Leading distributed pedagogical leadership in ECEC

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The presentation considers:

- The role of the pedagogical leaders in that they are positional leaders with a particular responsibility of leading their staff at their department.

- Based on the Managerial Work and Behaviour approach (Mintzberg, 1973) the study investigates the positional leaders communicative activities directed to staff, and how these are responding to challenges in distributed pedagogical leadership

Purpose:

- **Adding** to the discussions on distributed pedagogical leadership and the positional pedagogical leaders role leading staff at department level.

- **Presenting** the dynamics of mundane leadership practices in distributed pedagogical leadership.

- **Illustrating** the various communicative activities directed against staff.

- **Discussing** the purpose of the various communicative activities.

Introduction

- Although distributed pedagogical leadership has been evolving in ECEC (Heikka, 2013, Hujala, M. Waniganayake & J. Rodd (Eds.) (2013) less attention is given to pedagogical leaders and how they lead their staff at department level when pedagogical work is shared.

- Pedagogical leaders have an important role in leading distributed pedagogical leadership successfully (Heikka, 2013).

- Being both leaders and teachers at the same time, pedagogical leaders have the responsibility of supporting staffs capacities to act in the interests, values and purpose of education (MER, 2011).

- Challenges in distributed leadership concerns the differences in staff`s competence, being a teacher and a leader at the same time leading children and staff, leading professional development, responsible for creating a shared understanding of aims and methods of the organization.

Research questions
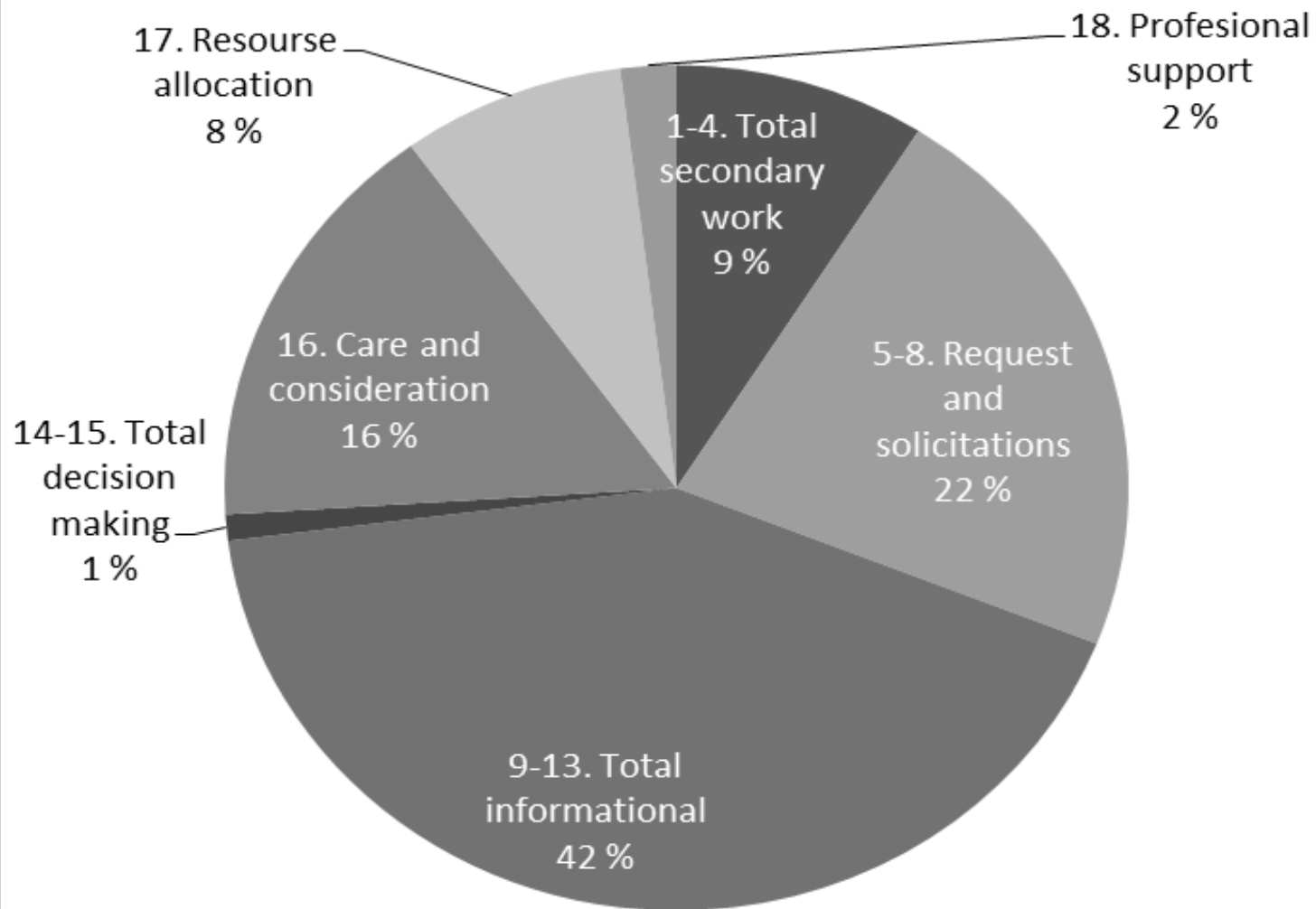
1. What do pedagogical leaders do?

More specifically, what are the communicative activities positional pedagogical leaders direct to staff in everyday leadership?

2. How are they responding to the challenges in a distributed pedagogical leadership?

Research design

- Data from shadowing (investigator triangulation and video-observation)
- Stimulated recall interviews
- Data was categorized according to Vie´s (2009) taxonomy *Purpose of verbal contact* who has expanded Mintzberg`s taxonomy adding four interactional categories. Acknowledging the flexibility and possibility inherit in shadowing to develop new concepts we added a new category, Professional support to Vie`s taxonomy because we found that the ECE context provided other data that did not fit into the already existing taxonomy.

Purpose of verbal contact

- 18. Profesional support 2 %
- 17. Resourse allocation 8 %
- 1-4. Total secondary work 9 %
- 5-8. Request and solicitations 22 %
- 16. Care and consideration 16 %
- 14-15. Total decision making 1 %
- 9-13. Total informational 42 %

The category: Giving information – how does it respond to distributed pedagogical leadership?

- Giving information is a way of being a positional leader. It is important to keep up with what is happening at the department.
- The importance of having the overview and be the best-informed member.
- Being a disseminator and a `sharer` of information.
- Some of the assistants need detailed and clear information, while others it is enough to signalize by eye-to-eye contact.
- Giving information in relation to ethics; especially when situations requires a different action.
- Because of different qualifications among staff, it could be challenging to trust every assistant to make the right judgments when unanticipated things happen.

The category: Total secondary work (informal meetings)

- Initiating informal meetings is to prevent incidental (un)pedagogical activities to happen.
- The importance of including the whole staff in decision-making when plans are changed.
- To secure a shared understanding of the work and practices based on the core values of the organization.
- The importance of a situational leadership style addressing the assistants – building strong relationships and successful interactions.

The (new)category Professional support.

- Professional support as short moments that are connected to pedagogical practices there and then.

4 strategies of professional support:

- Supporting the assistants by putting practice into words when they are present together in activities sharing first hand experiences. Pedagogy contributes to leadership in direct ways.

- Acting as a role model using their professional knowledge and expertise to set standards for best practices.

- Supporting desired practices by acknowledging the assistants work of performance when they act in relation to the core values of education.

- Giving professional guidance in spontaneous situations there and then.

Final thoughts…

- For positional pedagogical leaders being present in a collaborative and shared way of leading, leadership direction is provided through communicative activities.

- Through the various communicative activities they take the multiple responsibility for managing the challenges that exists when pedagogical leadership is distributed among staff.

- The functioning of distributed pedagogical leadership demands knowledgeable and skilful teacher/leaders in which teaching and leading contributes to each other in direct ways.

- Positional leaders interpersonal skills are important because distributed leadership rely on successful interactions (Logie, 2013).

Presence as more than physically `being there`

- It is evident that positional leaders' presence as an ethical quality seems to underlie the communicative activities against the staff, and thereby being a catalyst for building sustaining conditions for distributed leadership. In a delegating leadership style were the pedagogical responsibility is shared and the positional leader handles the differences in staff's qualifications. Leadership presence is something more than to maintain a smooth running of the department, rather it is a way of leading which has awareness to the core tasks in pedagogical leadership (Marsh, Waniganayake, & De Nobile, 2013).

Positional pedagogical leaders step forward as (teacher)leaders

- In distributed pedagogical leadership, one can assume a perception of leadership as automatically driven were the positional leader steps behind, lean on established routines disappears and becomes `just´ a teacher. Nonetheless, zooming in on the positional leaders communicative activities, can lead to a deeper understanding of how the communicative activities and the purpose of these can develop distributed pedagogical leadership at department level.