



# Management for learning

How external stakeholders expectations influence on ECEC leaders leadership  
outside ECEC`s

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# Background

- Early Childhood Education and Care director
- My role as an ECEC director in public sector
- Major changes in the ECEC sector, directors must participate outside the ECEC's – more visible
- Increased focus on learning, both nationally and locally – affect my role as a director
- How external stakeholders expectations influence on ECEC directors leadership outside ECECs

# Theoretical framework

- The structural and political perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2009)
- Leadership as a key function in the organization (Strand, 2007)
- The directors external/strategic functions (Gotvassli, 1990; 2006; Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2010).
- The stakeholders model (Skybakmoen & Behrens 2010; Busch, Vanebo & Dehlin, 2010)
- Leadership in interaction between the large and the small community (Klausen, 2001)
- Profession and dilemma (Møller, 2009)
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# Qualitative exploratory design

- Focus group interview with 4 directors of public ECECs in the same municipality
- In-depth interviews with the same 4 directors
- This municipality has enough coverage for the children in the ECEC's. Only 25% of the ECECs were public.
- The ECECs supreme leader is the principal of the schools.

## **Three themes:**

- ECECs as a learning arena
- Stakeholders related to the ECEC directors
- The directors external/strategic functions

## **I found three interesting categories in my analysis:**

- Expectations – from the stakeholders
- Influence option - or the lack of influence?
- Cross pressure – the directors experience

# Expectations

- Expectations related to the ECEC's as a learning arena
- From which stakeholders?
  - Owner
  - Parents

The directors emphasize the parents' expectations more than the owners in my interviews.

Because of the unclear structure in the organization, the directors find it difficult to see who the owner is:

The principal? The politicians? The councilman



# Influence option

- The directors find it hard to get access to the "large community", they experience not themselves as strategic or political leaders.
- They are not sure that they need to either....
- They are not present when important decisions are taken – in this big organization. The principal of the school are representing ECEC´s.
- Who take care of the discussions around the political view on ECEC´s? Nobody with ECEC-bacground?



# Cross pressure

- The directors finds it difficult to meet all the conflicting expectations from the stakeholders
- They call it "*one of the directors challenges – to take care of everybody to development a qualitative ECEC*"
- Three different dilemma (Møller, 2009)
  - Ethical dilemma
  - Logical dilemma
  - Moral dilemma



# Three different dilemma

(Møller, 2009)

## **Ethical dilemma – leadership or educational focus**

- Should the directors emphasize the parents demands of flexibility and service, or the children and the employees needs of a stable and predictable organization?
- They have a constantly pressure and a disparity between what they are required to do, and what they really are able to do.

- One of the directors say:

*"They give me new tasks all the time, and I notice that the way I have to balance everything with the parents, I have worked a lot with that... to meet all the demands from the parents, as a balance to how much i have to pressure the employees, how flexible we have to be"*

## **Logical dilemma – leader or colleague?**

- Who does the directors identify with?
- In this survey I find that the directors identify more with the colleagues than the employer – some unlike other research results.
- Small units, they are not present when important decisions
- They are not defined as leaders in the organization structure.

## **Moral dilemma – loyalty to the small or the large community?**

- The directors tells that they experience "to be stuck between a rock and a hard place"
- What can they say in political issues?
- They feel that they have to be loyal to the employer, they can't tell everything in media/to the parents
- Loyalty – a threat to the freedom of speech ?
- A difference between private and public ECEC directors?

# Conclusion

- Organizational structure is important – what is the role of the directors of the ECECs?
- Competition between the ECECs creates new challenges in the Norwegian ECECs – different expectations from the stakeholders
- Loyalty conflicts – difficult to participate in political issues about ECECs
- Who will take care of the childrens interests?

