

International Leadership Research Forum Roundtable Discussion

Trondheim, Norway - 12 June 2014

1. Use of concepts and terminology: Do we have misunderstandings in regard to early childhood terminology across cultures?

a) 'Leader' and 'leadership' were suggested as basic terminology which still needs to be explored and clarified by the group in regard to different interpretations between cultures:

- Discussion initially focused around the concept of 'leadership' requiring 'followers' in order for leadership to exist, however, it was also agreed that leadership could be exercised over a project which did not incorporate the concept of followers.
- It was suggested that the concept of 'leader' and 'leadership' were contestable, and that differences needed to be accepted and a solution found by explanations being provided in regard to presenters' understandings of notions when giving presentations.
- It was suggested that the concepts of 'leader' and 'leadership' will continue to be organic and dynamic as the group learns more about them, and that there will always be differences and commonalities between different cultures.
- The topic is dynamic not static, and continually developing which is similar to the notion of 'quality' which has developed over years - as understanding changes, so too the definition changes.
- There is no need for an 'end-product'.
- It was suggested that outcomes for children define what leadership is, and that it is the culture of leadership – the communicative activities - not what the leader actually does that is important.
- The culture of leadership also extends beyond centre-based leadership to advocacy for early childhood education in the local community as well as country wide.

b) 'Educational leader' and 'pedagogical leader' were also put forward as terminology which needs clarification among the group:

- The term 'pedagogical leader' is familiar to European countries with the term being from the classical Greek.
- In Australia, 'educational leader' was chosen for use in preference to 'pedagogical leader' when introducing a new role in early childhood settings, since the term pedagogical is not familiar in the non-European Australian context.
- However, it was suggested that in England and Scandinavia that the word 'educational' was more indicative of curriculum (content) as opposed to the notion of 'pedagogy' which it was suggested was about the theory and practice around teaching and learning.
- The term 'education' is seen in those countries as being very broad from vocational education to higher education.
- Another consideration presented was that in European thinking countries the notion of 'pedagogical leader' is not limited to a person in a particular role, but that all teachers can be nominated the title, bringing an added question of who holds the position of leader if all teachers are 'pedagogical leaders'.

- Different heritages bring different understandings and there is even confusion within one area such as Scandinavia about the use of the term 'pedagogical leader'.

c) Organisational culture, climate and ethos was presented as terminology which is beneficial to examine as a basis for an understanding of the development of early childhood leadership:

- Early childhood centres have different organisational cultures, including trust, values, vision, mission.
- The organisational culture sets the standards that staff are expected to adhere to and to move beyond.
- A culture of leadership encourages staff to lead in any small action, and develops a culture of distributed leadership being embedded into the centre.
- A culture of learning and leadership go hand in hand.
- A change in structures, such as can occur with the impact of external agents such as government regulations, in turn requires a change in organisational culture.
- There has not been a great deal of research done on organisational culture in the early childhood context, and the political level of organisational culture needs to be examined.
- It was suggested that there is a divide between the theory of business organisational culture, which can be easily manipulated, and the sociological organisational cultural theory which is more resistant to definition and moulding.
- Different levels of organisational culture are embedded into different contexts, however, there is a fluidity of organisational culture frameworks which can travel across borders and between sectors.

2. Research collaboration

A publication opportunity was presented by Manjula Waniganayake for the ILRF group in the form of chapter contributions from different countries, with commentaries of country contributions being done by Australia, Norway and Finland. The publication is to be a follow-up activity to the research presentations by those three countries at the public forum of the ILRF 2013 gathering in Australia. Separate information about the proposal is available on the ILRF website.

3. ILRF website

Per Tore will send all participants' e-mails from the 2014 Norway gathering to Mervi Eskelinen to place on the group website.

4. ILRF network

Eeva Hujala suggested that the group open its membership to a broader community. She presented following names for inclusion in group membership, which were all approved:

Petra Stremel, Hamburg, Germany

Elena Lenskaya, Moscow

Tiina Petersson, Tallinn, Estonia

Fortidas Bakuza, Dar El Salaam, Tanzania

Eleftheria Argiropoulou, Crete, Greece

5. Journal of Early Childhood Education Research

Attention was drawn to this on-line journal overseen by Eeva Hujala, Editor-in-Chief, Tampere University, Finland (eeva.hujala@uta.fi). Members of the group are encouraged to offer articles for publication.

'JECER, a Journal of Early Childhood Education Research, publishes early childhood scientific research. Research articles in this international journal are peer reviewed and published either in Finnish or English. Its focus is on the research of early childhood education and the theoretical and historical analysis of these phenomena. Target audiences for this journal are the researchers, educators and students of early childhood education, parents, early childhood education professionals, decision makers, and people working on administration and educational planning.' (jecer.org)

6. Next gathering

- a) Different alternatives in regard to time and place were discussed.
- b) It was suggested that an add-on to a conference would suit best, however, there were no conferences suggested that would provide such an option for 2015.
- c) Asking new members of the group to host a gathering was discounted as not viable.
- d) It was agreed that it is Finland's turn to organise.
- e) Mid December was suggested as the best time of the year in relation to the academic calendars of the different countries.
- f) Finland was to communicate to the group decisions in regard to time and place in 2015 for the next gathering.