



Care as Everyday Staff Leadership

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ABSTRACT: The analysis of data collected from a shadowing study conducted in Norway on pedagogical leaders indicated the importance of formal and informal interactions between leaders and their colleagues when working side by side. This article examines aspects of the pedagogical leaders' everyday work that are vital to purposeful leadership and building and facilitating a caring community within early childhood education (ECE) centres. The data explore leadership care, including how pedagogical leaders emphasise the importance of care and consideration in their leadership work. Rather than focus on great leadership acts and accomplishments connected to their formal position, leadership care provided by pedagogical leaders gives care a distinctive value beyond their trivial and everyday importance.

Keywords: *care, everyday leadership, leadership care, practice perspectives, shadowing*

Introduction

In the literature on leadership, little attention is paid to the everyday aspects of leadership, such as care and consideration, chatting, listening and creating a positive atmosphere. Rather, these actions may be seen as trivial and insignificant in leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Vie, 2009, 2012a). Within the managerial work and behaviour (MWB) tradition, several studies have focused on what leaders do in their everyday work. However, these studies have acknowledged only minimally the emotional aspects of the work (Tengblad & Vie, 2012). One exception is the study of Vie (2009) that investigates why and how formal middle management leaders in knowledge-intensive firms care for their co-workers. The results from the study of Vie (2009) show that leaders

demonstrate care through everyday activities, such as listening and chatting. He also found that leadership care could reduce tension in relationships and influence co-workers. Moreover, Vie also suggests that because of their formal position and leadership responsibility, leaders are more prepared to take on caring and emotional tasks. Considering these findings, it is important to be aware of the positive aspects of leadership care.

In early childhood education (ECE) in Norway, there are different leadership levels, where owners, centre directors and pedagogical leaders have different educational leadership responsibilities. This study focused on the leadership level of pedagogical leaders^a, who hold a formal position as leaders for both children and staff in their unit. The main leadership responsibility is to direct and facilitate pedagogical leadership, as well as to ensure pedagogical work is carried out in line with the aims and methods of the centre. ECE care is usually connected to pedagogical tasks, and the practitioner's collective responsibility to teach and inspire learning is in line with core values (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). This means that all practitioners —not only pedagogical leaders, experience care and the emotional aspects of their job integrated into their daily work. A weak division of labour and the fact that both pedagogical leaders and assistants do many of the same tasks (Steinnes & Haug, 2013) may create the perception that care is not important in leadership. In their studies of leadership from Australia and Iceland, Hard and Jónsdóttir (2013) reflect on the strong feminised nature of the field and on how the notion of being equal is a challenge according to leadership. They stress how the discourse of niceness might prevent strong leadership. In this case, care is associated with feminine values, which does not fit the image of leadership as influential and directive. Because of the relational and interactional nature of pedagogical leadership in ECE, one could imagine that care and emotional work are handled by pedagogical leaders, given that they are dependent on their co-workers to perform the tasks of the organisation. Sharing responsibilities and actions with co-workers in pedagogical leadership involves capacity building of the team to solve everyday issues (Heikka, 2014). Because of the interdependence between staff involved in pedagogical leadership, it is interesting to investigate the concept of care in relation to leadership. Taking into account that care is seldom acknowledged in the leadership literature, this article focuses on care as everyday leadership. The article attempts to highlight and understand how the concept of care is

^a The Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011) uses the professional title pedagogical leader to target this leadership level. Pedagogical leaders are front-line leaders with leadership responsibility for both staff and children in their unit.

related to leading co-workers, and it suggests care is more than a collective desirable way of being nice to each other.

Recent studies have emphasised the role of the leader of the group in facilitating and supporting other community members (staff) to achieve successful learning (Hognestad & Bøe, 2014; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Thus, when care is framed as leadership, it is likely that leaders give care a distinctive value beyond their trivial and everyday importance (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of care as leadership, we ask the question, why do pedagogical leaders engage in care? To answer this research question, the study examined leadership in practice by investigating six pedagogical leaders.

Qualitative shadowing was employed to study everyday leadership as closely as possible, and it included video observations, contextual interviews, field notes and video-stimulated recall interviews (Bøe, Hognestad & Waniganayake, 2016). Data comes from our PhD research (Bøe, 2016; Hognestad, 2016), which was not aimed at studying the pedagogical leaders' engagement in care work. Although the category of care and consideration was found in the project, it was not further analysed. After the thesis was completed, the data on care provided an opportunity to investigate leadership care, which has not been examined in contemporary research on ECE leadership. While there are rare empirical studies on leadership care work (Vie, 2009), and we have not found studies on leadership care work in ECE, a guiding question for this paper was why do pedagogical leaders engage in leadership care?

Theoretical background

Care is a broad term used in several contexts and disciplines, including nursing, education, leadership and philosophy, as well as in ECE. Tholin (2014) emphasised the concept of care as overall learning, because strong and caring relationships are the basis of children's being, learning and development. Further, care has ethical dimensions in that it relates to processes of decision-making. Care is given in situations wherein it is required that professionals show ethical consideration.

Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley and Shepherd (2012) introduced the concept of intentional leadership, where caring relations are linked to building organisational culture and ethos. Leadership care is important in building strong teams, where such democratic values as listening to staff and including them in decision-making are emphasised. Intentional leadership highlights the pedagogical leader's position to inform and explain to staff about the decisions being made in a way that is supportive and meaningful. Hence, intentional leaders aim to create an ethical workplace and to provide support for collaborative learning and knowledge sharing.

The focus on care as a condition for knowledge sharing and knowledge development has led to a greater focus on the emotional aspects of leadership work. Within the theory of knowledge management and knowledge creation, the positive effects of care have been considered (Vie, 2012b; Vie, Wallin, & Von Krogh, 2011; Von Krogh, 1998). This means that care plays an important role in facilitating and supporting a practice community to achieve successful learning. According to Von Krogh (1998), a caring environment will have a greater potential for knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. Von Krogh (1998) defines care as helping someone to learn and to broaden their awareness of what is happening and of the consequences of what is observed, fostering personal knowledge creation and sharing insights. To build strong relationships for knowledge creation, Von Krogh suggests leaders should be encouraged to create trust, to foster helping behaviours, to increase active empathy, to act as mentors to promote tolerance in judgment and to instil courage as a central value in the organisation (Von Krogh, 1998). Together, these constitute the five dimensions of care (Vie et al., 2011).

The main aim of this article is to contribute to the ECE literature on leadership by highlighting everyday leadership practices of care. We do this by combining the concepts of care and intentional leadership using the theory of knowledge management and an approach to leadership as social practice. Leadership as social practice (Tengblad, 2012a) focuses on the reality that leaders encounter in their everyday work, where they must cope with complexity and uncertainty. Research on leadership should therefore study the actions of leaders in dealing with everyday challenges. The underlying rationale is that leaders have skills and practical knowledge unaccounted for in theoretical models based on the scientific reasoning presented in textbooks. Thus, leadership as social practice is not restricted to simply listing or describing what leaders do but also strives to explain the meaning and intentions of their actions (Nicolini, 2013). Tengblad (2012b) summarises how the empirical studies presented in his book contribute to a practical perspective on leadership. Together with a review of 21 significant studies in the field of MWB, these empirical studies outline a foundation for a practice-based theory of leadership (Tengblad, 2012b). One contribution to this approach is the work of Mintzberg (1973), who shadowed leaders in their daily work. In his later work, he paid more attention to the emotional aspects of leadership, underlining how leaders' interactions with staff are often characterised by respect, trust, inspiration, listening and care (Mintzberg, 2009). However, we have not found that leadership care was further investigated in his research.

According to Nonaka (1988), middle management leaders have been given a central position, building a bridge between the top leaders' ideals and goals and the daily work of the practitioners regarding knowledge sharing. However, current research in ECE in Norway demonstrates that pedagogical leaders have different leadership responsibilities from those of centre directors, and they exercise significant leadership responsibilities in their unit (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2014). That is they play a significant role in directing,

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facilitating and supporting a shared and collaborative pedagogical leadership within their practice inside the centre (Bøe & Hognestad, 2015). Therefore, there is reason to believe that pedagogical leaders play an important role in enacting care, because they have comprehensive contact with their co-workers during the day through interactional tasks such as sharing pedagogical responsibility for playgroups and projects with children. Considering the role of the pedagogical leader's lead to why it is interesting to investigate why they are engaged in care.

Method

Using a practice perspective provides the opportunity to focus on the form and content of leadership work by collecting behavioural data about individual leaders with the intent to understand why leadership care is a significant part of pedagogical leaders' leadership. To answer the research question 'why do pedagogical leaders engage in care?', qualitative shadowing was conducted. Qualitative shadowing involved the researcher closely following the practitioner over a certain period to obtain detailed and rich data from work practices (Czarniawska, 2007; 2014). Shadowing studies on leadership have concentrated on leadership tasks and actions in different fields of practice (Arman, Vie, & Åsvoll, 2012; McDonald & Simpson, 2014). Shadowing enables the researcher to gain access to complex leadership actions as they unfold in everyday contexts and to seek an explanation for the shadowee's sense-making (Gronn, 2009). Therefore, shadowing as a methodological approach to studying leadership involves more than simply following participants to map their leadership actions. Additionally, the shadowing data includes information that explains the meaning-making process of the participants' actions (Bøe, Hognestad & Waniganayake, 2016).

Unlike other shadowing studies on leadership, this study extended the scope of the shadowing with the use of video footage and video-stimulated recall interviews. The study included two researchers (one as a distant shadow and the other as a close shadow) who simultaneously shadowed the same pedagogical leader or target participant. Six experienced pedagogical leaders were studied for one week each during their work in their respective ECE units. All six participants were 35–60-year-old women and ECE teachers with bachelor's degrees as early childhood teachers. The pedagogical leaders each had a formal leadership responsibility for three assistants with no formal ECE qualifications required. In a shared and collaborative way, the pedagogical leaders worked together with their assistants in leading pedagogical activities with the children. Thus, the pedagogical leaders had the responsibility to direct and facilitate pedagogical leadership through distributed leadership (Bøe & Hognestad, 2015). Six separate video-stimulated recall interviews were also conducted, during which the pedagogical leaders watched selected video situations and commented on what had happened. The stimulated

recall interviews were fruitful in obtaining the practitioners' opinions of their work practices and the meaning of leadership care. Taking an interpretive approach to shadowing enabled the researchers to engage with the participants in conversations and to acquire a privileged understanding of these practitioners' activities from their perspectives.

During the shadowing period, situations emerged that required ethical consideration. In shadowing, the researchers became quite close to the participants' practices, which undermined the importance of research ethics on the move (Dewilde, 2013). In this study, research ethics on the move were applied to situations in which the researchers dealt with concerns about the children and parents and to spontaneous meetings with sensitive content. It was important to make quick decisions regarding whether certain situations should be documented as data. Having two shadowers was an advantage in sensitive situations, because it provided the opportunity for brief exchanges of opinion.

Analysis

The first step in the analysis process was to identify leadership actions wherein the pedagogical leaders had verbal contact with their staff, as well as to identify the purpose of these actions. Using the 'purpose of verbal contact' taxonomy (Mintzberg, 1973) in which the category of Care and consideration (Vie, 2009) was present, the study identified leadership actions involving care. In total, 67 video clips and six stimulated recall interviews were transcribed and classified into the care and consideration leadership category. Data was a mix of visual data and written text, which made the analyses challenging. By interpreting and analysing the data as a team, personal interpretations were highlighted and discussed by the research team (Denzin, 1978). To share interpretations in a team was a way of ensuring the huge amount of data and the credibility of the analyses.

The second step involved watching the video clips repeatedly, and through visual analysis (Klette, 2009), new subcategories of care were discovered. The last step was a content analysis of the video-stimulated recall interview data (Bryman, 2012) to gain a deeper understanding of leadership actions in the category Care and consideration. In line with Vie (2009), analyses showed that leadership care was accomplished through everyday emotional activities. In this study, the final analyse made it possible to investigate care as interaction with co-workers such as engaging in humour, chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style. The subcategories of care are further discussed in the paper.

Empirical findings

The data showed that the pedagogical leaders in this study were engaged in caring activities by offering humour, chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style. These activities emerged continuously during daily work, and they were characterised by short informal interactions that last from 20 seconds to four minutes. During the day, pedagogical leaders spent much time together with their co-workers and participated in many common activities wherein they could interact with each other.

In the stimulated recall interviews, the pedagogical leaders emphasised the importance of emotional and interactional skills in leadership. Acknowledging their co-workers in their daily work was a way of showing care for them and that they were important. In addition, care involving humour exchange, chatting and support were found as a way of reducing tension in the relationship between the leader and co-worker. Further, the empirical findings are presented in the three subcategories: humour exchange, social chitchat and a supportive leadership style.

Humour exchange

Many of the caring activities were characterised by the pedagogical leader's way of using humour. In some situations, the pedagogical leaders took initiative to engage in jokes and offer funny comments. For example, in one situation, the pedagogical leader made a funny comment about the assistant's cleaning of the windows in the classroom. When the assistant brought water and soap, the pedagogical leader laughed and asked her to come to her place and clean her windows as well. In another situation, humour emerged when the pedagogical leader created a moment of laughter in between the pedagogical work with the children about age issues among the staff. This took place when the staff were discussing one of the assistant's birthdays, and the pedagogical leader made a point of commenting on how being "old" makes people more vital. This brought laughter to the staff.

In some situations, the assistants took initiative to use humour in their interactions with the leader. Preparing for a playgroup, one assistant put on a monkey mask, and she made monkey sounds until the pedagogical leader noticed her and laughed. In addition, humorous actions occurred in situations wherein the assistants had made a request of the leader and wanted the leader's decision. In one situation, the pedagogical leader responded with a supportive caring leadership style combined with laughter and a playful, kind tone. In another situation, the assistant addressed the leader to ask for permission to go upstairs and discuss a personal matter with the director. The assistant had just returned to work after visiting her dentist. The pedagogical leader accepted the request, but at the same time, she used the opportunity to inform the assistant about the arrangements for the upcoming meal, giving her detailed instructions about her

responsibility for certain children. In this short conversation, the pedagogical leader showed care by asking how the assistant was, and in a humorous way, she asked, “Did your teeth fall out?” The assistant responded with a laugh, saying, “No, they did not fall out”. The leader went a bit further with this joke and offered the assistant help: “I have tools and a mirror at home. Do you want me to contribute?” They both laughed.

Social chitchat

In between the pedagogical and practical work, small talk and chitchat about personal matters occur frequently. For example, in one situation, the pedagogical leader and assistant were changing children’s diapers in the bathroom. As they were talking about children and sleep, the pedagogical leader suddenly started to talk about her cat that wakes her up every night and disturbs her sleep. Then, they continued talking about their relationships with their cats. In other situations, the pedagogical leader addressed the assistant, smiled at her and asked how she was and whether she was well again. In the data, several episodes show how the pedagogical leader had to focus not only on work in the moment, but also on sharing personal experiences at the same time to show interest in the assistant’s personal life. Many situations involving chitchat were characterised by dialogue where the leader and assistant shared everyday experiences.

A supportive caring leadership style

From the video data, supportive caring actions occurred in situations wherein the pedagogical leader supported the assistant’s decision-making in pedagogical work with children. For example, in one situation, when the pedagogical leader and assistant shared responsibility for a painting and drama group, some of the children wanted to put on a show and dance on the table. Because many children were doing different activities, the assistant argued it would not be a good time to dance on the table. The pedagogical leader supported her decision, saying in a friendly manner, “I agree; I share this decision”.

In another situation, the pedagogical leader was sitting with the children around the table drawing. When the assistant approached the table, she told the leader about a complicated playgroup for which she had responsibility. To manage the complicated situation, she had to intervene and negotiate with the children to reach an agreement about how the children could interact with each other. This is something she felt was necessary to discuss with the leader, so she bent down towards the leader who was sitting on a chair around the table. The pedagogical leader signalled a time-out from participating with the children, turned to the assistant and listened carefully.

Caring leadership support expressed how pedagogical leaders’ positive attention to their co-workers’ work and signalled agreement and hence an acknowledgement of the collegiality within the team.

Discussion

Care as intentional leadership actions

In this study, the various caring actions have in common that they actively strengthen the emotional relationships between pedagogical leaders and their co-workers. “This is not a scripted emotional performance but involves a wide range for actions, concerns, utterances and feelings that grow out of sensitivity and concern for the needs of those close to us” (Vie, 2012a, p. 149). These everyday caring actions are not planned; nevertheless, they seem intentional in that they have a clear purpose in building ethical values and support in the group (Waniganayake et al., 2012). When pedagogical leaders deliberately or intentionally engage in care, leadership care is more than simply encouraging knowledge creation, as identified by Von Krogh (1998). Care and consideration are intertwined with other leadership actions, such as informational tasks, requests and solicitation, decision-making, leading knowledge development and resource allocation (Bøe & Hognestad, 2015), and they happen continuously during the day. The findings of this study suggest that leadership care supports these actions, giving them legitimacy as intentional leadership actions within the group. For example, when there is a strong relationship between co-workers and the leader, it becomes easier for leaders to step forward and demonstrate their vision. In this way, leadership care as an everyday leadership practice functions as a prerequisite for creating a professionally caring and learning community rather than encouraging knowledge creation only.

When pedagogical leaders engage in care during the day, this may be looked upon as a distinctive leadership style that characterises front-line leaders who have a commitment to caring about their co-workers. It is interesting that other leadership research studies argue that the more distant the leader, the less important leadership care becomes (Vie, 2012a). Therefore, because the pedagogical leader is present and participates in direct contact with co-workers in the practice community, the need for caring actions will increase as a prerequisite for intentional leadership. Intentional leadership goes beyond caring actions simply to be nice to each other. It may also be understood as being firm and authoritative (Vie, 2012a). In the analyses, it is interesting to notice that humorous exchanges often occurred in situations in which pedagogical leaders step forward in decision-making processes. Sometimes these decision-making processes were characterised by dialogue. However, authoritative power and the duty to make professional decisions lie with the leader.

On the one hand, humour exchanges can function as a deliberate action to reduce or weaken the power relationships between formal pedagogical leaders and their co-workers. Often, co-workers have less formal ECE education than the pedagogical leader, which creates asymmetrical power relations. For example, in one situation, the assistant

was outside with a group of children playing in the snow. The agreed-upon plan was that she would remain outdoors until lunch, but because of the cold weather, the assistant knocked on the window to get the leader's attention from indoors. When the leader opened the window, she looked at the assistant, who had a red nose and was visibly cold. She smiled and laughed at the assistant as she made a joke about going to the North Pole. The assistant laughed, and they continued for a few seconds, having a humorous talk. The conversation ended when the pedagogical leader agreed to end the outdoor play and let everyone inside. In this situation, it was evident that the leader had a strong position in that the assistant expected her to be involved in decision-making. The leader commented about this situation in the video-stimulated recall interview. In this way, showing care and using humour can reduce power relationships and contribute to avoiding confrontation and creating a negative atmosphere. Rather, humorous actions have an impact in balancing democratic and hierarchical leadership styles. It is necessary to realise power in a legitimate way to sustain a democratic leadership and hence gain acceptance as a leader leading from within the practice community.

On the other hand, care and humour can also be used in a manipulative way when the pedagogical leader employs humour and social chitchat as part of her leadership agency to develop strong relationships to get co-workers "on her side". In this way, power could be something leaders use to benefit themselves. However, having power does not necessarily mean dominating and controlling others; instead, power could be understood as the possibility to achieve successful influence. When pedagogical leaders combine leadership and caring actions to achieve organisational goals, power becomes constructive to support strong relationships. Through humour, chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style, pedagogical leaders' feedback avoids being seen as empty and superficial. Being responsible for facilitating the distribution of pedagogical work in their unit, pedagogical leaders in this study use care intentionally to develop collegiality as the first step towards creating a shared understanding of the core values in the organisation.

Building a practice community through leadership care

Assuming human beings are relational, as well as that they operate and communicate in a social environment, it is not surprising that caring activities are present in a working group. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) highlight the importance of everyday work activities, such as listening, chatting and creating a positive atmosphere. They conceptualise leadership as making the mundane extraordinary. Although every member of the team more or less participates in caring activities, one could imagine these are simply relational and social activities and they happen naturally for everyone. However, Vie (2012a) raises the question, do caring activities have the same influence no matter who is engaging in them?

Care and consideration demonstrated through humorous exchanges, social chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style are in this study seen as important leadership actions. In this tight collaborative environment, staff members are mutually dependent on one another to fulfil educational goals; care and consideration strengthen the foundation for all relational activities. Several studies address leadership as relational work, as well as how relational activities contribute to empowering staff members (Arman, Wikström, Tengelin, & Dellve, 2012; Cooper, 2014; Helstad & Møller, 2013; Vie, 2009; Von Krogh, 1998). In ECE, leadership care is embedded in everyday practice and thus empowers staff to perform pedagogical activities (Cooper, 2014). Thus, the caring activities of the pedagogical leader can be seen as the basis of establishing trusting relationships so that staff members feel confident in decision-making. In this way, care can prevent mistrust and uncertainty and thus promote an effective practice community. According to Vie (2012a), care is a process of social influence that is central to effective leadership. As this study shows, pedagogical leaders engage in caring acts as a strategy to build their position as a hierarchical leader. This could be understood as the pedagogical leaders' need to build legitimacy through communication so staff members see them as core members of the practice community. To be acknowledged as a core member or to be appointed as a leader is not something you can ask for; rather, it requires acts that demonstrate qualities worthy of respect and acceptance by other staff.

According to Von Krogh (1998), the relational nature of care and acknowledging other people's perspectives are essential in creating and sharing knowledge within a practice community. To strengthen the potential embedded within a community of practice, studies have highlighted the leader's role in cultivating a learning community (Wenger et al., 2002). ECE studies have revealed how pedagogical leaders provide knowledge development within the strong relationships that comprise the community of practice and how this is crucial, because these communities are the social fabric of knowledge sharing (Hognestad, 2016). Pedagogical leaders must balance control, authority and power with adequate influence, trust, support and participation to achieve successful knowledge-sharing communities. Because of their double role as pedagogical leaders with responsibility for the learning of both children and staff, they must build trust within the group they are leading. As leaders, the core issue when they engage in care is leading by building strong collegiality from within the group, while also being a fellow group member. In this way, we argue that leadership care functions as a catalyst towards an inclusive leadership practice. If pedagogical leaders detach themselves from the group, become more distant and lead from the 'outside', they will lose their relational agency and position as a core member of the same centre or the community of practice.

Pedagogical leaders become core members through an inclusive leadership style, where they facilitate the practice community from within (Bøe, 2016). Hence, humour exchange, social chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style create democratic relations in the

group so the pedagogical leader is able to sustain their position as an equal member of the group. In this way, leadership care holds a special responsibility in preserving and safeguarding the practice community. When combining hierarchical and democratic leadership styles, it is possible to understand how leadership care is embedded in everyday practice: “It is supported when teachers embrace an identity underpinned by advocacy and relational agency, and teacher’s identity as leaders emerges within an effective community of practice” (Cooper, 2014, p. 93). When pedagogical leaders commented on their leadership practices in the video-stimulated recall interviews, they emphasised how developing strong relationships among staff was a crucial part of their work. Thus, care is linked to professional agency with a strong capacity to participate as a fellow member of the team, while also stepping forward as a leader to build the practice community through leadership care.

Conclusions

In this study, the data illustrated the importance of pedagogical leaders’ caring actions. Moreover, they demonstrated how humorous exchanges, social chitchat and a supportive caring leadership style meant more than being nice and friendly towards staff. Rather, we have found that when pedagogical leaders engaged in care during the day, they were able to balance between hierarchical and democratic leadership styles. Thus, leadership care was intentional because of the influence pedagogical leaders have as core members of the practice community.

In addition, leadership care was supported by how formal pedagogical leaders saw themselves as relational agents with the capacity to build strong relationships and collegiality from within the team. In this way, leadership care can provide a balance of power so that they can build trust and gain legitimacy as a leader. Due to the strongly collaborative, shared and distributed style of working in ECE centres (Heikka, 2014), the category Care and consideration reflects the types of caring relationships among colleagues that create the conditions for collaborative work and collegiality. Leadership research in ECE has shown how pedagogical leaders are reluctant to step forward as leaders, as well as how feminine values do not fit the image of leadership (Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013; Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011; Waniganayake, 2014). This may be because caring actions are looked upon as trivial and ordinary rather than actions that have a special value in leadership. “Rather being significant in themselves, it is their being done by managers that gives them a special, emotional value beyond their everyday significance” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1435). The connection between ECE leadership and care illuminates how ‘feminine values’ (Waniganayake, 2014) on the other hand can strengthen pedagogical leadership in contexts wherein collaboration and interdependence are required. Pedagogical leaders exercise a significant responsibility in

their units building a strong and inclusive team and leading this team professionally. Exploring care as everyday leadership can highlight pedagogical leaders as intentional leaders characterised by an inclusive leadership style that differs from that of centre directors who are accountable for overall management tasks and compliance work (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015).

One implication from the study is to further explore the potential of care in relation to collaborative and shared pedagogical leadership practices where staff members are engaged in meaning-making and developing pedagogical leadership (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). Rather than thinking about care as preventing strong positional leadership, the potential of leadership care should be accounted for and developed in distributed practices. Demonstrating how leadership care works and facilitates a shared understanding of organisational values, thus strengthening knowledge sharing and the practice community, that could encourage a reconsideration of leadership care from being trivial acts to intentional or purposeful everyday leadership.

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