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The current state of ECE leadership in Finland – Implications for practice and directions for future research


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Distributed pedagogical leadership in Early Childhood education in Finland


Research aims:

- To investigate how distributed pedagogical leadership can be conceptualised within the context of ECE.
- To examine how the enactment of ECE leadership responsibilities, especially pedagogical leadership, is perceived by different stakeholders involved in leadership roles in local municipalities.
- To gain a holistic understanding of the perceptions of leadership enactment as held by different ECE stakeholders.
- To analyse and interpret the leadership perceptions of different stakeholders in order to identify the main constructions of ECE leadership within the theoretical frame of distributed pedagogical leadership.



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Participants of the study

- 11 municipalities in Finland
- In each municipality:
- The key ECE stakeholders
 - The members of municipal committees
 - ECE leaders (municipal administrative officials)
 - Centre directors
 - ECE Teachers


The number of participants involved in the study:

Stakeholder type	Number of municipalities involved in the study	Number of individuals who participated in the study	Range of participants between municipalities
The members of municipal committees	4	37	8-10
ECE leaders	10	57	2-9
Centre directors	9	75	3-11
Teachers	9	75	5-10



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Methods of the study

Data collection method:

- Focus group discussions among each stakeholder group within municipality


Data analysis:

- Analysis of the substantive content of the discussions among stakeholder groups
 - Qualitative content analysis (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2009)
- Cross-group examination
 - Organizing and analyzing diverse perspectives of the stakeholders side by side (distributed representations -method, Gergen & Gergen, 2007)



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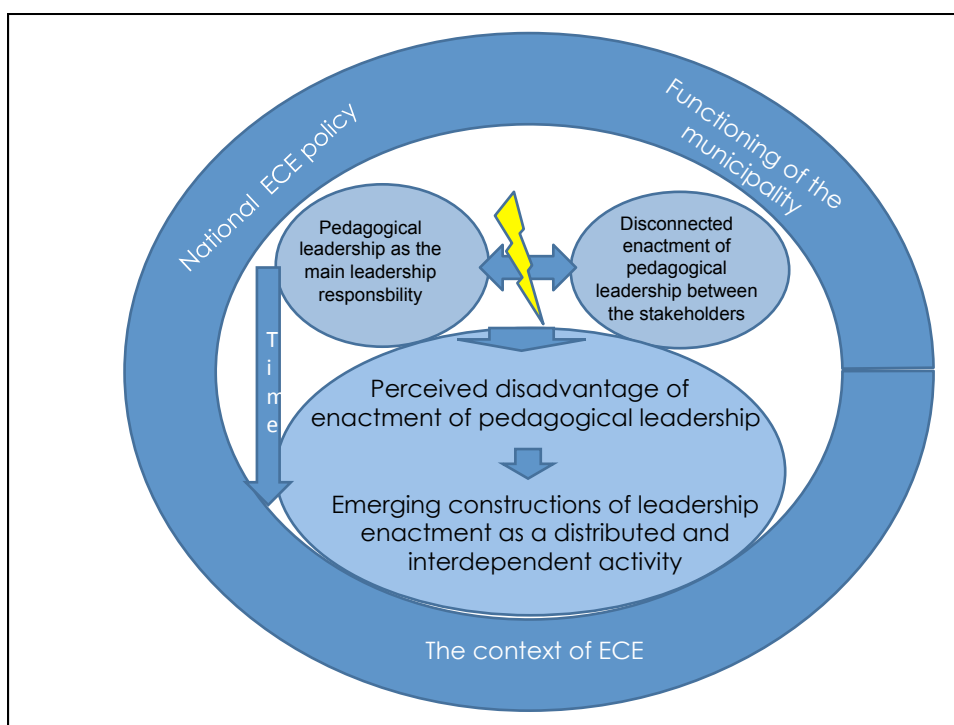
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Key findings of the study

- 1) Pedagogical leadership as the main leadership responsibility.
- 2) Leadership as taking responsibility for influencing the goal-oriented work of others.
- 3) Disconnected enactment of pedagogical leadership between the ECE stakeholders.
- 4) Emerging constructions of leadership enactment as a distributed and interdependent activity.





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Implications for policy and practice

- Enhancing shared consciousness of the vision and strategies between the stakeholders
 - Development of quality strategy
 - Development of structures which enable discussion between the stakeholders
- Distributing responsibilities for pedagogical leadership
 - Creating local structures where efficient enactment of pedagogical improvement in centres could be realised
 - Making pedagogical leadership visible and accountable
 - Support for pedagogical leadership. Reconsidering the delegation of managerial duties
 - Encouraging university-qualified teachers' participation in leadership



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Implications for policy and practice

- Distributing and clarifying power relationships between the stakeholders.
 - Bottom-up channel of exerting influence so that the daily development challenges in the practice of ECE could regulate higher-level decision-making
 - Evaluate and development of cross-boundary teams, especially the extent to which teachers voices was represented in these discussions
 - Centre directors felt excluded from making structural decisions and changes to enhance collaboration between stakeholders



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Implications for policy and practice

- Distributing the enactment of pedagogical improvement within centres
 - The centre director and and assistant director worked interdependently for pedagogical improvement within centre – developed and coordinated leadership functions.
 - Coordination of informal leadership activity
 - Creation of culture of teacher leadership based on shared knowledge and developed leadership practices
 - Functioning of distributed leadership needs development of leadership, planning, trust and co-operation, structures, shared vision and support from administrative staff



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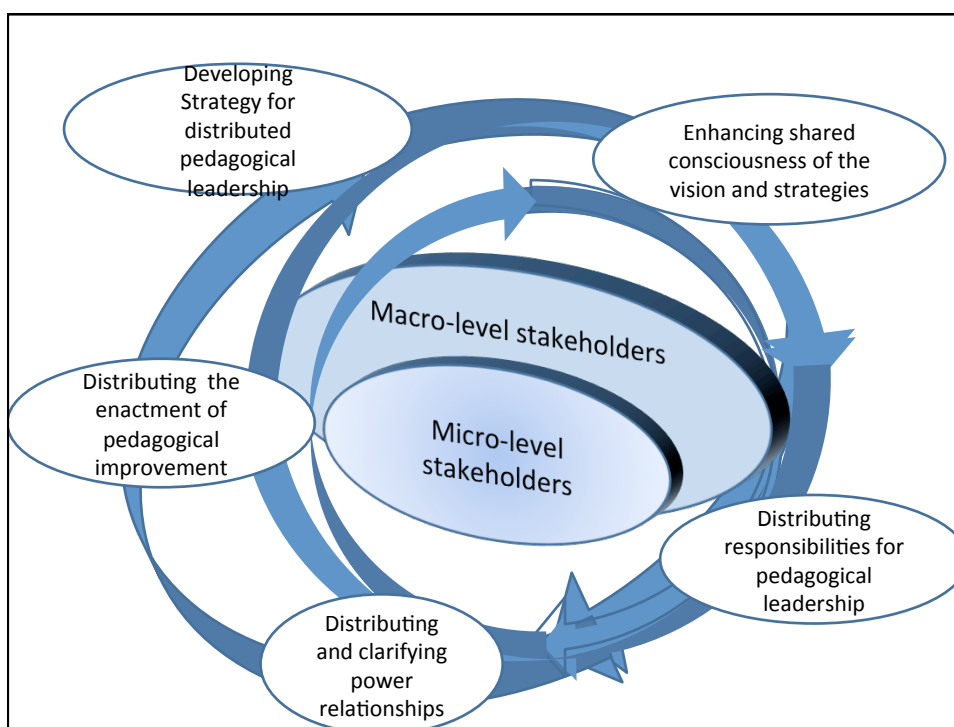
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Implications for policy and practice

- Developing strategy for distributed leadership
 - Those holding leadership positions would have to learn how to create efficient practices of distributed leadership and foster participation of those in informal positions.
 - Managing cross-boundary leadership functions between the stakeholders is crucial for creating interdependence
 - Various roles should be discussed collectively in terms of planning, aligning, and evaluating the work in a coordinated way across the organisational contexts.
 - Establishment of an appropriate strategy for distributing leadership makes guidelines and procedures explicit for each stakeholder group and reflect the focal work processes at a system level
 - System level organisational visions and strategies which determine of functions, tools, and procedures for leadership evaluation and development



Directions of future research

Leadership enactment

- Deeper investigation of the interdependent forms of leadership distribution identified in this study could contribute to the improvement of everyday practice in more practical ways.
- The role of ECE teachers as pedagogical leaders in their own centres requires more careful investigation because of their direct link with children's learning.

Leadership outcomes

- By continuing the analysis of evidence gathered in this study, knowledge advancement of the actual impact of efficient forms can also be strengthened.
- To find better ways of understanding leadership effectiveness and its impact on children's learning.
- What impact leadership distribution had on the organisation and its stakeholders and how the overall leadership performance and effectiveness of distribution could be assessed that require further investigation.



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