



Høgskolen i Telemark

# Exploring leadership praxis

A collaborative PhD project  
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# Purpose:

- **Adding practice architectures discussing leading professional support as praxis in a distributed pedagogical context**
- **Presenting professional support**
- **Illustrating actions of professional support through sayings, doings and relatings**
- **Discussing how professional support are enabled and constrained in different ways**

# Introduction

This presentation considers how positional pedagogical leaders on department level in Early Childhood Education (ECE) lead professional support as praxis.

The increasing conceptualisation of pedagogical leadership as distributed calls for an attention to explore how distributed pedagogical leadership enables and constrains professional support as praxis.

Acknowledging leadership as not manifested in the person of the leader, we propose that using the theory of practice architectures as a lens is productive to explore how discourses, social relations and working conditions hold in place leading professional support as praxis (Kemmis et al., 2014) .

# Background

- The value of this idea is illustrated from a collaborative qualitative shadowing study on leadership in ECE Centres.
- The analyses is based on data from the category **Professional support** which is one of nineteen categories developed from the leadership taxonomy: The purpose of verbal contact (Mintzberg, 1973; Vie, 2009).
- The informants are ECE teachers with bachelor degree and at least five years experiences as positional pedagogical leaders at department level.

# The voice of the informants:

*In these days, I feel that it is almost the same what we are supposed to work with. In a busy schedule we must find ways in which leading professional support can be linked directly to the existing practices there and then.*

*We do not have time to do this in formal meetings. It requires a lot of thought to find the right moment. You have to find the right time, and do the right thing in the right moment, in addition to all the other things that you have to do.*

*Yes, we have come so far now that we have to take advantage of what we actually have, and from this, do the best we can. I can't see no other way, and we can only hope that this is as effective as what we would have been doing in formal meetings.*

# Professional support

- leading professional support is actions enacted by the leader to support and develop the assistant's work of performance to achieve a shared understanding of the core values in ECE.
- Leading professional support in line with the purpose of education means to act educationally underpinned by a notion of praxis. Praxis means to undertake actions *which is morally committed and oriented and informed by traditions in the field* (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4).

# Research questions

The main research question is **how distributed pedagogical leadership enables and constrains leading professional support as praxis.**

1. How do discourses hold in place professional support as praxis (Sayings)?
2. How do working conditions hold in place professional support as praxis (Doings)?
3. How do social relations hold in place professional support as praxis(Relatings)?

# 1. How do discourses hold in place professional support as praxis (Sayings)?

- languages and discourses on teaching are supporting the leader's language on leadership.
- Informant: *You are a model for better or worse. You are looked at what you do and do not do. And then I recall again what I have learned about children's development and interaction. Because I use my professional knowledge on children in my staff leadership, especially that children learn from role models for better or worse. So, this part of my leadership role, I am pretty humble on.*



## 2. How do working conditions hold in place professional support as praxis (Doings)?

- The pedagogical leaders emphasise that Professional support is effective when they can relate directly to practice, but working conditions make it difficult.
- Informant: *We have to put the pressure on here and now situations and everyday situations. To be able to support there and then is perhaps the most effective way because then we can relate it to practice. What is a pity, I think, is that unlike a formal meeting, it is difficult to pull the thoughts further and follow up on the assistants reflections. It is a danger that the reflections can be a little short.*

### 3. How do social relations hold in place professional support as praxis(Relatings)?

- Being both a teacher and a leader at the same time challenges the relationship to the assistants.
- Informant: *The staffs have very different competences, as you have someone who has worked for many years, and someone who just has started working in Early Childhood Centres. Then, you simply have to teach the staff.*

# Summing up

- practices of teaching become practice architecture for practices of leading professional support.
- we argue that it is necessary to consider conditions for distributed pedagogical leadership so that the leaders are given reasonable terms to fulfil their multiple responsibilities. Given reasonable terms they are able to act and lead educationally as more than being just an implementer of external aims, rather, they become actors in pedagogical leadership that supports and acts moral values, when leading praxis by praxis



*Within the practice architectures of distributed pedagogical leadership professional support as praxis is enabled and constrained in different ways.*

*We argue that that certain conditions have to be in place to realize professional support as praxis.*



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