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Teacher Leadership Repertoires in the Context of Early Childhood Education Team Meetings in Finland

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates teacher leadership in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings in Finland. We used discursive analysis to investigate repertoires of teacher leaders during weekly team meetings organized by staff teams. In Finland, a staff team usually comprises of an ECE teacher - who is the team leader, and two childcare nurses. In this study ECE teachers are understood as being teacher leaders (Fairman & McKenzie, 2012). The study identifies four repertoires of teacher leadership: 1. collaborative teacher leadership; 2. supportive teacher leadership; 3. professional expertise; and 4. legitimation. Understanding teacher leadership is fundamental to enacting pedagogical leadership in staff teams at an ECE center. This study informs ECE teacher education on how to prepare teachers to take on leadership roles and responsibilities by developing appropriate knowledge and skills through the enactment of teacher leadership. In this way, this study contributes to pedagogical development within the ECE sector.

Keywords: *early childhood education, leadership, pedagogical leadership, teacher leadership*

Introduction

This study investigated teacher leadership repertoires in the context of team meetings in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings in Finland. This study emerged within the context of implementing the Finnish ECE policy reforms that have taken place in the past

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few years and which emphasize the role of the ECE teacher as being responsible for leading staff teams in assessment, planning and development of pedagogy of a children's group (EDUFI, 2016). There is a strong emphasis on pedagogical issues in the work of an ECE teacher as this is the core purpose of their role as teachers. Simultaneously, the teacher is also recognized as a team leader. As Fairman and MacKenzie (2015, p.81), who have studied the enactment of teacher leadership in school settings explain it, this is a "collective commitment" which shows teachers exerting influence on their colleagues for the purposes of improving children's learning within a given setting. As such, we also see teacher leadership of an ECE teacher as being integral to understanding the broader concept of pedagogical leadership. However, in this study, we do not focus only on pedagogical leadership but on more general leadership operating within small teams in ECE settings. Typically, each child group involves three staff members, including either one or two ECE teachers. These ECE teachers have a three-year degree, either a Bachelor of Education from a university or a Bachelor of Social Sciences from a University of Applied Sciences. Childcare nurses joining these teams typically have a vocational qualification in social welfare or in health care.

Although Finnish national policy strongly emphasizes the leadership role of ECE teachers, leading an ECE center is a joint task that involves other stakeholders, including ECE center directors, ECE municipal leaders, parents, and childcare nurses. The center director is responsible for developing the organizational culture, and this involves pedagogical leadership, the development of education and assessment systems as well as ensuring good working conditions for staff and developing their vocational competence (EDUFI, 2016).

Most ECE center directors in Finland today lead a cluster of units comprising 2-3 centers and other services including family day care and open play groups. This expansion of programs within a cluster of settings managed by a single director has required distributing leadership within centers and across a municipality. Consequently, this has also meant that a center director is not always present at the center every day, and the focus on leadership has shifted to emphasizing the role of ECE teachers as leaders (Halttunen, 2016).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical underpinnings of the present study are connected with educational research on teacher leadership (Fairman & MacKenzie, 2012, 2015; Harris, 2003; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016, 2018; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leadership means that an ECE teacher takes on leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2003) for a team

of staff members. Distributed forms of leadership can assist in achieving the goals set for ECE by enhancing the professional development of ECE staff, improving curriculum work, and supporting pedagogical development and organizational change (Heikka, Waniganayake, & Hujala, 2013). The implementation of teacher leadership also creates interdependence between teachers and other ECE leaders who enact pedagogical leadership at multiple ECE centres and across a municipality (Heikka, 2014). Due to global interests in investigating the leadership responsibilities of ECE teachers (Boe & Hognestad, 2017; Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2015; Heikka et al., 2016, 2018; Ho, 2010, 2011; Hognestad & Boe, 2014, 2015; Waniganayake, Heikka, & Halttunen, 2018), the awareness of the ECE teacher's role in leading pedagogy has increased.

Teacher leadership operations in ECE comprise a variety of responsibilities, and these can vary contextually between centres and countries. These tasks can include leading curriculum work in small teams, organizing daily activities in a child group, dividing labour in a team, coordinating cooperation with parents, enhancing change and pedagogical development, guiding the teaching practices of childcare nurses, supporting professional learning and motivating colleagues, as well as co-operating and participating in decision making at the centre (Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2015; Danielson, 2003; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Harris, 2003; Heikka et al., 2016; Ho, 2010, 2011; Hognestad & Boe, 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leadership enactment can also involve responsibility for assessing, planning and ensuring that pedagogy is connected with the ECE goals at the centre. In addition, teachers share pedagogical leadership with others, including teachers from various child groups at the same centre (Heikka et al., 2016). According to Fairman and Mackenzie (2015), the main purpose of teacher leadership is to enhance children's learning by developing an organization that moves toward its goals by influencing others and participating in decision making as members of the organization. Teachers are models of professional attitudes, and based on their professional expertise, they can coach colleagues and advocate for organizational change (Danielson, 2003; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Harris, 2003).

Leading small teams within their centres is one important part of ECE teachers' leadership responsibilities (Heikka et al., 2018). Leading the team within their classroom takes place on a daily basis and at different types of meetings at the centre or with the team. Weekly team meetings present an important arena for ECE teachers to lead pedagogy. Heikka et al. (2018) and Waniganayake et al. (2018), have reported findings indicating that there are differences within ECE centres and teams on how teachers lead, document and reflect on pedagogical practice. Individual teachers also seem to differentiate their practice in relation to their commitment to teacher leadership. Not all teachers lead the team into critical reflection and learning or encourage the participation of childcare nurses. The Finnish *National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care* (EDUFI, 2016)

demands building a learning community where professionals share ideas and encourage each other to discover new pedagogical approaches to developing pedagogical practice. The role of an ECE teacher as a leader of the team is also emphasized in Finnish national ECE policy (EDUFI, 2016). However, there is a lack of research focusing on the questions of how do ECE teachers understand their leadership? and how do they act as leaders?

When participating in professional development, it is important that the team pursues learning together (Ord et al., 2013). Critical reflection is crucial in developing pedagogy and a collaborative working culture in a team (Brookfield, 2009). Critical reflection used in planning forthcoming learning activities determines the ability of the team as a whole to develop its practice. Consequently, teachers have the power to inhibit or nourish shared reflections and the goal-oriented pedagogical planning of an organization and move forward in achieving its goals (Heikka et al., 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2018).

With the accumulation of research-based evidence (see for example, Aubrey, 2016; Hujala, Waniganayake & Rodd, 2013; Strehmel, Heikka, Hujala, Rodd & Waniganayake, 2019; Waniganayake, Rodd, & Gibbs, 2015) we are now better informed about ECE leadership matters. Several studies have indicated that leadership is enacted through mutual relationships between ECE leaders comprising centre directors and teachers (Boe & Hognestad, 2017; Halttunen, 2016; Heikka, 2014; Ho, 2011; Sims, Forrest, Semann, & Slattery, 2015). The current investigation focused on the ways leadership was enacted by teachers. Halttunen (2009) has done pioneering work investigating an organizational model based on a cluster of centres where centre directors lead centres geographically distanced from teachers. Heikka (2014) has continued this work by identifying five key dimensions: enhancing shared consciousness of visions and strategies between the stakeholders; distributing responsibilities for pedagogical leadership; distributing and clarifying power relationships between stakeholders; distributing the enactment of pedagogical improvement within centres and developing strategy for distributed pedagogical leadership. These dimensions create interdependencies between the enactments of distributed leadership responsibilities. This study indicates that ECE organizations have interdependencies between leaders, including teacher leaders who share responsibilities for distributed pedagogical leadership across a municipality.

As research on ECE teacher leadership is evolving, conceptualization of this phenomenon as a theoretically based concept is in the early stage of development. As prevailing research focuses mainly on what tasks, responsibilities, or benefits teacher leadership entails, little is known about how teacher leadership evolves in teams. This study focuses on investigating how teacher leadership is formulated in the discussions of ECE teams. Teacher leadership repertoires are investigated in the context of weekly ECE team meetings to further develop this knowledge base.

The research question that was explored in our study was as follows: What kind of repertoires of leadership do ECE teachers construct during weekly team meetings? The function of talk, and the formation of teacher leadership subject positions during staff team conversations in weekly meetings were analysed, and teacher leadership repertoires were identified. Findings from this investigation will assist in informing ECE teachers on how to develop themselves as effective and participatory leaders of their teams.

Method

The data collection was completed between the years 2015 and 2017, and six ECE teams from five municipalities in Finland were selected as a purposive sample. The five municipalities represent a mix of large and small municipalities in Finland. After consulting municipal ECE leaders about the appropriate centres for study, from five centres one and from one centre two ECE teams participated in the study on a voluntary basis. All the centres were public. Typically, an ECE centre in Finland includes 3-5 teams and this was reflected in the centres participating in this study. Teams were selected based on the team working together for a sufficient period of time and the availability and willingness of all team members to participate in the study.

The data was collected by observing and recording a weekly team meeting at six ECE centres participating in this research. The teacher was the chair of these meetings. Except for one team meeting that was recorded by the study participants, one of the researchers attended the ECE team meetings to observe and record conversations for analysing in this research. All members of each team, both ECE teachers and childcare nurses, participated in the study. In Finland, typically, there are three staff members in an ECE classroom team. The combination of professionals can be either one ECE teacher and two childcare nurses or two ECE teachers and one nurse. In the six teams involved in this research, there was one ECE teacher and two childcare nurses in five of the teams and two teachers and one nurse in one of the teams.

About an hour was usually reserved for each team meeting and staff from other teams at the centre worked with the children during these meetings. The researcher did not interfere in the organization or interrupt the discussion between the team members during the meetings. The participants were asked to carry on with the meeting as usual. Field notes were made during the team meetings by documenting staff' names and professional positions in the team. The data was transcribed verbatim noting the pauses and utterances where relevant. Essentially, our study is an exploratory study with a small

sample of centres. As our data was collected from one team meeting at each centre, it was not appropriate to 'count' the existence of the repertoires analysed in this paper.

The study employed critical discourse analysis (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1988) to identify the functions of the talk and the subject positions of ECE teachers in the team meetings. There are multiple views on what a discourse is. Some authors make a distinction if the discourse is only spoken or written language or both (Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). There are also different views concerning the purpose and nature of language as expressed. This study is founded on social constructivism which seeks to understand language as social practice (Gergen & Gergen, 2007; Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The present study followed the basic assumptions of understanding language as action and having different functions. Wood and Kroger (2000, p. 5) wrote that "The emphasis in the discourse analysis is on what talk is doing and achieving." The analysis of the present study focused on the talk of the team members, especially on the teachers' actions, initiations, reactions, and responses, and choices of terms and concepts, which reflected the teachers' aims, purposes, and positions during the weekly meetings.

In the identification of repertoires, the study was interested in examining the functions (Wetherell & Potter, 1988; Wood & Kroger, 2000) of the teachers' talk and the subject position of the teachers (Edley, 2001). Whereas discourse consists of different functions that reflect the ways we characterize and relate to our social worlds (Wetherell & Potter, 1988), the subject position describes how teachers relate to other team members in the situations being examined. The subject position refers to the way individuals place themselves in the discussions. The subject positions are relevant to this study because the way teachers position themselves in the weekly team meetings reflects their orientation towards leadership. Also relevant to the analysis is the interpretation of teachers' statements in relation to the professional position they held at the centre (Edley, 2001). Professional functions and subject positions were linked together so that when the teacher talked, s/he took a position and formulated a function of the discussion with the team members. For example, the team was planning upcoming pedagogical activities in the following excerpt, and the teacher's function was to bring into the discussion the activities she had planned in advance:

> Teacher: *Baby bear math tomorrow.*
>
> Childcare nurse: *You'll take baby bear math tomorrow*.
>
> Teacher: *I'll take the little children first, and the older children could take games.*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *Games.*

The subject position of the teacher reflects who was responsible for leading pedagogy in the team. However, as the teacher presented her idea in a directive manner and left no space for negotiation between team members, her position appears to be one of a solo expert and not as participative orientation towards the others in the team.

In the first stage of the data analysis process, the aim was to separate all the expressions of the teachers where their talk included a function related to leadership. Expressions like describing what children have done during the day or parents' messages to the staff team were not included in the analysis. Two researchers first analysed the data independently. A leadership function is sometimes expressed in one short sentence and because of that, with two researchers analysing the same data researchers targeted to ensure that all the leadership functions were included in the analysis. The second stage of the analysis was to compare and combine the individual analysis gathering all the expressions of leadership functions. The third stage of the process was concerned with analysing the subject positions of the teachers, particularly the functions of the talk that supported or informed the nature of the repertoires. This was the critical stage of the analysis where the core of the analysis was the not the content of the teacher's talk but merely what was the aim of the talk. The final stage involved labelling the repertoires analysed in the talk of the teachers during the team meetings. In addition to the function and the subject positions, the context of the discussion, in which the repertoires occurred, were identified and described. This analysis yielded four different repertoires of teacher leadership as discussed next.

Findings

The four repertoires in the teacher's talk identified in the analysis can be described as i) collaborative teacher leadership, ii) supportive teacher leadership, iii) professional expertise, and iv) legitimation. The properties characterizing the repertoires presented in this paper do not describe an individual teacher. Rather, they describe how teacher leadership occurs in the talk of the teachers during weekly team meetings as presented in the full data set collected and analysed in this research.

Repertoires do not work as a typology of the discussion of a team because the repertoires varied during the team meetings held at the six teams participating in this research. The first two repertoires reflected collaborative orientation towards leading. In the first teacher leadership repertoire - collaborative teacher leadership, the function of promoting pedagogy was dominant, whereas in the second teacher leadership repertoire - supportive teacher leadership, the teacher works on promoting the professional performance of teammates more directly by providing personal feedback or responding

to the questions from individual childcare nurses. In the third repertoire - professional expertise, leadership was strong, but the teacher did not initiate a conversation or involve the childcare nurses in a shared discussion and in the decision making of pedagogical activities. The fourth interpretative repertoire - legitimation, includes leadership talk, which was justified by regulations or by decisions made by someone else such as the centre director or a parent. All four repertoires included a set of functions and teacher positions and occurred in certain contexts of talk, which are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Teacher leadership repertoires, functions, context of talk, and subject positions

	Collaborative teacher leadership	Supportive teacher leadership	Professional expertise	Legitimation
Function of talk	To invite other team members to plan and reflect on the pedagogy at the child and team level	Strengthen child care nurses' professionalism To provide personal feedback and individual guidance for child care nurses	To present the plans and observations done by the ECE teacher herself to the team members	To justify the actions done
Context of talk	Occurred when a) talking about individual children or when b) planning the pedagogy for the child group	Occurred when a) child care nurses needed advice or b) teacher gave individual feedback	Occurred in different parts of the data when teachers discussed with other staff members about what they had done with children and what they planned to do	Occurred when ECE teacher's leadership actions /decisions needed back up
Subject position of ECE teacher	Enhance reflections Needed while being the identifier, observation interpreter, concluder, and decision maker	Tutor and mentor to other ECE team members	ECE teacher as the responsible person for leading pedagogy; Solo expert on pedagogy	Follower of regulations

Collaborative Teacher Leadership

These repertoires represented accounts of when ECE teachers invited team members to participate in reflecting and planning the pedagogy together as a team. This teacher leadership repertoire served several functions for the teachers. The main function of these repertoires was to reflect on the pedagogy and working culture of the team as well as to assess the level of learning and development of individual children in the group. Teachers initiated discussion based on the pedagogical documentation made by team members and enhanced this by leading a reflective discussion of the team's teaching practice. In these discussions, the teachers interpreted the team members' descriptions of children's performance and confirmed the interpretations of individual children's development or needs.

Invitations for collaboration were both direct and indirect. There were accounts, for example, where teachers directly asked for the opinions of team members. These kinds of direct accounts were evident especially when teachers oriented themselves towards discussions with parents concerning individual plans for a child's ECE.

> Teacher 1: *Individual plan discussions should be made. Would you like to say something about this? How about Eric?*
>
> Teacher 2: *I actually have his plan here if you have some thoughts for tomorrow?*

In the following excerpt, the direct invitation to collaborate made by the teacher and the resulting reflective discussion of the team culture is evident. The teacher had earlier suggested putting the children in small groups, and after the pedagogical activities of this small group had been implemented by the team members, the teacher initiated a reflective discussion in the meeting by asking team members for their opinion about the practice. The teacher also noted that one of the childcare nurses had suggested using small group pedagogy as illustrated next:

> Teacher: *Well, now we have followed the idea you Laura introduced to us after your in-service training in town.*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *I did what?*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *You brought your knowledge to us.*
>
> Teacher: *The transition to lunch so that each of us take care of our own small groups of children.*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *Yes mmm…*
>
> Teacher: *What kind of experiences do you have of this new procedure?*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *I think it is good.*

Childcare nurse 1: *Yes yes.*

There were accounts where the teacher invited team members to reflect on the past more indirectly or make suggestions on how the team should work and handle daily practices. When teachers supported others in reflecting on the past, they were keen to hear the opinions of other team members and, with a few words, encouraged others to continue the discussion. When teachers directed the discussion towards the future, they invited the team to work in the same way using questions such as "shall we do it in this way?". Teachers often presented questions to childcare nurses during team meetings, which can also be seen in the excerpts above, and they also initiated and led reflective discussions of pedagogy and culture in the team. This collaborative repertoire positioned the teachers as reflective enhancers, professional interpreters of pedagogy, and decision makers.

Teachers, however, did not always take the lead in team meetings during reflective discussion and planning. In the following excerpt, the discussion of artwork was initiated by the childcare nurse when she presented her ideas about artwork based on the upcoming Valentine's day. The leadership drift was evident when the teacher followed the nurse's ideas without initiating any reflections on how the activity could support children's development and learning or could align with the pedagogical goals set for this child group:

Childcare nurse: *Shall we do same artwork? Others?*

Teacher: *Yes.*

Childcare nurse: *We should plan something nice, winter?*

Teacher: *I have not been browsing.*

Childcare nurse: *What is coming up?... Valentine's day is approaching, shall we do something lovely?*

Teacher: *Yes, then we could take the songs and then we could delight the other groups.*

Childcare nurse: *Let's make craft cards for them. We could start doing them already. Isn't it the 14th day?*

Teacher: *It will take a long time to prepare them.*

Childcare nurse: *Shall we start crafting them?*

Teacher: *Yes. We have already made winter stuff, a snow man. It doesn't have to involve winter; it is a friend also….*

The teacher followed and completed the childcare nurse's ideas, which were affirmed as being timely and were defined by the themes set, not by the children's interests, or development or pedagogical goals. A pedagogical point of view and leadership

responsibility were absent. Collaborative teacher leadership positions the teacher as equal with their team members as an idea provider for planning pedagogy and upcoming events. Pedagogical planning reflected the format of collaborative brainstorming issues. The teacher did not lead the discussion to deeper levels of reflection or goal setting for this activity and thereby, did not enable the full potential of the team to pursue pedagogical development together as a group.

Supportive Teacher Leadership

Supportive teacher leadership repertoires included accounts where the teacher directly provided personal feedback to each team member. In promoting and supporting professional thinking and performance, the main function of the talk was to strengthen the professionalism of childcare nurses. In the following excerpt, the teacher provided feedback to a childcare nurse about personal characteristics and skills that can be useful when working with young children:

> Teacher: *…but Eva, I admire the sense of humour you have, it's the same you have with everybody. Then I have been thinking about the time you put Jessica to sleep so that she didn't get up at once. What miracle hands you have!*

This repertoire included guiding and informing childcare nurses about problematic issues and challenges they may have encountered when working with children and families. In the following except, the teacher guides the childcare nurses on how to respond to problems encountered with parents:

> Teacher: *The thing we should pay attention to is coping with children's parents.*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *The two-year olds growl and get parents tired.*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *Yes.*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *But what if we do not know the family yet, how do we bring things up for discussion with them?*
>
> Teacher: *I brought up, for example, the individual child's plan in the discussion, and the reasons why we should have this discussion.*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *She wouldn't want to come.*
>
> Teacher: *She wouldn't want to.*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *It is very important to explain this to her.*
>
> Teacher: *What if we start so that…*
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *Vigorously?*

This repertoire positioned the teacher as a personal professional supporter, feedback provider, and responsive guidance and information provider in a problematic situation brought up by childcare nurses.

Professional Expertise

Professional expertise repertoires represented accounts where the ECE teachers brought to the discussion their plans and observations, made by the teacher herself. These accounts occurred throughout the team meeting discussions. The professional expertise was taken for granted and when the teacher described the plans she had made for pedagogical activities, no one disagreed with her. The ECE teacher/s in all centres participating in this study had the position of a professional who was in charge of pedagogy. This repertoire concerned teachers being autonomous in leading the planning of pedagogical activities. The leadership of the teacher in this repertoire was strong in this role however, it was not participative as the teacher excluded childcare nurses from the planning and presented plans for the nurses in an authoritarian manner. The function of these repertoires was to declare or announce forthcoming pedagogical activities for the team members, but these activities were not open for discussion with the childcare nurses. This is evident in the following excerpt in which the teacher presented her plans for the following morning to the whole child group. In the discussion, the childcare nurses simply followed the teacher by repeating what the teacher said:

> Teacher: *Baby bear math tomorrow.*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *You'll take baby bear math tomorrow.*
>
> Teacher: *I'll take the little children first and the older children could take games*.
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *Games.*
>
> Teacher: *It won't take long.*
>
> Childcare nurse 1: *Yes*.
>
> Childcare nurse 2: *What to do when we are finished?*
>
> Teacher: *Then we'll go out.*

The teacher in this excerpt holds the position of expert in pedagogy and team members relied on her professional knowledge. This repertoire positioned the teacher as an individual decision-maker about up-coming pedagogical activities. Team members were not involved in decision-making, in setting goals, or in reflecting together as a group.

Legitimation

The ECE teacher's leadership is framed by regulations made at the municipal and center levels. Legitimation represented accounts where a teacher legitimated actions done by referring to legislation, to conventions to the centre director. In the following excerpt, the teacher explains why she had to act the way she did based on a legal agreement with the parents:

> Teacher: *…in the evening we had a situation with a family in the other child group that was involved in an ongoing custody dispute, and a person came to pick the child and he/she was not mentioned in our service agreement. That person did not have any written permission to pick up the child…*

There were also accounts where the teacher's position when enacting teacher leadership was stipulated at the center level by the director and by other teachers. There were some accounts where decisions were made together by the center director and the teachers, although they also raised disagreement in the team, which can be seen in the next excerpt:

> Teacher 1: *About the preschool class. Jane [center director] said that at the end of this spring, the child group will go to the other side [school] for a while. And Jane will say, which group will come here in turn. She will tell who could be at school.*
>
> Childcare nurse: *So they will visit there before school starts.*
>
> Teacher: *So that they will know where the gym is and how you take the lunch, they can visit briefly.*
>
> Childcare nurse: *It's bad that they can only have a short visit and then be drawn back.*
>
> Teacher1: *So, Jane suggested that at the end, that there is a week anyway. But they won't remember. They will forget during the summer break. I'll have to discuss how it goes with Jane.*

In legitimation, the position of the teacher was to comply with regulations and the directions given by the centre director. The same regulations and conventions also supported the teachers in their leadership roles.

Conclusions

The investigation of repertoires of teacher leadership during weekly team meetings indicated that ECE teacher leadership manifested in four ways: 1) the promotion of collaboration between team members; 2) the provision of support for team members; 3) the use of expertise in pedagogical planning; and 4) the legitimation of professional practice. This study also highlighted the variety of roles teachers played during weekly

team meetings by identifying subject positions. The main positions analysed were teachers as reflection enhancers, decision-makers, interpreters, guides, and agents of compliance in team decision-making within ECE settings. At the same time, during staff team meetings, ECE teachers had to act, for example, as decision makers or tutors and mentors for colleagues. In addition to the repertoires of teacher leadership and subject positions, the study also identified situations where the voices of childcare nurses were neglected when the team planned forthcoming activities. Although ECE teachers are not always able to take into account observations and suggestions by other team members (Waniganayake et al., 2018), such as childcare nurses, this study revealed participative leadership in the actions and decision-making by the teachers. The significance of the findings of this study for the broader field of educational leadership research is connected with understanding how informal leadership positioning constructed by discursive means can influence how the teacher utilizes daily encounters to promote pedagogy.

The findings enabled us to identify four repertoires of ECE teacher leadership. The first two repertoires embody collaboration and interaction among team members and emphasize the role of teachers as team leaders in reflecting on and planning pedagogy. Teachers also acted as supporters of the professional development of childcare nurses. These encouraging findings show how Finnish ECE teachers identify themselves as responsible for the pedagogy in their teams as well as supporting professional development of their team members, as stipulated in the latest changes in the Finnish ECEC regulations (EDUFI, 2016). However, the study indicated emerging yet unstable repertoires of leadership when teachers enacted their new professional roles as pedagogical leaders. Expertise in team leadership were found to be underdeveloped in terms of equal promotion of participative discussions and the development of professional opportunities available for teachers and childcare nurses during team meetings. As discussed in our previous publications (Heikka et al., 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2015), teacher leadership is supported, for example, by the recognition of the position on behalf the whole ECE centre and across the sector. Centre directors play a key role in this support by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of team members and providing training for teachers to guide processes for practice development in their staff teams.

The limitations of this study are reflected in the characteristics of the research design. As a small-scale exploratory study, data collection was limited to a purposive sample of six ECE teams. Additionally, as an unfunded study with a small research team, we focused on recording one team meeting from each team. Recording only one team meeting however constrained the type of information we were able to collate and analyse and it was not possible to strictly verify how typical or representative were the meetings we attended. This also limits the generalisability of the findings of this study.

ECE teachers are the professionals located at ECE centres who have the best expertise in ECE pedagogical practice, acquired through their university education. Their knowledge and expertise were particularly evident in the repertoire of professional expertise. However, this repertoire did not leave space for discussion among team members. When teachers were analysed using this repertoire other team members were not included to the discussion. In addition, teachers rarely justified plans made, or activities done that were based on their professional expertise. In other words, the leadership and expertise of the teachers was taken for granted, and childcare nurses in this study did not question the teachers' plans or ideas.

According to Jäppinen (2012), interaction and shared decision-making are key contributors to achieving a sense of community and well-being in educational organisations. In additions to these aspects, pedagogical leadership is a way of enhancing critical reflection that aims to develop and concretize pedagogical thinking in the practices of all educators in ECE settings. It aims to develop a team of staff who is able to direct their own pedagogical work (Corrick & Reed, 2019). Therefore, in the future ECE teachers can be better prepared on how to lead their teams in a participative manner by applying research-based knowledge available on effective leadership. A pedagogical leader has responsibility to support and develop educators to reflect and shape a learning organization (O'Sullivan, 2009).

In the study by Heikka et al. (2016), childcare nurses said that while teachers have a broad education, they were expected to lead the pedagogy and use knowledge that nurses did not have. The position of an ECE teacher was quite independent as a team leader in the fourth repertoire, legitimation. However, there were municipal or centre regulations with which they must comply. In other words, teacher leadership is determined by teachers themselves and by other actors such as the centre director and State regulations implemented at the municipal level.

It was found that teachers mostly act as members and leaders in their teams. Their role as leaders entails considering how to use their professional expertise and collaboratively lead the team with childcare nurses. This dual expectation with its demands may create different professional identities that bring both richness and ambiguity to teachers (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). The position of the teachers in their teams is quite similar for example in Australia and Norway. That is, ECE teachers played a double role as leaders of their team members and as teachers of the child group (Sims, Waniganayake & Hadley, 2018).

In Finland, as in other countries, ECE teachers do not usually have sufficient training or preparation to become team leaders with diverse roles, which includes leading

administration, management and pedagogy in their teams. In these countries, there is a strong call for training of educational leaders to be provided either through a master's degree (Waniganayake & Stipanovic, 2016) or through professional development courses (Hadley, Waniganayake & Shepherd, 2015). During university studies and in-service training, ECE teachers need support to understand the different subject positions included in their employment when working at ECE centres. Findings herein suggest that training and support would provide teachers with richness and the full potential of their position as teacher leaders based on a deep knowledge and understanding of ECE pedagogy.

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