



Shadowing teachers as pedagogical leaders in early childhood education settings in Finland

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Research on early childhood education (ECE) leadership indicates that teachers play an active role in leading pedagogy in their staff teams, and teachers work to mediate pedagogical leadership within the whole centre. This article presents findings from a study which investigated pedagogical leadership practices in ECE settings. Qualitative shadowing was used to investigate the enactment of pedagogical leadership by six ECE teachers in selected ECE settings. The analysis of findings suggested that pedagogical leadership consisted of responsibilities that were embedded in the teachers' daily work with their team members and the child groups. Pedagogical leadership occurred in different forms and situations as well as the approach and style of leading. The study indicated how the enactment of pedagogical leadership was layered and influenced by the social and operational environment of ECE.

Keywords: *early childhood education, early childhood education teachers, pedagogical leadership, shadowing*

Introduction

This study investigated the enactment of pedagogical leadership by teachers in the context of Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings in Finland. According to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) and the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], 2022), ECE teachers are responsible for pedagogy in their staff teams. The Act on Early

Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) requires that two of every three educators among the multi-professional staff must have bachelor's degrees in education or social services from university or university of applied sciences by the year 2030, and at least half of them should be qualified teachers holding a university level bachelor's degree in education. Currently, a staff team usually comprises the university-qualified ECE teacher together with two ECE childcarers or one childcarer and a teacher with a Bachelor of Social Services degree from university of applied sciences. Childcarers typically have a vocational qualification in social welfare or in health care. Teachers' pedagogical leadership is essential in the staff teams because implementing the national curriculum requires teachers to act as pedagogical professionals and developers of ECE pedagogy in their child groups (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, 540/2018; EDUFI, 2022).

In many countries, the significance of teachers' role in pedagogical leadership is recognized (e.g., Heikka et al., 2021; Li, 2015; Sims et al., 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to promote ECE teachers' professional development towards pedagogical leadership and to strengthen their leadership skills. Heikka et al. (2018) and Waniganayake et al. (2018) reported findings indicating that in Finland there are differences on how teachers lead, document and reflect on pedagogical practice. Teachers involve team members in planning and assessment in varying ways. Also ECE teachers' skills and commitment to lead critical reflection and learning in their teams vary. Some teachers also feel uncertain about taking the leadership role in their staff teams (Heikka et al., 2020). This is a critical finding as teachers have the power to inhibit or nourish pedagogical development in their teams (Heikka et al., 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2018).

Previous research has focused on specifying the ECE teachers' leadership tasks and responsibilities; however, studies investigating how teachers practice pedagogical leadership in their daily work are rare. This study aims to investigate the practice of pedagogical leadership in the situations and encounters included in the ECE teachers' daily work, and thus to clarify the characteristics of pedagogical leadership expected of ECE teachers. The research question of this study was: How do ECE teachers enact pedagogical leadership responsibilities in daily ECE practice?

ECE teacher's pedagogical leadership practice

The leadership-as-practice approach assumes that leadership occurs as practice instead of arising from certain traits, habits or positions. Leadership is therefore perceived as a collective practical performance shaped by particular social setting (Raelin, 2020). Similarly, Palaiologou and Male (2019) suggest that leadership is generated as an interplay of contextually related factors and the conceptualization of leadership in ECE is to be build acknowledging its specificity. Gibbs (2020) conceptualized leadership as a

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practice within the social contexts of ECE and as a relational activity that can be enacted in formal and informal leadership roles. She identified leadership dispositions of effective ECE leaders and suggested that the practice of leading is enabled by the practice architectures of the setting, such as the collaborative development of vision and philosophy, professional knowledge and language, cultures of trust, sharing of power as well as democratic allocation of resources. Coleman et al. (2016) suggested that engaging responsively with families, using evidence to drive improvement, motivating and empowering staff and embracing integrated working were the key leadership functions in ECE.

Within ECE, the concept of pedagogical leadership is at an early stage of development. Pedagogical leadership aims at supporting children's all-round development and well-being (Douglass, 2019; Modise, 2019). Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) considered the term to be connected not only with children's learning but also with the competencies of early childhood educators and the values and beliefs about early childhood education held by the education community and the wider society.

Implementing pedagogical leadership is critical for the quality of ECE (Sylva et al., 2010; Douglass, 2019). The main functions of pedagogical leadership are leading pedagogical practices and development, curriculum implementation and professional development that aligns with core goals, values and ethical practices (Corrick & Reed, 2019; Heikka, 2014; Hognestad & Bøe, 2017; O'Sullivan, 2009; Stremmel, 2019). A pedagogical leader is responsible for supporting and developing educators to reflect and to inspire and shape the learning (O'Sullivan, 2009). Reflection is connected to a team's ability to develop practices (Waniganayake et al., 2018). Critical pedagogical reflection is also an analysis of ECE work from the perspective of the learning and well-being of a child, which promotes mutual learning and development of integrity among the ECE staff (Parrila & Fonsén, 2016).

ECE teachers' expertise can contribute to pedagogical leadership, and in many countries, ECE teachers' work has increasingly included responsibilities of leadership (e.g., Heikka et al., 2021; Li, 2015; Sims et al., 2018). In Finnish ECE settings, pedagogical leadership is enacted by ECE centre directors and teachers. The directors are responsible for the functioning of the whole centre, and they usually lead a cluster of units and ECE services. Leadership is enacted separately but interdependently at different levels of the ECE centres' functioning (Heikka, 2014; Heikka et al., 2018; Heikka et al., 2021).

Teachers' involvement in leadership has been conceptualized within the framework of teacher leadership, defined in this context as an ECE teacher that performs the responsibilities expected of a leader (Harris, 2003). Teacher leadership functions and

responsibilities discussed in research are twofold, including direct work with children and indirect work with staff.

There are limited studies exploring ECE teachers' leadership in relation to children's learning. In the school context however, there are extensive research on pedagogical work under the concept of classroom leadership and teacher leadership. Pounder (2006) states that in practice, teaching and leadership are intertwined and reflecting the teaching from the perspective of leadership can have positive effects on children's activities and classroom climate. Stein (2020) argued that teachers are leaders as they have power to influence in their classrooms. Sheridan and Williams (2017) state that pedagogical leadership with children in early childhood settings is about listening and leading children thus creating democratic child group community that supports children's learning and well-being. The idea of leading child group is not new as classical conceptualizations of pedagogical leadership considered pedagogical leadership as teachers' pedagogical work with children focusing on teaching and learning (Sergiovanni, 1998).

Teacher leadership functions entail leading the pedagogy and curriculum in child groups as well as enhancing pedagogical development and guiding pedagogical practices in the staff teams. The teachers also support the team members' professional learning. Furthermore, teacher leadership includes organizing daily activities in the child groups, arranging the division of labour in the teams, and coordinating collaboration with parents. In addition to team-level leadership tasks, the teacher participates in decision-making at the centre level with the centre director and teachers from other child groups (Colmer et al., 2015; Harris, 2003; Heikka et al., 2016, 2018; Ho, 2010, 2011; Hognestad & Bøe, 2014, 2015; Li, 2015; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leadership functions can be analysed within the classical framework of administration, management and leadership, which reflect diverse aspects of responsibilities (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). Heikka et al. (2016) identified the functions of leadership as performed by ECE teachers as well as discussed the identified acts followed the conceptual framework of administration, management and leadership. In this analysis, administrative duties in teachers work are connected with organizing the work shifts, ensuring ratios as well as collecting or reminding childcarers to collect information from the parents about the coming holidays and the need for day care. Management acts are connected with the daily functions usually including division of labour for the team members and organising and managing the upcoming activities. The acts of leading pedagogy by the teachers included, for example, instructions for the childcarers how to guide children in the daily activities. It included advice like how to support individual children during curriculum activities and play, how to handle teaching children with special needs, and informing childcarers about pedagogical skills and how to do pedagogical documentation. The tasks and responsibilities of a teacher focus

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primarily on pedagogy, and therefore, pedagogical leadership appears to be the core function of teacher leadership (Kahila et al., 2020). This article focuses on pedagogical leadership, although in practice, the diverse aspects can not be completely distinguished and sometimes they overlap. However, this division helps to theoretically outline pedagogical leadership as part of teacher leadership.

How leadership is performed depends on the contexts in which it is situated. These contexts include broader cultural, political and structural factors and the more situational contexts, such as with whom the teacher is working and in what kind of activity (Kahila et al., 2020). Understanding pedagogical leadership in early childhood education requires combining the basic concepts of pedagogy and leadership thus viewing leadership through pedagogical lenses. Pedagogical leadership is a common construction of knowledge and responsibility towards foundational values of ECE (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011; Male & Palaiologou, 2012).

Methodology

In this study, the data were collected via qualitative shadowing. Shadowing as a research method considers observing by following the target participant constantly, like a shadow (Czarniawska, 2007; Gill et al., 2014). The purpose of our data collection was to collect detailed and rich descriptions of the ECE teachers' leadership enactment, including the actions and interactions between the ECE teacher and other staff members, children and parents. A video camera and notes were used as data collection tools. Because ECE teachers' everyday leadership is enacted in different daily situations, including hectic, fragmented and unforeseen situations, shadowing has been seen as a good method of capturing continuous practices of ECE teachers' work (see Bøe et al., 2016). In addition to the individual teachers, shadowing is particularly suitable to study phenomenon connected to social relations in ECE. Teachers' positions are explored within a complex of interrelated processes (Quinlan, 2008).

The study involved six ECE teachers from six municipalities in Eastern Finland, which represent a mix of large and small municipalities. The participants worked in municipal ECE centres; they all were female, university-qualified ECE teachers who had been working as ECE teachers for several years. After consulting municipal ECE leaders about the appropriate study centres, they were approached. Criteria for appropriateness in participating the study were ECE centres' and the teachers' voluntariness, ECE teacher's Bachelor of Education degree (university qualified) and several years of work experience. Furthermore, the team, where participating ECE teacher worked, must have worked together for a sufficient period. It was important, that all team members were available and willing to be involved in the study, because the ECE teachers, who were the

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participants in this study, worked in the team environment most of the time they were shadowed. It would have been difficult and unethical to record the teachers if their team members had not given their consent to recording. In other words, informed consent for the study and video recording was acquired from every adult. All team members and children in these groups were informed about the study, as well as the children's guardians. Guardians gave permission for the child to participate in the videorecording. Children without a permission were not involved in recording.

Typically, an ECE centre in Finland includes 2–5 teams, and this was reflected in the centres participating in this study. Only one ECE teacher was selected from each centre. The combinations of teams involved in the study varied. Three teams consisted of one ECE teacher and two ECE childcarers; one team had two ECE teachers and one childcarer; another included one teacher, three childcarers and one assistant; and the sixth team consisted of two teachers and two childcarers. In the two-teacher team, the shadowed teacher had a Bachelor of Education, and the other teacher had a Bachelor of Social Services degree from a university of applied sciences. The shadowing was carried out over three days per team, going along with the teachers' daily working hours.

Long-lasting shadowing can bring ethical challenges, which should be considered while determining the length of data collection (Bøe et al., 2016). In this study, it was decided that three days of data collection was enough to gather a rich amount of data but is also reasonable to both participants and researchers. Additionally, it was considered that three days was appropriate duration that there would be no time to create a relationship between the researcher and the participant, which could influence their behaviour, notes and analyses (see Bøe et al., 2016). Furthermore, shadowing is very intense and demanding method for participants and researchers (Bøe et al., 2016; Czarniawska, 2007; Gill et al., 2014), so long-lasting shadowing can be wearing. Filming can cause anxiety (e.g., Bøe et al., 2016; Gill et al., 2014) among the children and adults, which must be taken into consideration because nervousness can affect behaviour. One of the teachers seemed anxious and for that reason she was reassured that there was no need to feel stressed, and she could withdraw from the research at any time if she feels like it. The filming was shorter for her, lasting only two days. In addition, the longer the data collection would have lasted, the more footage could have been gathered. However, according to Bøe et al. (2016), there are no explicit rules on how long the shadowing process should take to obtain sufficient data for analysis, but a long-lasting shadowing can aggravate the ethical challenges of conducting shadowing research.

Shadowing, including preparations, the actual field research and study after, needs constant sensitivity and ethical consideration (see Bøe et al., 2016; Johnson, 2014). The data collection began with an introduction, where the researcher briefly told both the children and the team members about the video recording. Specifically, children were

shown how the camera functioned, how they would know when the researcher was recording, and why the researcher could not respond to children's initiatives while recording. During shadowing, interaction between the researcher and the children and adults were kept to a minimum. However, participants could ask questions and contact any time they wanted, because shadowing can be stressful due to its intensive nature (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, the gestures and expressions of both participants' and others', for example teacher's team members, children and their guardians, who were involved the study, were constantly observed and evaluated.

The researcher shadowed and filmed the participant all the time while working. While recording, the researcher took an outsider's perspective and kept their distance from the participants, who were asked to ignore the presence of the researcher as much as possible. However, if the teachers' actions required more information (e.g., while doing written tasks alone), the researcher asked them to describe the actions.

The researcher was sensitive to different situations and considered whether recording was appropriate and ethical for that time. For example, in situations where confidential matters were discussed or people who had not given permission to record were involved, the video camera was shut down. In that case, the researcher focused on making written observations, which consisted only matters that related to the study, and any confidential matters were not written down. Overall, the data collection consisted of 123 hours of shadowing.

Our intention was to investigate the teachers' pedagogical leadership actions. The data were analysed using inductive qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). In qualitative content analysis the participants original actions, expressions and intentions are the basis for the process of construction, including interpretation and inference, where the theoretical concepts and conclusion are generated. Shadowing is a demanding data collection method, and it results in a large amount of data that can be challenging to analyse (Quinlan, 2008). Therefore, in the first step of the analysis, relevant video clips were selected as demonstrations of pedagogical leadership practices. For example, an episode could include a conversation between the team members or guidance given to a team member during daily activities. It was defined, that the episode ended when the action transformed into another act by its nature. The episodes were transcribed and based on the content of the leadership act, descriptive information about the situation was added in the second step of the analysis. Descriptions included information for example about the episode's context, where it took place and who were involved. In the third phase, the described episodes were grouped cumulatively within the whole data set, proceeding team by team in the clustering process. The final categories were formulated at the end of this phase by combining and adjusting the categories to fit in the whole data set. To support the credibility of the study, some anonymised excerpts from the data are

included in this paper. For clarity, the shadowed teachers are named as teacher leaders in the excerpts of the research findings.

Findings

The findings indicated that ECE teachers' pedagogical leadership was embedded in their daily pedagogical work both within and outside the own child group and team. The practice reflected a diverse range of leadership responsibilities related to pedagogical activities, ECE curricula and pedagogical work for goals (see Figure 1). Pedagogical leadership also entailed responsibilities for the professional development of educators in the teams as well as co-operation with parents and professionals involved in multi-professional collaboration.

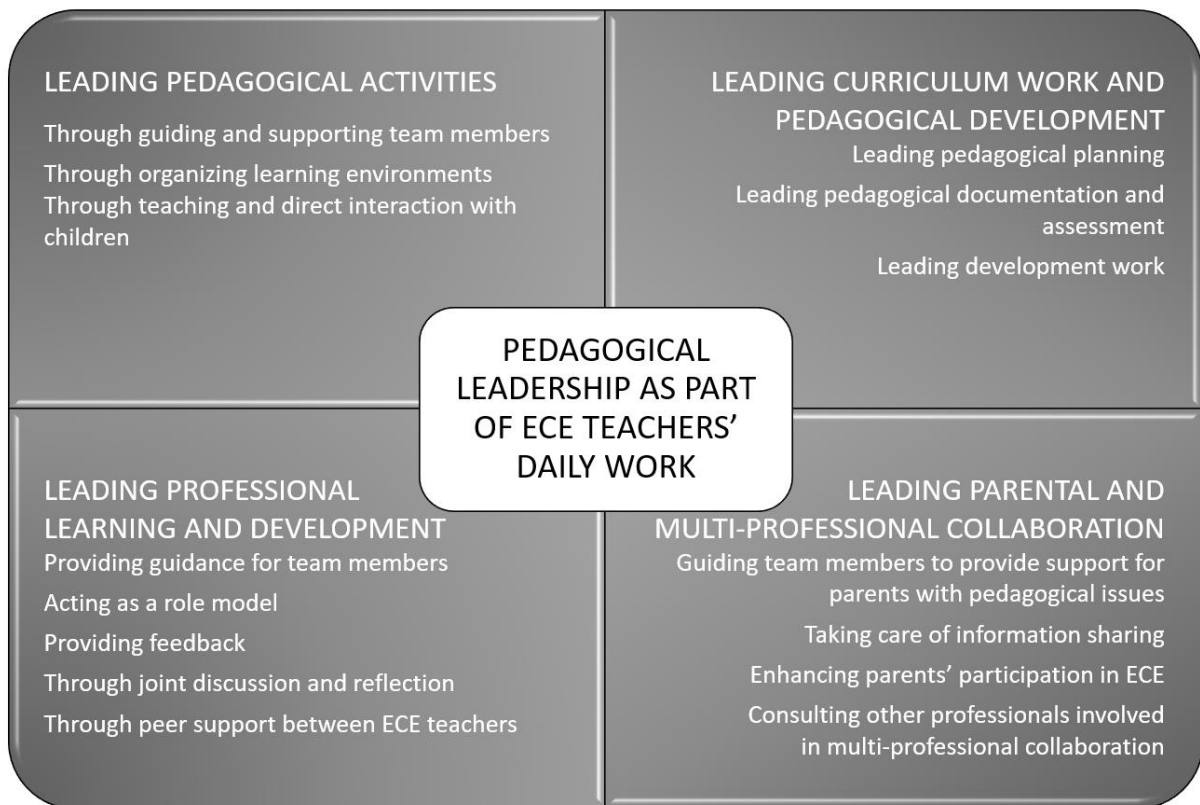


FIGURE 1 Pedagogical leadership as part of ECE teachers' daily work

Leading pedagogical activities in the child group

Shadowing the teachers' daily work revealed that the leadership of pedagogical activities was twofold. Pedagogical leadership emerged through leading team members as well as in direct pedagogical interaction with children. Firstly, the teachers guided and supported the team members in pedagogical activities and gave opportunities to make their own decisions.

The teachers involved childcarers in teaching with them to guide individual children while leading pedagogical activities. In some shadowing episodes, it could be seen that the teachers advised how the team members should interact with children or affirmed their pedagogical solutions and reasoned their daily events with children. For example, in one episode, the teacher told the childcarer that she made the right choice in a problematic situation with the individual children. The teacher also provided advice for how the childcarers could handle similar matters or intervene in children's problematic peer interactions in the future.

Teachers also urged childcarers to participate in children's self-initiated activities and play. Teachers also directly asked the team members to guide certain pedagogical activities for children. For example, one teacher instructed the childcarers to provide opportunities for handicraft activities for particular children or to sing a song during the transition. Pedagogical leadership sometimes reflected features of managing pedagogy when the teachers organised the activities, environment and people in a pedagogically relevant way. The following excerpt shows how the teacher (Teacher 1) asked the childcarer to guide pedagogical activities for a small-group of children:

Teacher leader: Bea, today we have library theme. I thought that Susan could take a small-group of children with her to the library and would you like to take 5 year olds, so that you could go on with them?

Childcarer: Yes I can.

Teachers also advised their team members in settling into a space so that they were divided appropriately to guide all children and activities in the group, for example when receiving a child in the morning.

Leading pedagogical activities in the child group was at the core of the teachers' daily work and pedagogical leadership. During shadowing, the teachers were actively influential and goal-oriented regarding the children's activities. They coordinated and facilitated learning activities, for example, by providing tasks and instructions for the children. Teachers supported children's thinking and activities as individuals and as groups by directing children's attention to the tasks or the phenomena. Teachers also

motivated children to participate in the activities and enhanced their co-operation and play with each other by providing tools, games and materials.

Leading curriculum work and pedagogical development

The teachers' work included taking care of the processes to ensure the achievement of pedagogical goals. These processes consisted of pedagogical planning, documentation and development.

Leading pedagogical planning

The teachers' responsibilities included leading pedagogical planning in their staff teams. The teachers planned forthcoming pedagogical activities both independently and together with the team members and always made the final decisions about forthcoming activities. The extent to which team members were involved in the shared planning varied. When actively involving others in pedagogical planning, some teachers just informed their team members about forthcoming activities. The common pedagogical discussion among the team members was a dialog in which the teachers expressed their opinions to the team members, but they also provided space for others' ideas and confirmed the teams' decisions. The next excerpt describes this kind of conversation in the teams. Along with the teacher, staff team 1 consisted of the childcarer and another teacher (teacher 2).

Teacher2: So there could be several activity points. The scissor master activity needs an adult's supervision, but then, if there could be a pin game or hama pearls at one point in that table, an adult isn't so necessary.... And then, for example, drawing from a model.

Teacher leader: Yes, that is challenging.

Teacher2: It is very challenging for preschoolers too. We tried it today.

Teacher leader: Hey, should we have tearing? Because it was also quite hard for children when we did it in the spring.

Teacher2: Well, that's it. Shall we keep the same theme all week?

Teacher leader: But we go to the library during that week.

Teacher2: Yes.

Teacher leader: And then, when is Father's Day? We need to start doing those things briskly on that week, too.

Childcarer: Hey, I have an idea for that.

Teacher 2: That's right, you did.

[The childcarer tells her idea for a Father's Day gift. Teacher2 echoes her idea.]

Childcarer: *Shall we do that?*

Teacher leader: *Yes, let's do that.*

In team 5, however, the teacher led her team members in a more authoritative and managerial way. Her approach seemed to emphasize individual planning. In the team meeting, she reported her plans for the team members and divided the tasks for the implementation. In the team meeting, the childcarers often acted like passive listeners, mainly asking questions about what was expected from them during the planned activities.

In the discussions with their teams, the teachers occasionally reminded the team members about the goals of the national core curriculum (EDUFI, 2022) in the functioning of the staff teams as well as in their child groups. They also initiated discussions of the core curriculum content and of how the staff can develop their pedagogical plans based on it. Thus, the staff teams planned long- and short-term goals as well as the contents and methods for the forthcoming activities.

In some teams, pedagogical leadership included guiding the staff team so that they were able to plan appropriate goals and content for the small groups of children. In these child groups, the children were divided into small groups, and each team member was responsible for one group of children. The teachers' guidance included supervising over how the pedagogical plans can be implemented to achieve pedagogical goals. In addition, they discussed the purposes of the activities with the team members, who generally actively engaged in the discussion and expressed their own ideas as well. The leaders also initiated shared reflections with the team members regarding how the goals have been reached in ECE pedagogy.

In addition to planning with their staff teams, the teachers were involved in the pedagogical groups formulated for them at their ECE centres. This included co-operation with the centre directors and other teachers at the centre. In these meetings, the leaders and the centre directors planned and discussed pedagogy in the child groups and in the centre as a whole. Some centre directors also guided the teachers in how to account for the national core curriculum in the child group pedagogy, how to guide the team, and how the goals can be reached in the activities of the child group. From these meetings, teachers passed knowledge and information to their teams. The next excerpt describes how the teacher informed educators in team 1 about the decisions made in the pedagogical group:

Teacher2: *What did you talk about?*

Teacher leader: *We talked about strength crows and came to the conclusion that they cannot be done by age groups now. The strength crows are shown as we adults use this*

language of strength and use those terms when talking to children – if it comes naturally, like, “You are brave” or “creative” or something. Then, in activity planning, we have to consider what strengths this activity is confirming in the child, this activity I have planned. And then, bear in mind that you process many of the strengths, not just one...

Teacher2: *So we don't deal with these theme by theme with the children?*

Teacher leader: *Not necessarily.*

Childcarer: *Should it be seen in the weekly programmes of parents?*

Teacher leader: *Well, for parents, we tell them about this via the weekly programmes, as you nicely did sometimes.... Let's put it the same way, what strength is meant to confirm. And in centre letters for families and individual pedagogical plan conversations with parents, they should be in written form, so it is shown that we use these terms of strength about a child. Then, children identify their own strengths and others' strengths so that they learn to find these in themselves and others. And, of course, you can take them thematically if you notice a need in the group; like now, we need co-operative skills or persistence or something, then you can take up specific strengths. But we take them up based on the group's need and not by age.*

Leading pedagogical documentation and assessment

Leading pedagogical documentation in the child group included both the teachers' individual documentation and their guidance in the practices of pedagogical documentation among the team. The leaders enhanced child observation and mutual reflection based on documentation made by the team members. In team 3, for example, the teacher initiated a discussion on how pedagogical documentation was done in the child group. She also reminded the team about the goals and purposes of pedagogical documentation and emphasized the importance of discussing of the documents together. The childcarers in this team were asked to document individual children's skills during pedagogical activities by the teacher:

Teacher leader: *Have you remembered to write observations in the notebook?... Have you noticed something about the children that could be written here? I'm just asking briefly. About Tanja [child], for example?*

Pedagogical documentation relates closely to pedagogical assessment and its implementation. Assessment occurs on many levels, starting from the child group, and extending to include the whole ECE centre. In their own groups, teachers involved both children and their team members in observing and sharing their observations. In one episode, the teacher and the childcarer shared their observations about one child, and the leader writes notes. Later, they share these positive observations with the children in a joint teaching moment, as shown in the following excerpt from team 3:

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Teacher leader: *We have found more strengths. Aino* [ECE teacher student] and I thought, and Liisa [childcarer] whispered in my ear one thing.... Now, we could highlight one thing from this morning, quite a recent thing Liisa heard. What did you hear, Liisa, were there many things?*

Childcarer: *At breakfast, when I gave you breakfast, many children said 'thank you' [childcarer starts to list names]. I think we can give one (sticker) for that.*

Teacher leader: *Yes, we put one there, that is a third (sticker), the strength of gratitude – we have been grateful. And it belongs to good manners. Then, I want to present one thing, which might be self-regulation or channelling your own behaviour in a good way, because the other group told that Onni [child] was very friendly to someone.... The other group's adults said that he acted so great. Applauses to Onni [everyone applauses]. These are moments of growth. You can be proud of yourself.*

Leading pedagogical development

Pedagogical leadership also included the development of pedagogical practices in the staff teams, which consisted of initiating and enhancing reflection of the daily practices among the team members and utilizing reflections in the curriculum planning. The reflection usually focused on development areas and how the team works together to reach goals in daily activities. The teachers brought development areas into the discussion. For example, one teacher facilitated the childcarers thinking about how to enable the continuum of play. She also initiated a discussion about how to enrich the contents of play according to the children's interests. On another team, the staff reflected on how the minority children and parents were encountered by the staff.

The teachers sometimes indicated practices and features of the operational culture for the team members, which did not match the centre's goals. The teachers also provided direct feedback for the team members, they sometimes suggested reasons why the practices may not have been working, and they gave advice for future situations. One teacher, for example, questioned the childcarers' reactions to the children's raucous play: the teacher felt that the childcarers' interruption of the children's play was not congruent with the pedagogical principles. In this episode, the teacher reflected strong leadership by argumentation directly with the childcarers about which activities are suitable among children and why, and she guided them in how to intervene in the children's play when needed. This indicated the teacher's capability to adjust her leadership approach.

It seems that there was a strong trust between the teachers and their team members, and therefore, critical interventions in the activities were accepted and respected. It was evident that the teachers also actively listened to the team members' ideas and negotiated decisions about future developments together. That is what has possibly built trusting relationships among the team members. In this study, educators also actively brought up issues in shared discussions in the teams. The team members, for example, brought up

accurate observations about the skills of children for the team to discuss, like next excerpt from team 3 shows:

Childcarer: One of the other group's adults said that in the past few weeks, Onni [child] has become such a big and brisk boy. I said that I have noticed the same thing.

Teacher leader: Concerning this, we have a couple things that we could add to our strength board about him, and we could say certain things about the whole group, too.

Childcarer: But I think he is. During the time I have been here, there has been development all the time – just amazing.

Teacher leader: Yes, yes it is.

Childcarer: There is no more of that kind of racketing that there used to be.

Teacher leader: And I have other things to say about him too. Onni has been...

Childcarer: So great.

Teacher leader: Yep.

The teachers usually made further questions for the team members and either provided suggestions for future support or instructed how to observe individual children during the forthcoming activities. Teachers sometimes also intensified the team discussion by questioning the reasons for the children's performance, thus leading pedagogical reflection in the teams and contributing to the development of practices. The childcarers' ideas, however, did not always lead to mutual reflection in the teams, as the teachers sometimes overtook their initiatives.

In addition to enhancing discussion, the teachers also directly guided the team members in teaching during pedagogical activities and play, thus improving pedagogical practices. This included actions like providing ideas for the childcarers to support play and assisting them to connect their teaching with pedagogical goals.

Leading professional learning and development of educators

The analysis revealed that teachers intentionally acted as promoters of professional development in their teams; they provided goal-oriented and pedagogical guidance for the team members, for example by promoting skills for reflection of pedagogical activities. The teachers gave instructions on how to interpret children's activities and use observations as a basis for planning. The leadership approaches they used usually involved acting as a role model, confirming decisions made by the team members and providing feedback. One teacher from team 5, for example, acted as a model of reflection for the childcarers by reasoning purposefully by herself as to why the teaching strategies

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she used with the children didn't work. She also explained why she changed her plan during the pedagogical activity and how she took the children's level of development into account while teaching.

The teachers actively promoted the team members' professional development by providing feedback for how they guided children. Often, feedback tended to be quick comments alongside working and being with kids, like next phrase from team 1 shows. However, they occurred regularly during workdays.

Teacher leader: *Was there some kind of quarrel situation?*

Childcarer: *In the nap room? Well, Antti [child] came out crying and couldn't tell what was wrong, so I went there. The outcome was that Antti thought he was left out of the play, but others thought that they did include him, but they gave him a role he didn't want to play.*

Teacher leader: *Okay. You cleared that out pretty well.*

The teacher in team 4 actively co-operated with the other teachers in the same centre while shadowing. These episodes consisted of discussions and interactional peer support among teachers, for example, considering the planning of annual events for the children in the centre. These episodes were usually short stops at the group door during the activities, where the other teachers asked the teacher for her opinion on the plans they made. In this way, the teachers also reinforced each other's pedagogical decisions and provided feedback.

Leading parental and multi-professional cooperation

Leading collaboration with parents and other professionals such as early special education teachers aimed to benefit the individual children's learning and development in ECE. Pedagogical leadership in parental cooperation included discussions with the team members about how to guide parents to support their children's learning at home. For example, in team 5, the teacher told the childcarers how to guide parents to support their child's perceptual development through certain activities and play. The teachers also guided the team members in important topics to be discussed with the parents when they pick up their children from the ECE centre. Additionally, teachers were responsible for taking the parents' views into account in the pedagogical planning. This was evident in the team 3 discussion:

Teacher leader: *Silja [child] was the one I was about to ... wait a little bit, I'm looking for it, let's see what we have written...*

Childcarer: *Her mother was a little bit worried about her pronunciation of R, and D tends to go to L. So, could we...*

Teacher leader: *Yeah, exercise that.*

Childcarer: *...Exercise them, I told her that we can do rhyming.*

Leading co-operation also included enhancing parents' participation in ECE by listening to their ideas and hopes about the pedagogy and support provided for their children. The teachers also presented their own views to the parents, brought up problematic issues in their parent-teacher discussions, explained their decisions concerning particular children and unwrapped the children's challenges for the parents. In addition to pedagogical leadership, they organized discussions and composed the children's individual pedagogical plans with the parents and the children.

Leadership also included multi-professional collaboration with early special education teachers. Teachers anticipated assistance from the special teachers in assessing and supporting the development of individual children. This was evidenced to be complicated sometimes; for example, team 5 discussed having too little support for children with learning difficulties. The shadowing data, however, did not include any episodes of multi-professional cooperation in which the special teachers was present.

Discussion

In this study, six ECE teachers were shadowed with the purpose of investigating pedagogical leadership in their daily work in child groups and work communities. The findings revealed that ECE teachers' pedagogical leadership was embedded in their pedagogical work with children, team members, parents as well as other community members (see also Hognestad & Bøe, 2016). The leadership practice considered a diverse range of tasks and responsibilities related to pedagogical activities, pedagogical work for goals, professional development and co-operation with parents and professionals involved in multi-professional collaboration.

Similar to previous studies (e.g., Corrick & Reed, 2019; Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011; Parrila & Fonsén, 2016), the findings of this study indicate that ECE teachers have multiple varying assignments, duties and responsibilities that require pedagogical leadership. This study also confirmed the understanding provided by previous studies (e.g., Gibbs, 2020; Hognestad & Bøe, 2014), how ECE teachers' everyday work tasks, considering also responsibilities of pedagogical leadership, are divided and fulfilled at different levels by interacting with different people. In the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (EDUFI, 2022), leading holistic learning in the child group is considered a main function of teachers' pedagogical leadership. Teachers' pedagogical leadership also entails leading staff teams and the functioning of ECE centre staff as well as establishing external relationships, such as with parents. Furthermore, the teachers'

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responsibilities extend beyond the immediate education community to the social responsibility of implementing national ECE policies and reforms. In this study, pedagogical leadership was identifiable in all of these dimensions. This study revealed, that in some situations, pedagogical leadership also overlap with diverse aspects of management and administration in ECE practice. However, teachers' responsibilities and styles of leading varied depending on the contexts and situations, as illustrated in Figure 2.

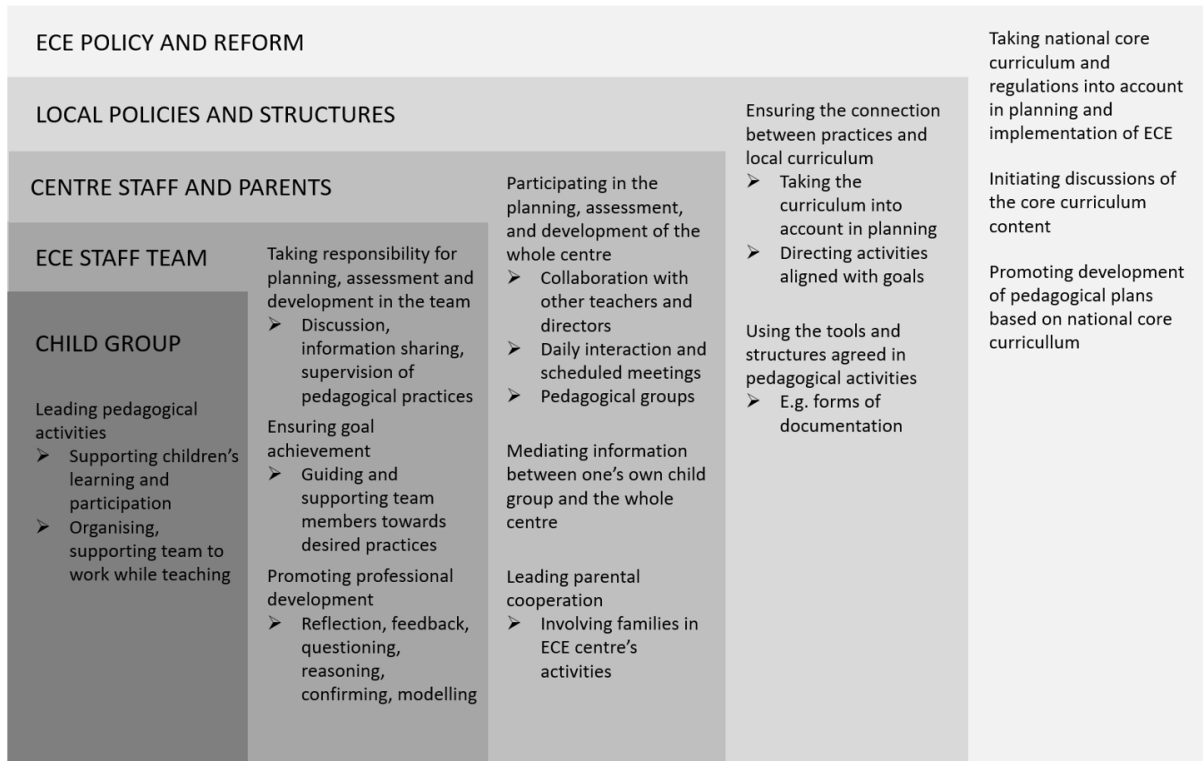


FIGURE 2 The nested layers of teachers' pedagogical leadership practice

The analysis revealed that teachers' work was visible and emphasized primarily the pedagogical work with children and their own team members. However other layers, for example ECE policy and reform, were occasionally apparent in daily practices and interaction situations with children, staff members as well as parents (see Figure 2). Therefore, the external layers, such as the teachers' social responsibilities, were present in pedagogical leadership. The pedagogical leadership of the teachers was realized through the influence of nested levels of ECE's operational environment.

In this study, pedagogical leadership was also featured in teaching, in those moments when the teacher carried out pedagogical activities for a child group (see also Sheridan & Williams, 2017). This observation leads to a question about the relationship between teaching and pedagogical leadership or whether these phenomena are somewhat

intertwined (Pounder, 2006). The question can be seen also as a matter of theoretical perspectives. Reflecting the teaching from the perspective of leadership can be useful and has been found to improve the quality of teaching (Pounder, 2006). In this study, the teachers led pedagogical activities by consciously seeking to influence the activities of a group of children and educators in the direction of the goals. The conceptualization of ECE teacher's pedagogical leadership is still evolving and research to understand the phenomenon has increased in recent years. Based on the findings of this study, it seems necessary to further explore the relationship between teaching and pedagogical leadership and thereby increase understanding of the conceptual interfaces of pedagogical leadership.

National policies require the commitment of teachers as pedagogical professionals and developers of ECE pedagogy in their child groups (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 540/2018; EDUFI, 2022). Currently, the ECE teacher qualification requirement of a Bachelor of Education provides limited preparedness for teachers to manage pedagogical leadership in ECE practice. According to contemporary findings, teachers experience uncertainty when taking a leadership role in their teams. The qualification requirement and the teacher education content should be assessed in relation to teachers' responsibilities in ECE settings (Heikka et al., 2020).

Pedagogical leadership and pedagogical matters occur in different forms and situations as well as the approach and style of leading does. This study revealed that teachers had to read the situations to adapt their leadership in an appropriate way. There were moments when the teachers had to be more direct and establish their leadership role very clearly. This study also provided indications that teachers' personal factors also influence how they exercise leadership. On the other hand, teachers' leadership also occurs by involving other team members in planning, discussing and implementing the pedagogy in the long term and in alignment with local and national policies. Indeed, these kinds of daily pedagogical leadership are partly based on and affected by the goals set for early childhood education. Working in an ECE child group has situations that are surprising and unexpected and requires the teacher to act and make decisions quickly and independently, which demands both strong pedagogical and leadership skills from the teachers (see also Muijs et al., 2013).

As Heikka et al. (2018) revealed, teachers differ in how they implement leadership in their teams; similar findings were also analysed in this study. For example, they varied in how much they involved team members in decision-making, assessment, and planning. The involvement of educators in reflection and pedagogical development is crucial for collective meaning making and curriculum implementation as well as for sound practice in the teams (Heikka, 2014; see also Ljunggren & Hoås Moen, 2019). Enacting pedagogical leadership requires skills to promote reflection and professional learning among

educators aligned with long-term goals and regulations (Corrick & Reed, 2019). In the future, it will be important to investigate the factors for these differences. For example, more research is needed on how different factors such as teachers' personalities, team composition, child group characteristics, and teachers' educational backgrounds and pedagogical perceptions impact their leadership enactment to plan support for teachers.

Shadowing as a research method was a rich way to gather data in this study. Video data is reliable in its own way because it shows the authentic and original situation, which enables the researchers who haven't been involved in the real-life situation to see the data as it is, without any chance of manipulation or secondhand interpretations. Also, it is easier to retrieve data in different phases of analysis. When filming, you get more information than you would while observing and making notes. For example, interactions, expressions, gestures, actions and environment offer so much more when you can see them rather than read about them. This way, video material gives more diverse and rich data.

One limitation in this study was that there were children and ECE staff members who could not be filmed. Permission to film was obtained in writing form from the guardians. It required concentration to keep people, who we were not allowed to film, out of the screen and in some cases situations could not be recorded at all. Although these moments were rare, there would have been additional data to capture manifestations of pedagogical leadership. ECE teacher's working days varies which is why additional data can offer different kind of information on teacher's pedagogical leadership.

In this study, due to the nature of the data collection and its limitation to only three working days, the teachers' pedagogical leadership in relation to the child group and their own team was strongly present. There was less pedagogical leadership at the level of the centre staff and in interaction with parents and other professionals. Further research should therefore study what kinds of pedagogical leadership teachers perform, especially in situations outside one's own team, for example in pedagogical meetings between teachers and in meetings with parents. Moreover, it would be interesting to study pedagogical leadership at a level of whole ECE centre. Participation of several child groups from the same centre could bring out different kind of information of how pedagogical leadership is enacted and distributed throughout the centre. In addition, this study demonstrated the impact of local and national ECE policy on teachers' work by providing the structures and goals for the activity. Yet, how teachers engage in pedagogical leadership at these levels and, for example, how they bring their pedagogical expertise to decision-making and advocate for the realization of children's interests appears to be a necessary topic for further research. For example, how might one participate in local and national reform work, and how do teachers perceive the importance and significance of participating in pedagogical leadership at these levels?

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