentoring, because it implies someone like a director being more competent and/or experienced than the novice (Lauvås & Handal, 2014, p. 66). Another reason is that a mentor's task is to introduce the novice to professional practices and provide support and challenges. Even if not all staff are novices, a central task for directors as leaders is to introduce staff to the aims in the professional practice of the ECEC centre, and to support and challenge staff regarding the quality of their professional practice.

The most dominant tradition in mentoring in Norway has been the action and reflection model (Lauvås & Handal, 1999). With a transition towards social constructivist approaches, the discourse on professional development has been expanded (Klages et al., 2020, p. 104). One example is Gjems (2007), who sees mentoring in professional learning groups from a systemic point of view where humans participate together in learning processes (Ulleberg & Jensen, 2017, p. 60). Gjems defines mentoring as '[a] learning process that takes place between two or more people to create meaning, new understanding and possible alternatives of action in professional contexts' (Gjems,

2007, p. 154). This definition is in accordance with Wong & Waniganayake (2013), who define mentoring as 'a facilitated process involving two or more individuals that have a shared interest in professional learning and development'. Based on such understandings of mentoring, key objectives of directors' mentoring will be professional learning and development that can give meaning and new understandings, and possible alternative actions Mentoring, understood as such individual and collective learning processes in staff groups, can contribute to ECEC centres being what Senge (2006) defines as a learning organisation:

> Organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together (Senge, 2006, s. 3).

Owners' Governance of ECEC Centres

A large-scale quantitative study from 2009 in Norway shows that owners are heavily involved in the pedagogical work, staff leadership, financial priorities, and external relations (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2016, p. 212) of their centres. There can be different forms of governance from the owner (MER, 2018, p. 168). One form can be 'authoritative rules', where owners supervise closely, request frequent reports, and give instructions and directives. This approach can also include pedagogical package solutions and procedures for quality assurance systems (MER, 2018, p. 168). Another form is more dialogical and negotiative in nature, and can be described as 'encouragement', where the owner is someone to help and understand the director. Another form of governance is 'organisational capacity building', where the owner can be someone who provides arenas for negotiations between owners and directors regarding pedagogical content. Forms of governance can also be 'sanctions and incentives', where owners give financial support to prioritised areas or sanction deviations, or 'pedagogical capacity building', where owners can arrange competence development for staff or provide developmental resources (MER, 2018, p. 168).

The organisational structure in the ECEC field will also have an impact on the individual and collegial autonomy of the professionals (MER, 2019, p. 12). Autonomy in a profession means one is relatively

free in how one performs a task (Molander & Terum, 2008, p. 17). In their performance, professionals are required to use both their formal knowledge and their professional judgement. In Norway, there is a discussion on whether early childhood teachers are losing their autonomy (Greve et al., 2014). Demands from owners, politicians, and society for more standardised tools and more detailed regulations place limits on their autonomy. This can make it more difficult for ECEC teachers to use their professional judgement, both as educators and leaders, and raises the question of whether directors experience autonomy in their mentoring practices.

Method

The study builds on semi-structured lifeworld interviews with seven directors in various ECEC centres (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 22). Such interviews are used when themes from daily life should be understood from the perspective of the person being interviewed, in this case directors' perspectives on mentoring. The interview guide is designed through themes, which allows the dialogue to be both open and structured (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 46). There were several themes in the study where this presentation is based on the theme 'Owners and mentoring'. Four questions were included in the theme: 1) Does the owner have views or strategies for mentoring in the ECEC centre? 2) How do you find the owner's involvement in mentoring: too little – adequate – too much? 3) How does the owner facilitate mentoring of the staff in the ECEC centre? 4) Other thoughts on owners and mentoring?

The selection of directors is strategic, with directors of centres in both public and private ownership, and involving both small and large owners (Johannessen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2010, p. 106). Table 15.1 presents an overview of the directors and owners in the study:

Table 15.1: The informants, the size of the ECEC centre, formal training as director, owner, size of owner.

Category	Director 1	Director 2	Director 3	Director 4	Director 5	Director 6	Director 7
Percentage of full-time position	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Size of ECEC centre	4 units 60 children 1–6 years	4 units 80 children 1–6 years	5 units 88 children 1–6 years	4 units 60 children 1–6 years	5 units 69 children 1–6 years	4 units 63 children 1–6 years	13 units, 198 children, 1–6 years
Formal training as director	Leadership in ECEC (30 ECTS) Supervision (30 ECTS)	None	Leadership in ECEC (30 ECTS) Mentoring (15 ECTS)	Leadership in ECEC (30 ECTS) Master's student	Administration and leadership (ECTS unknown)	Leadership in ECEC (30 ECTS) Children with special needs (30 ECTS)	Leadership in ECEC (30 ECTS)
Owner	Private	Private	Private	Public	Public	Public	Public
How many centres the owner owns	Large (more than 200 centres)	Medium (14 centres)	Small (4 centres)	Medium (19 centres)	Medium (29 centres)	Medium (12 centres)	Medium (22 centres)

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

A central question regarding validity is how well, or relevant, the empirical data represents the phenomenon (Johannesen et. al, 2010, p. 69). In the beginning of the interviews, I presented my own background as a former director, educator, and researcher in the ECEC field, something which I found gained the trust of the informants. The directors answered the questions openly and shared their daily experiences and thoughts. This trust in the relationship contributed to a connection between the phenomenon under study and the empirical material that emerged during the interviews. I therefore find the study to be valid. Although the small number of informants is not representative, the study still implies tendencies in owners' role in and governance of directors' mentoring practices. Reliability in qualitative research is about making the process and analysis of the empirical material transparent and explicit to others, so they can judge the quality of the work

(Halkier, 2010, p. 126). Through the description of the design of the study, the process during the interviews and the presentation of the analysis, I have sought to strengthen the reliability. Regarding ethical considerations, an information letter was sent to all participants explaining the aim of the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 104). All participants consented voluntarily to being interviewed. The study was ethically approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data [2] (NSD, from 1.01.2022 SIKT).

Analysis of the Empirical Material

I began analysing the empirical material by collating the directors' responses on the theme into one document. I then used a phenomenological approach to analysis where I followed four main steps: 1. main impression and condensation of meaning, 2. codes, categories, and concepts, 3. condensation, and 4. summarisation (Malterud, 2011). I first read through the document and the responses to gain an overall impression of the statements and thoughts of the directors. Next, I coded the text that was relevant for the research questions and identified categories like 'mentoring important', 'systems for mentoring', and 'autonomy positive'. I then reduced the empirical material to develop more abstract concepts and found quotations that could illustrate the condensed meaning. Finally, I tried to summarise the empirical material to find patterns that emerged from the directors' lifeworld (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 232).

Results

In the following section, I will present the results from the study, based on the analysis of the empirical material. The results are organised according to the categories developed during the analysis, with subparagraphs.

Mentoring important for owners

Several of the directors (2, 3, 4, 5, 7) report that their nearest leader, or pedagogical adviser at owner level, sees mentoring as very important. These professionals at owner level have a clear engagement in mentoring, either through formal training or through experience as a mentor

themselves. One way the engagement shows is that several leaders at owner level offer mentoring to directors if they need it:

> She is a really experienced mentor, so if I come to her on a Friday afternoon and I am quite frustrated as a leader at the end of the week, she will say 'Okay, now I'll put everything away. Sit down and let's do some mentoring together, let's spend some more time on this.' (Director 4)

As one can see, the owner prioritises mentoring the director regarding challenges in her leadership practice. Another example of an owner who sees mentoring as important is a private owner with more than 200 ECEC centres. This owner has developed a written booklet for their directors on how to become a skilled leader and mentor (Director 1). Still, this is the only owner that a director in the study mentioned who has developed written guidelines for mentoring. There is also only one director who says the owner sees mentoring as so important that a system for mentoring staff has been designed (Director 2). The owner is private and has medium-sized (14) centres. This owner demands that all new pedagogical staff in the organisation should be involved in mentoring in their first two years, even if they have long experience from other ECEC centres.

Expectations from Owners to Directors to Establish Systems of Mentoring

All participants in the study report that they find that the owner expects the director to mentor staff and to develop a system for mentoring. One director says her leader see mentoring as a tool to develop the pedagogical work, and that she expects systems for mentoring developed by the directors (Director 4). The owners' expectations still seem to be more unspoken than clearly articulated. Nearly all the directors (3, 4, 5, 6, 7) say there is no reluctance towards mentoring from the owner, just not a clear strategy and little facilitation for mentoring in the ECEC centres. The directors seem to agree that developing a system for mentoring staff is a part of their responsibility as leader, and do not object to the owners' expectations. One director says she believes that if the owner meant 'something was not good enough, I would have gotten feedback' (Director 6). This implies that owners might 'keep an eye' on the directors, but do not demand any reports on their mentoring of staff.

Directors Want Autonomy in Designing Systems for Mentoring

Several of the directors (2, 6, 7) find it positive that directors are given autonomy in designing their mentoring practices. The reason given is that directors are closest to the centre and the staff and are in the best position to judge where there might be a need for mentoring. One director says she sees it as quite natural that she should be the one to decide how mentoring should be done, as she knows the routines and everyday life in the centre (Director 2). Another director says she believes it is a good thing that the owner allows her to find her own path and solutions regarding mentoring (Director 7). Based on these statements, it seems that directors welcome autonomy in designing the mentoring practice in their own organisation.

Dialogue and Support from Owners if Needed

When asked what the directors think of the owners' involvement in mentoring staff, some of the informants say the answer depends on who one sees as the owner:

> The involvement is just fine. But it depends on who you see as the owner. The one at the top is not involved at all in my leadership or mentoring practices. But there is a supervisor at the owner level with whom I regularly discuss my practice as a leader. (Director 6)

As one can see from this response, this dialogue is about various situations in the directors' leadership practices. The director says she finds these conversations with the adviser at the owner level very helpful. Some of the other directors (3, 5) also mention leaders at owner level whom they find to be supportive. One director says that she finds the owner to be a good listener, and that the owner welcomes inputs and ideas from the director (Director 3)—this could be designing a system for mentoring. This director works for a small private owner with four centres, something she believes makes it easy for her to be in a close dialogue with the owner.

Mentoring Done at Director Meetings Influences Mentoring in the ECEC Centre

All the directors say they participate in meetings for directors with the same owner. At some of these director meetings, or in smaller networks, directors do mentoring together. One director says directors for the same owner have organised such meetings, including mentoring, themselves (Director 1). The directors bring forward various cases and choose one of them. The mentoring given at such meetings is seen as very useful by the directors. Some say their own experiences of mentoring in such networks influence their mentoring practices with staff. One director says that experiencing mentoring herself makes her believe that it will also be all right in her team of pedagogical leaders (Director 5). In this way, what is done at director level regarding mentoring is repeated when directors do mentoring with staff in the ECEC centre.

Owners Do Little to Facilitate Staff Mentoring

Most of the directors (1.4, 5, 6, 7) report that owners do little to facilitate the mentoring of staff:

> The owner doesn't facilitate anything! [laughter] (Director 7)

The director says that apart from mentoring newly qualified teachers, it is all up to her to organise mentoring in her own staff group. One director reports that the only way the owner facilitates mentoring is by requiring all staff to be involved in mentoring (Director 2). As a result of this demand, the director can say to staff that 'mentoring is not up for discussion'. By this she means that staff choosing to work in the centre can't protest against being involved in mentoring.

The area where all the owners do facilitate mentoring is for beginning early childhood teachers:

> All the newly qualified early childhood teachers who work here have to attend mentoring groups in their first year. It's mandatory, and is currently being revised, so it might be mandatory in their second year as well. (Director 5)

Several of the directors say the owners expect them to organise the staff groups so that the newly qualified teachers can attend group mentor-

ing. The directors can also be contacted by the responsible mentor at owner level if the newly qualified teacher fails to attend the mentoring group. One director says she would have liked mentoring in the staff group to be facilitated by the owner in the same way as for newly qualified teachers (Director 4). This would demand more time and financial resources for substitutes, which the owner doesn't give.

Discussion

The research questions in this study are: 1) What kind of role do owners have in directors' mentoring of staff in ECEC centres in Norway? and 2) Does owners' governance influence the quality of mentoring practices?

1) *The owners' role:* The study shows that owners in general see mentoring as an important area. This is in accordance with international research showing that governments and employers recognise the benefits of mentoring (Wong & Waniganayake, 2013). The finding implies that owners see mentoring as a way of ensuring the quality of the pedagogical work, and that mentoring can contribute to the ECEC centre being a learning organisation (Senge, 2006). Nonetheless, few owners in the study have written strategies for mentoring staff, and there seems to be no or few requirements for reporting on what kind of mentoring is practised by directors. Staff mentoring seems to be an area where owners trust directors and give them autonomy to develop their own systems for mentoring. If owners had demanded that a system should be developed and reported by directors, they might have had better documentation regarding the demand in the framework plan to be juridically responsible for the quality of the ECEC centre (MER, 2017, p. 15).

As in earlier studies (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2016, p. 214), owners seem to govern more through support and dialogue than through authoritative rules. Several owners govern through 'encouragement' and being available to help and support directors by offering mentoring (MER, 2018, p. 168). Another form of governance could be described as 'pedagogical capacity building', whereby directors enhance their competence in mentoring through participating in mentoring in networks established by owners. The area where owners govern to a greater extent is in mentoring for newly qualified teachers. Here own-

ers govern more through 'incentives and sanctions', as they require directors to organise their staff groups so that newly qualified teachers can participate in group mentoring. This form of governance can be seen in relation to a nationwide agreement in Norway to provide mentoring for newly qualified teachers in both schools and ECEC centres (MER, 2009). Such systems for mentoring of beginning teachers are also established globally (Thornton, 2015).

The directors say that the owners provide few financial resources to facilitate mentoring of staff. The findings from the large-scale quantitative study in Norway from 2009 showed that directors at both public and private owners believed there were not enough resources and that there were too many tasks (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2016, p. 215). This study also shows that directors find that owners do not provide resources for staff mentoring in general, nor do they facilitate or help directors in implementing mentoring. These results are also in accordance with the situation globally, where resources for individual coaching and mentoring are said to be extremely limited (Nutall et al., 2018). This implies that there is a lack of financial resources from owners in the area of mentoring.

2) *The owners' governance and the quality of mentoring practices:* Since staff mentoring seems to be an area where most owners expect and leave it up to directors to design their own mentoring practices, owners do not seem to participate much in leading and governing this area. The directors also seem to be able to choose their own methods of mentoring, and are allowed to make professional judgements on who in their staff groups needs mentoring or not. Unlike other areas in pedagogical leadership, staff mentoring seems to be one where directors have retained their autonomy (Greve et al., 2014). As many directors in Norway have formal competence in leadership, this allowance of autonomy from the owner might lead to high standards of professional judgement from directors (Molander & Terum, 2008).

On the other hand, lack of facilitation from the owner and lack of cooperation in leadership between owners and director might lead to various extents to new actions in the professional work as part of being a learning organisation (Gjems, 2007). It might depend on the director's interest and qualifications in mentoring, or the time available to do mentoring. Studies show that directors take responsibility both internally and externally, and there is much to suggest that direc-

tors are overburdened (MER, 2019, p. 48). Staff mentoring may be one of the tasks that directors do not have enough time to do. Mentoring could be a tool to initiate collective learning processes in the ECEC centre and to bring the centre towards being a learning organisation (Senge, 2006). This may not happen if the actual extent of mentoring done is limited.

As a conclusion to the first research question—What kind of role do owners have in directors' mentoring of staff in ECEC centres in Norway?—the study shows that even if owners see mentoring as important, their involvement is limited. They govern mainly through support, dialogue, and pedagogical capacity building. Regarding the second research question—Does owners' governance influence the quality of mentoring practices?—the study shows that it seems as though owners' governance influences the quality of the mentoring practices to a minor degree. The quality of the mentoring practices depends to a greater extent on the directors' engagement and prioritising of mentoring in their leadership practice, or the time given, in addition to that for other leadership tasks, to establish a system for mentoring. As this study is based on limited qualitative research, larger studies are needed to confirm or disprove the tendencies in the findings. Nevertheless, the study implies that owners may benefit from being more involved in the directors' mentoring practices for the whole staff group, not only for newly qualified early childhood teachers. In this way, the owners would know more of what is needed to develop the mentoring practices, such as financial resources or time for mentoring. The possibilities for higher quality in the pedagogical work and in the ECEC centres as learning organisations would then increase.

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CHAPTER 16

Integrative Leadership Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

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Abstract

Several changes have taken place both in the content and structure of early childhood education and care (ECEC) throughout the world, which has led to a need for developing leadership and quality evaluation strategies in early educational settings. Recent changes call for understanding leadership as part of comprehensive ECEC governance. The purpose of this conceptual chapter is to describe how governance, leadership, and operational culture in the ECEC context are integrated and how they provide the foundation for examining quality in ECEC. The aim of the chapter is to introduce a comprehensive approach to ECEC leadership, called an integrative leadership framework, devel-

oped in the Finnish ECEC context. The integrative leadership framework introduces the dimensions affecting operational culture in ECEC leadership and curriculum implementation when developing quality of ECEC services and their pedagogical practices. Legislation and administrative premises provide the frame for the leadership and management functions, as well as for quality management. The integrative leadership framework combines the dimensions connected to leadership to provide high-quality ECEC services.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, leadership, management, quality evaluation

Introduction

The national steering system of Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) has undergone major paradigmatic changes in recent years: ideological, legal, conceptual, pedagogical, and administrative (Alila & Eskelinen, 2021). Following the administrative change in 2013, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) was reformed in 2018 and again in 2022. In line with the reform, the new National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018; renewed in 2022) began to steer the development of ECEC in a more goal-oriented and mandatory manner than previously. In addition to the changes in the governance of ECEC, the amount of ECEC research conducted by Finnish scholars has significantly increased over the past two decades. According to Alasuutari and Raittila (2017), this occurred after pedagogically oriented ECEC teacher education was transferred to the universities in 1995.

The changes in Finnish ECEC reflect international trends, as ECEC has become a subject of political and research interest in many countries and institutions. It has been argued that high-quality ECEC enhances children's cognitive development and is linked to their later academic success (Sylva et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2013). Quality ECEC has also been shown to benefit the development of social skills and self-regulation skills (Sammons et al., 2014). Consequently, ECEC has been seen as an efficient investment in the future (Heckman, 2011), and it can be seen as effective, for example, in preventing social exclusion of children (Sipilä & Österbacka, 2013; Sipilä, 2020).

One of the changes brought about by the reform of the Finnish ECEC steering system concerns evaluation. In the Finnish context,

municipal ECEC organisers and private service providers are required to plan and carry out self-evaluations as part of their more extensive system of quality management (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 540/2018; Vlasov et al., 2018).

The reforms, as well as the overall development of ECEC, aim to strengthen the pedagogy of ECEC and increase the quality of services. The paradigmatic changes have also had an impact on ECEC leadership (Granrusten et al., 2018; Strehmel et al., 2019). Currently, the importance of ECEC leadership is acknowledged, and it is widely understood that leadership is a significant driver for developing the quality of ECEC services and implementing changes (OECD, 2020). Even though the significance of leadership has been acknowledged in Finnish ECEC, until recently it has not been mentioned in the official steering documents. For example, the previous National Core Curriculum (2003) did not mention leadership. As Douglass (2017) has stated, leadership in the ECEC sector has long been invisible and undervalued.

The theoretical foundation for examining leadership in this chapter is based on contextually defined leadership (Hujala, 2013), where leadership is perceived to be embedded within the context of ECEC. Contextual leadership has its roots in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, where the macro level of the system, societal values, and institutional structures define leadership on the micro level. Intangible and tangible capital empowers the organisation and its management functions. In ECEC, contextually defined leadership considers the mission, core tasks, vision, and management of ECEC processes as integrated (Hujala, 2013). The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how governance, leadership, and operational culture in the ECEC context are intertwined and how these different aspects build the foundation for examining ECEC quality in each society. Legislation and administrative premises are seen to provide the framework for leadership and management functions, and thus for quality management. This conceptual chapter introduces a comprehensive approach to ECEC leadership, called an *integrative leadership framework*, developed in the Finnish ECEC context. The integrative leadership framework is seen to combine different dimensions connected to leadership to provide high-quality ECEC services.

Context of Finnish ECEC Leadership

The reforms in Finnish ECEC date back to 2013, when the administration of ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture. With this administrative shift, the societal focus of ECEC changed to one that emphasised the right of children to early education and learning. Previously, the roots of ECEC had been deeply grounded in social welfare and labour force policy (Alila & Kinos, 2014). In the legislation (Act on ECEC 540/2018), ECEC refers to a systematic and goal-oriented whole consisting of education, instruction, and care, with particular emphasis on pedagogy. Thus, ECEC is now officially acknowledged and considered as the first phase of formal education within the system. The primary focus of planning, delivery, evaluation, and development of ECEC should be in the child's best interest. Additionally, the law stresses that every child has the equal right to receive support for their holistic development and growth, learning, and well-being regardless of their background (Act on ECEC 540/2018; the renewal of the Act 1183/2021; Alila et al., 2022).

Since the pedagogically demanding law came into force, and implementation of the curriculum became mandatory, the Finnish government has understood the significance of leadership as a foundation for quality improvement. The government demonstrated strong support to ECEC by allocating financial resources for the development of leadership and quality improvement. This is crucial, as the law states that new ECEC leaders, starting from 2030 onwards, are required to have a master's degree in education, to include appropriate ECEC teacher competence and leadership experience.

It is widely understood that having qualified and competent ECEC staff is crucial and plays a significant part in providing high-quality ECEC (OECD, 2020). In the new legislation, the nomenclature for ECEC staff has been revised to emphasise both the core content and the task of ECEC. The multi-professional team of adults working in a child group should consist of a tertiary trained ECEC teacher, a social pedagogue trained in a university for applied sciences, and an ECEC caretaker with a diploma at upper-secondary level from a vocational college. Currently, ECEC teachers as pedagogical experts have strong research-based training. This presents a challenge to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of ECEC leadership so that they become

instrumental in fulfilling teachers' expectations and supporting them in their pedagogical work.

Although ECEC legislation emphasises leadership and appropriately points the way for its implementation, the wholeness of leadership is quite confusing for many ECEC professionals, according to Naskali (2020). Sihvonen (2020) affirms that along with the reforms of the municipal organisation, the job description of ECEC centre leaders has expanded, with an increase in financial and administrative work. ECEC centre leaders both in Finland and elsewhere have experienced a conflict between pedagogical leadership and the day-to-day management of ECEC. Leaders often feel that their working time is spent mainly on maintaining structures rather than on developing pedagogy (Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013; Palethorpe, 2019; OECD, 2020; Siippainen et al., 2021). This is quite contradictory, as the staff expect leadership for pedagogy and everyday support in their work (Fonsén, 2014; Palethorpe, 2019). There has been a feeling that managerial leadership has overtaken visionary and development-oriented objectives (Siippainen et al., 2021). Instead, the goal of leadership development should be to direct ECEC leadership so that it becomes strategic and proactive (Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013). The OCED (2020) states that the complexity of leaders' work and expectations for leaders have been growing exponentially. The changes in ECEC policy and changes in leaders' workload require clarification of leadership and the leadership framework. More clarification is needed on how the guiding documents direct different areas of leadership and management and how they, in turn, guide the quality management and development of ECEC.

Leadership as a Pathway to Quality in ECEC

One significant issue challenging the development and leadership of ECEC concerns the current changes in the definition of ECEC quality as well as the evaluation of quality. In Finland, the evaluation of the ECEC sector is relatively new and has been a statutory task since the new Act on ECEC was launched in 2015. International trends and a focus on evaluation in ECEC, including research-based evidence of the impacts of high-quality early education (Sylva et al. 2010; Goff, Evangelou, & Sylva 2012; Heckman, 2013; Sammons et al., 2014), have

created a need to develop the evaluation of ECEC services, and thus leadership practices.

Creating an efficient and reliable national evaluation system based on the principles of trust and enhancement-led evaluation is not an easy task. In previous years, Finland has lacked a nationally shared perspective on quality factors in ECEC as well as a suitable quality evaluation system (Alila, 2013; OECD, 2016). Additionally, the absence of efficient training of ECEC staff in evaluation and monitoring has been a challenge. To address the national need, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is currently in the process of creating a national ECEC quality evaluation system and evidence-based instruments to support quality management at the local level (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2021).

According to today's ECEC paradigm, parents' role in evaluating quality and—through that—being partners in leadership, has been seen to be increasingly crucial in ECEC practice. The core issue in leadership is to engage the staff to understand, maintain, and improve ECEC quality. Fonsén (2014) emphasises shared values as a means through which a leader and staff can work together to achieve the goals set for ECEC. To develop high-quality professionalism (Peterson et al., 2014) and to strengthen the distributed leadership in ECEC (Heikka, 2014), the leaders' challenge is to involve teachers in evaluating and developing ECEC practices. This will lead to genuinely distributed pedagogical leadership, which is the pivotal characteristic of leading ECEC expert organisations.

The curriculum—which emphasises teachers' self-reflection on the pedagogical processes, and therefore demands leadership for pedagogy—implicitly contains the idea of teacher leadership (Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016). Teachers in multi-professional teams lead the pedagogical work and are thus responsible for the quality of everyday work in ECEC child groups. According to Heikka, Halttunen, and Waniganayake (2016), the implementation of teacher leadership in ECEC centres is dependent on the conditions and structures created for teacher leadership as well as the teachers' attitudes in leading and improving pedagogical practice.

Integrative Framework for Leadership to Achieve ECEQ Quality

As described in the previous sections, the reformed ECEC policy has emerged as a result of large and paradigmatic changes, and a more obligatory and demanding framework for conducting ECEC has been developed. This creates a need to examine ECEC leadership from a new perspective. The changes have led to a demand for an emphasis on the meaning of leadership, for the development of know-how and practices in leadership, and finally for the formation of *a new kind of leadership culture*. One could argue that the changes—and the impact of those changes—have been a driving force for the ECEC sector and its leadership renewal.

To enhance understanding of the new kind of leadership culture, this chapter introduces an integrative framework for leadership. In this chapter we define the integrative framework for leadership as a conceptual model, which clarifies the connections between ECEC policy, research on ECEC and leadership, and leadership and management functions, as well as quality evaluation in ECEC. It is understood that
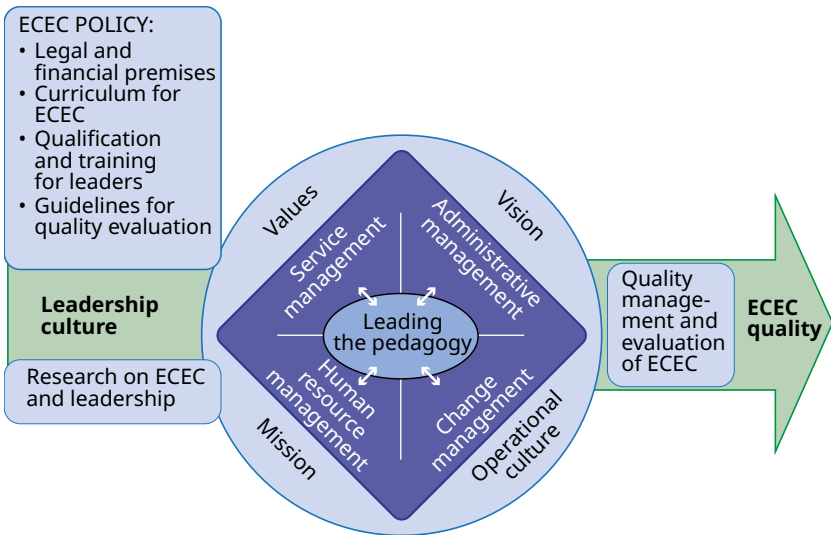
Figure 16.1: Integrative framework for leadership and management functions to achieve quality in ECEC.

the model is not just linear, and that the connections between the different areas are integrated. The integrative leadership model described in [Figure 16.1](#) explains how reforms in ECEC policy and new research on ECEC and leadership lead to new demands for leadership and management functions. ECEC pedagogy has strengthened as a result of the revised law and curriculum. The definition of quality, as well as procedures of evaluation, have been specified (Vlasov et al., 2018). As a result, the new governance offers a unified framework with which to examine ECEC leadership. In the model, the context for leadership is based on the mission and operational culture of ECEC. The future way for leadership is defined in vision and developed further according to Finnish ECEC values. Quality management in ECEC is a final dimension in the integrative framework model. The new leadership culture shows the way for quality in ECEC. Next, we will explain the integrative model of leadership in more detail.

The Legal, Financial, and Pedagogical Premises of ECEC Policy

In the model, the legal, financial, and curriculum-based premises of ECEC policy are seen to build a structural framework for the leadership culture and the implementation of ECEC (Alila & Eskelinen, 2021). These structural factors of quality steer how ECEC services should be organised and therefore direct the way in which leadership should be conducted (Vlasov et al., 2018). Structural factors remain rather stable, as they are defined in laws, curriculum, resources targeted to ECEC, and documents regulating the operational culture of ECEC. Quality policy and guidelines for evaluating the quality provide direction for high-quality ECEC.

In Finland, qualifications for ECEC leaders and personnel are defined in legislation (Act on ECEC 540/2018). Qualification requirements have been changed along with the reform of legislation, as the societal demand to develop ECEC and to enhance children's well-being has increased. The new requirements aim to strengthen the skills and competence of ECEC professionals and thus raise the level of pedagogy (Alila & Eskelinen, 2021). Qualification requirements, as well as ECEC research, form the basis for both basic and in-service training of professionals. Raising the level of basic leadership training is perceived

to be important nowadays, as is investing in the continuous learning of the leaders (OECD, 2020; Siippainen et al., 2021).

Changes in ECEC policy affect the context of leadership work and how leadership may be implemented. In Finland, for example, ECEC leaders had to take over the reformed administration of ECEC, the revised legislation, and a curriculum emphasising pedagogy in a rather short time. In addition, the strengthened perspective on ECEC quality and its evaluation and an increased amount of research have led to pressure on leadership. It can be said that the changes in ECEC policy have a significant impact on the value base, vision, and mission in the implementation of ECEC, as well as on the operational culture. This is also reflected in the implementation of various aspects of leadership and the development of quality.

Research on ECEC and Leadership

Research on ECEC and leadership has increased during the last few decades (Douglass, 2019). Research theorising on ECEC, curriculum, and evaluation policy, as well as research on leadership, provides a foundation for implementing, evaluating, and developing leadership and management practices. Research has produced theoretical knowledge to strengthen teachers' pedagogical thinking. It gives a strong basis for renewing the practice of ECEC (Alasuutari & Raittila, 2107). In Finland, recent PhD studies have focused more on ECEC leadership. Finnish leadership studies, especially PhD studies and their results, have been recognised by the OECD and EU (OECD, 2020), whose reports have acknowledged Finnish leadership research as valuable in developing international leadership governance and practice.

The first Finnish PhD thesis on ECEC leadership was conducted by Nivala (1999). He studied the phenomenon of Finnish leadership in ECEC and found that there was a struggle between leaders' pedagogy-oriented and care-oriented interests in leadership. Akselin (2013) suggested that a leader's crucial skills are to be an example, an inspirer, and a presenter of possibilities. Theses by Halttunen (2009) and Soukainen (2015) perceived leadership as a broad arena that requires people involved in ECEC to be jointly responsible for improving the quality of ECEC core tasks. Heikka (2014) studied different ECEC stakeholder groups who all agreed that the main leadership responsibility in ECEC was that of leading pedagogy, although there was insufficient

sharing of leadership responsibilities among stakeholder groups. Fonsén's (2014) thesis focused on pedagogical leadership, and she defined it as advocating for the appreciation of ECEC, enhancing the quality of the services, and promoting the best interest of the child. In her thesis concerning change management, Sihvonen (2020) found that to implement change, the prevailing operational culture needs to be open, to ensure that all the members of the organisation understand the language used in change management. Rytkönen (2019) examined servant leadership in ECEC. Findings indicate that ECEC leaders found a humane perspective on leadership and daily management practices to be the most important aspect of their leadership. Tiihonen (2019) found that ECEC leadership takes place in different forms of interaction. The relationships allow for the sharing of leadership skills and knowledge. She described the following leadership relationships: leadership as an interactive relationship, leadership in confidence, leadership in partnership, and leadership as an authority relationship. In reality, relationships are interrelated and implemented holistically (Tiihonen, 2019).

Leadership research gives tools and understanding to evaluate and develop leadership practices in ECEC settings. Additionally, research helps in developing ECEC governance and new training programmes for leadership. The Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE) has chosen leadership as one of the main themes for in-service training in ECEC. A new leadership training programme for basic and in-service training as part of the Finnish government's Right to Learn development programme will be launched in January 2023 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). The programme will also provide tools to evaluate leadership, create networks for researchers and leaders, and offer a variety of support material for leaders—for example, how to best implement the curricula. Additionally, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre is carrying out a national evaluation of the current state of Finnish ECEC leadership (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2021). The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the state of ECEC leadership and local management systems and their connection to the realisation of equality and the best interests of the child in municipal and private ECEC. The evaluation aims to benefit the management system on both national and local levels by providing information on the current state of the leadership system and its strengths and areas for development (Siippainen et al., 2021).

Leadership and Management Functions

The ECEC setting, defined in its mission and vision, based on Finnish values, and operationalised in the operational culture of ECEC, provides a context for ECEC leadership and management functions. ECEC policy regulates the organisation of ECEC, whereas research builds the vision for the ECEC mission, which is the core of the integrative leadership model. ECEC policy is based on Finnish values, administrative regulations, professionals' qualifications, and training. In addition, research creates an operational culture based on the mission and vision of ECEC. Operational culture has its foundation in the context and cultural history of the organisation. Therefore, it can be said that operational culture implicitly defines the curriculum implementation and leadership. The leader is in the central role of creating a professional and versatile operational culture (National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2022).

The new National Core Curriculum on ECEC (2022) aims to strengthen pedagogy. Thus, the core issue in leadership is that all management functions should support *leadership for pedagogy*. The curriculum defines leadership for pedagogy as leading, evaluating, and developing the entity of ECEC as a goal-oriented and systematic leadership activity. While leadership significantly affects the operational culture of ECEC, its development, and quality (Granrusten et al., 2018), the preconditions for developing the operational culture include leadership for pedagogy. It includes all actions in creating good working conditions for personnel, the utilisation and development of professional competence and training, and pedagogical activities. ECEC leadership aims to promote the well-being and learning of every child (National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2022).

In researching the leading of pedagogy, Naskali (2020) found that the definition of 'pedagogical leadership' is ambiguous even for leadership experts in ECEC. The experts in the study were researchers, administrative heads, managers, and teachers. Some of them comprehended leading the pedagogy simply as one of the tasks of leadership. Some experts understood it as an umbrella concept for all leadership and management functions. Experts perceived that leaders must have an in-depth knowledge of pedagogy and therefore place pedagogy at the heart of leadership along with other managerial responsibilities.

However, according to ECEC experts, leading pedagogy was seen primarily as a shared task.

In the study by Heikka et al. (2020), leadership for pedagogy in Finnish ECEC centres focuses on leading the pedagogical processes and taking care of the structures for pedagogical development. The main purpose is to develop the centre's pedagogical quality and children's development and learning. According to Heikka (2014), leadership for pedagogy is seen to be aligned with children's growth, professionals' capacity building, and societal educational values (Heikka, 2014). Leadership for pedagogy aims to support the staff to implement and develop the ECEC curriculum and pedagogical practice (OECD, 2020). The National Curriculum for ECEC and the local curricula are crucial tools for ECEC leaders. The curriculum provides the foundation and goals for leaders' work. Leadership for pedagogy and leadership for curriculum share similar features such as a commitment to change, progress, development, capacity building, and the prioritisation of the promotion of quality education in ECEC. Fonsén (2014) emphasises that a strong leadership for pedagogy is needed to enhance the competence of professionals by empowering them as continuous developers of pedagogical practices. The renewal challenges ECEC professionals to assess their professional thinking and to create a shared and mutual understanding of the values and theoretical views that guide their work. The old operational culture and pedagogical practices need to be constantly reflected upon and revised to meet the new challenges. The key to strengthening ECEC in its attempts to maintain and develop pedagogical quality together with the educators is strong, distributed pedagogical leadership (Fonsén & Vlasov, 2017; OECD, 2020). That is why the leadership for pedagogy to support professionals in developing their pedagogically focused operational culture is now more important than ever before.

Administrative Management

In the model presented, ECEC legislation, quality policy, and curriculum guidelines are perceived as administrative regulations. Administrative management coordinates laws, regulations, and guidelines and transforms them into pedagogical practice. Based on his school leadership study, Pennanen (2006) argues that administrative leadership is more reactive, while other leadership functions are more proactive.

Administrative leadership takes care of tasks that are needed while managing everyday situations in the ECEC centre. Administrative management includes financial management and management of public relations, as well as cooperation with stakeholders. It provides the foundation for other ECEC management functions such as leadership for pedagogy, human resource management, service management, and change management (Eskelinen & Hujala, 2015).

Human Resource Management

Human resource management and leadership for pedagogy are embedded with each other. Strehmel (2016) argues that human resource management focuses on taking care that the personnel are strongly committed to reaching the objectives set for ECEC and to developing pedagogical practices. The main prerequisite of quality ECEC is that professionals undertake the actual pedagogical work. The work well-being of the personnel influences the entire ECEC setting. Professionals can feel that their work is meaningful when they can develop their work and help children enjoy their life in ECEC. The challenge to enhance the quality of ECEC through leadership and management is to engage the entire professional community in the ECEC centre to strengthen the operational culture for children's well-being and early learning (National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2022).

Change Management

As described earlier in the chapter, there have been several changes in Finnish ECEC in recent years. This requires leadership that involves influencing change (Douglass, 2019). Fullan (2007) states that leaders need to understand the necessity for the change if they are to manage the change phenomena. Change is currently constant in the Finnish ECEC system. Some reflects a change in policy from childcare to early childhood education; a change in the theory of instruction from didactic discourse to the discourse of pedagogy for early learning; a change in the paradigmatic thinking from child-centredness to the paradigm of participative pedagogy; and a change from family-focused childcare to a participative parent–teacher partnership. Changes in leadership have shifted from focusing on administrative management to leading

the pedagogy (Fonsén, 2014; Hujala & Eskelinen, 2013). Additionally, there has been a change from hierarchical leadership to collaborative leadership, which is referred to as teacher leadership (Heikka et al., 2016). One of the biggest changes concerns the new culture of evaluation and quality management in ECEC, and how to adopt and implement it in practice (Vlasov et al., 2018). In addition, management of support and inclusion has arisen lately as a new theme of leadership in ECEC (Hautakangas & Laakso, 2022). All these changes require active change management in centres as well as in the whole steering system by every stakeholder (Alila, 2013).

The revised ECEC policy and changes in curriculum challenge leaders to develop the operational culture of their ECEC centre. According to the curriculum (National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care 2022, 30), the leader's responsibility is to:

> … promote an operational culture that encourages active participation by creating structures for professional discussion. The leader supports the community's development into a learning community where competence is developed and shared. The aim is that the shared operational concept and the goals of the activities are apparent in the practices. The leader is in charge of ensuring that shared working practices are made visible and regularly examined and assessed.

Service Management

The challenges for leading today's mission in ECEC, as well as the skills and knowledge required from the leader, emerge from the early learning needs of children, including parent–teacher partnership. The parent–teacher partnership has always been emphasised in Finnish ECEC, but the understanding of its role in ECEC has changed considerably. Previously, parents were seen as recipients of ECEC services, in contrast to the current situation, where the policy dictates that parental participation is emphasised (Vlasov, 2018). The reformed Act states that the best interests of the child and the right to early childhood education must always be at the centre of the leader's activities as part of family service guidance and management-related decision-making. Research by Kuukka, Siippainen, and Alasuutari (2019) has highlighted that service guidance in ECEC must be developed and managed consciously. Through the government's Right to Learn pro-

gramme, ECEC service guidance has been developed and researched on a term basis in 2020–2022 (Alasuutari et al., 2022).

Quality Evaluation and Management

Quality management comprises ECEC leadership, planning, and evaluation of ECEC, as well as continuous improvement of services. Quality management refers to the different strategic actions that guide the organisation's quality work (Vlasov et al., 2018). The purpose of quality management is to enhance the quality of ECEC and promote the preconditions for children's well-being, development, and learning (Act on ECEC, 2018). With a purposeful and well-functioning quality management system, ECEC organisations can ensure that evaluation data is circulated throughout the entire organisation, including at the highest levels of management and decision-making.

Local authorities organising ECEC have a legislative responsibility to evaluate their services regularly and take part in the external evaluation of the provision. Self-evaluation processes are steered, but not controlled, from the national level by an independent expert body called the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. The evaluation process and the methods used may be decided on the local level yet ensure that all the stakeholders involved—for example, local authorities, ECEC professionals, parents or custodians, as well as children—have up-to-date information about the implementation of the services and the quality thereof. Self-evaluation is thus considered to be a significant part of the management system and a leadership tool (Vlasov et al., 2018).

In Finland, evaluations at all levels of education are based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation (Patton, 1997), which emphasises trust between the evaluator and those participating. This enhancement-led evaluation aims to build an evaluation culture in which evaluation is based on open discussion and dialogue rather than on control or accountability (Vlasov et al., 2018). The purpose of this kind of evaluation culture is to help organisers and service providers to identify development areas in their activities but also good practices that promote ECEC development. The main goal is to support the commitment and motivation of the staff or entire work communities and to help them develop their practices (ibid.). According to the National Core Curriculum on Early Childhood Education and Care (2022), the objectives of the evaluation are set for the educators and their peda-

gogical work in such a way that they support the child's learning and development. In contrast to many other countries, children's learning outcomes are not assessed in Finnish ECEC.

ECEC Quality

As Douglass (2019) and Strehmel (2016) have stated, the quality of leadership supports the development of quality in ECEC. The discussion about quality has remained important while developing ECEC and ECEC pedagogy and leadership. The definition of quality provides the framework for quality management. It is widely recognised that quality is a complex phenomenon (Alila, 2013), and that quality is formed by process and structural factors, which should be realised at the national, local, and pedagogical activity level to deliver ECEC with an impact (Vlasov et al., 2018).

Leadership connected to quality has been a theme of interest in the EU and OECD in recent years (Douglass, 2019). Both the European Commission (2014) and the OECD (2012, 2016) have published definitions for quality in the ECEC sector to be used in quality development at national level. The definition of ECEC quality is closely tied to societal and cultural values that indicate what ECEC aims for and why something is considered important (Vlasov et al., 2018). While quality has traditionally been considered important and has been stressed in ECEC steering documents, defining it in unambiguous terms is challenging. Quality is a relative concept, as it is always connected not only to time but also to the surrounding society and culture, and the meanings produced by them (Pence & Moss, 1994; Alila, 2013). Furthermore, the definition of quality is regarded as one that is formulated in a shared democratic negotiation influenced by the prevailing values of society and the multiple meanings brought to bear on the definition by different parties (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Hujala, Fonsén, & Elo, 2012).

Leadership is seen as an important part of quality development work (OECD, 2020). High-quality ECEC includes the teacher's commitment, sensitivity, and ability to respond to the feelings and needs of a child, as well as creating an atmosphere that strengthens togetherness and participation (Hujala et al., 2019). Instead of maintaining strict learning goals for children, ECEC aims to promote child-specific growth and children's health and well-being, and to support the pre-

requisites for life-long learning. Because of that, aims are set for pedagogical activities, staff, and the environment to support every child's learning (Vlasov et al., 2018).

The national evaluation conducted by FINEEC (Repo et al., 2019) indicates that the level of quality varies in Finnish ECEC. In a large proportion of ECEC centres, the objectives set for ECEC in the curriculum were mainly achieved well, whereas in some centres and family day-care groups, their achievement was poor. The evaluation showed that the implementation of the national curriculum was facilitated by good pedagogical leadership. Curriculum implementation was also promoted by correctly targeted continuing education for the ECEC staff. Nevertheless, the shortcomings in leadership practices and the pedagogical competence of the staff members, as well as a shortage of pedagogically trained professionals, lowered the level of quality (Repo et al., 2019.)

Final Word

This chapter argues that leadership and its premises should be considered as central factors in the enhancement of quality in ECEC. The integrative framework for leadership is introduced to achieve quality in ECEC. This framework examines all the crucial elements of leadership. It offers a conceptual framework to examine the wholeness of governance and different management functions, including quality and the evaluation of quality. Education policy, legislation, and curriculum are integrated with ECEC research. The implementation of the leadership framework becomes actual and valid in leadership culture.

The traditional way of thinking about children's participation in ECEC as being beneficial for a nation's economy by releasing women to work has changed to seeing children as democratic citizens. The renewed ECEC legislation in Finland emphasises pedagogy, and the new curriculum defines the operational culture from children's perspectives. Today, the entire governance system perceives ECEC as an early educational service for children, while children are strongly seen as agents in their own lives.

The Finnish ECEC curriculum challenges the stakeholders on all levels to develop the delivery of services. The curriculum appreciates trained professionals' knowledge and competence as ECEC specialists. It trusts staff members to implement the objectives set out in the cur-

riculum. While the curriculum is broad, it gives teachers a fair degree of freedom to implement it to support children's learning challenges. However, local authorities and service providers need support in their quality management tasks as well as training and support for the implementation of their self-evaluation tasks.

The integrative leadership framework envisages leadership as wholeness, beginning with legislation and covering all the management tasks serving the implementation of the high-quality mission of ECEC. Based on ECEC leadership and its policy, legal, and curriculum premises as introduced in the integrative leadership framework, we pronounce the vision of Finnish ECEC and its leadership to be as follows:

> *Pedagogically oriented ECEC professionals and leaders, supported by policymakers and politicians, take a joint leadership to strengthen the role of ECEC, and further develop the mission and quality of ECEC to support children's well-being and early learning.*

Early education is economically and socially effective. Children's participation in early childhood education is a significant promoter of social equality. (Sipilä, 2020.) As stated earlier, ECEC has been shown to have a positive effect on later academic success. However, the positive effects are dependent upon ECEC being of good quality, which again requires a new kind of integrated leadership.

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Concluding Words

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With this publication, the International Leadership Research Forum – Early Childhood Education (ILRF–EC) has collected research articles into a research publication for the fifth time. The previous publications were published in 2013, 2015, 2019, and 2023. These publications aim to fulfil the purpose of ILRF–EC, which is to provide a learning space to bring together those interested in early childhood leadership research from around the world.

The strength of this book is the bringing together of diverse contexts, studies, and perspectives on ECEC leadership. In addition, the book integrates new knowledge that researchers and both practitioners and policymakers can draw on to improve leadership and management in early childhood settings. We are proud to be able to provide the most recent research findings and theoretical underpinnings of ECEC leadership in this publication.

The book is divided into three thematic parts, with the first part contributing the theory of leadership in ECEC. The conceptualisation and interpretations of ECEC leadership are built from the theoretical understanding of educational and pedagogical leadership with a foundation in educational sciences. ECEC leaders need competence to lead pedagogy and curriculum implementation to avoid the risk of using a

mechanical top-down process in the implementation of the curriculum. An inclusive education approach challenges us to think about the purpose of ECEC, how we understand childhood and education, and the purpose, goals, and values of ECEC. The deepening theoretical understanding supports leading those dimensions to fulfil the purpose of ECEC: the best possibilities for every child's learning, development, and well-being.

Team leadership, the diversity of team members, and the question of diversity management are topical questions to clarify in rapidly changing global environments. To support understanding teacher leadership and teachers' ability to take part in distributed leadership, we clarify leadership structures through the research provided in our book. Furthermore, theoretical understanding of ECEC leadership is beneficial for clarifying the positions and responsibilities of centre leaders as well as for clarifying their relations with their immediate superiors in the leadership and management hierarchy. The clarification of leadership theory and roles and responsibilities, in turn, enhances understanding of ECEC leadership in theory and practice. Finally, our shared wish is that politicians and administrators would utilise this knowledge to support resources for ECEC.

The second part of the book comprises chapters concerning how to enhance the professional development of leaders and teachers—and through this—high-quality pedagogy. For the professionalism of ECEC leaders, it is evident that peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECEC and supports leaders' professional development. The roles and responsibilities of all professionals, including leaders, need to be clearly defined. This supports the effectiveness of work but also the occupational well-being of all participants. This kind of theoretical knowledge benefits both practical work and leadership education when clarifying the content and responsibilities of work, as well as being conducive to ideas for further ECEC leadership training.

One enormous global issue is the lack of an ECEC workforce. This includes ECEC centre leaders. Expressions of power and agency are seen as factors that can influence leaders' experiences of working in ECEC and their decisions to leave or stay at work. ECEC leaders frame the reality in terms of their self-identity and form their own narratives where they either succeed well or not so well. It is useful to understand this narrative perspective for professional development and, with this, to enhance the retention power of the profession.

High-quality professionals are required to provide high-quality education. All professionals need understanding of the principles of inclusion and, in addition, of barriers to inclusion at the practical level. The research-based recommendations and solutions are provided in the current book. It is interesting that attitudes to the use of digital technology may also be seen as a question of equality in learning. It is not evident that using digital equipment is an equal right available to all children.

The last part of the book examines the governance and policies of ECEC leadership in various countries and how these influence ECEC. Inclusive education is not possible without the support of administration. National legislation and administrative premises, operational culture, the evaluation system of quality, and curricula, etc. affect and modify the reality of ECEC in each country in a unique way. We may ask what kind of steering system best supports high-quality pedagogical work in ECEC. The current book provides examples from various countries of how policies, governance, steering, and evaluation support the leading of high-quality ECEC.

Leading ECEC in an effective way in children's best interests is our shared mission!

Index

Backcover text.

Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education presents research evidence to improve leadership and management in early childhood education and care settings. Divided into three thematic sections, the volume examines the theory of leadership in early childhood education and care, strategies for improving professional development, and the governance and policies related to leadership worldwide. The contributions blend theoretical and practical perspectives, and the book addresses diverse topics, such as pedagogical leadership in different countries, peer mentoring, and the utilization of digital technology in early childhood education.

Aimed at a wide audience, including the academic community, policymakers, practitioners, teachers, and other professionals, the book provides knowledge and tools to enhance the development of the sector. The volume encompasses contributions from across the world, from South Africa to Norway, Australia, Finland, and beyond. By incorporating different contexts and viewpoints, Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education makes a significant and timely contribution to the field of education.