

Introduction

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This volume on *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education* highlights leadership issues high on the global political and professional agendas. Leadership is considered a key factor for quality practices and improvement in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, and ECEC leaders are expected to improve and sustain quality in a time of changing requirements and extensive policy changes that have influenced their work. Current results from a litera-

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ture review on ECEC leadership suggest a need to create a stronger evidence base on how to develop successful leadership for diverse ECEC settings and contexts, as well as improve and sustain process quality in ECEC (Schleicher, 2020).

The title of the volume, *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education*, alludes to the constituency of membership in the International Leadership Research Forum in Early Childhood (ILRF–EC). The forum draws together global stakeholders interested in ECEC leadership to share good practices and the findings of research conducted in the sector through the production of research publications. The volume builds on this global collaboration and is the fifth publication arising from the ILRF–EC network initiative.

This book aims to create knowledge about leadership issues and thus contribute to a stronger research base on leadership by bringing together global perspectives on ECEC leadership issues from various contexts and understandings among those involved in the sector. Further, it aims to contribute knowledge and tools for policymakers, practitioners, and ECEC leaders (teachers and directors) in training and will hopefully be of value to the ECEC community in higher education, school settings, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and at the policy level.

The chapters in this book offer various perspectives on global leadership practices and introduce the reader to new thoughts and ideas shared in their findings. The findings of the chapters are based on empirical studies, and the reader is encouraged to approach problem areas in new ways and to apply lessons learned from the volume in their own contexts.

The terminology surrounding early childhood education differs from country to country, reflecting the variations within the sector. To establish consistency rather than use various acronyms about early childhood education (for example, ECEC and ECCE), we have chosen to use the format ECEC in this publication.

In Finland and other Nordic countries, ‘early childhood education and care’ (ECEC) is commonly employed, as care and teaching are integrated into a comprehensive full-day early childhood education programme. ‘Early childhood education’ (ECE) is more commonly used in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where early childhood education means three to four hours a day of school-like teaching, with the children then in a day-care centre (or in the care of a family member or

neighbour) if the parents are unable to provide care afterwards. Some countries alternatively use terms such as ‘early childhood care and education’ (ECCE) or ‘early childhood development’ (ECD), depending on the administrative sector responsible for overseeing this domain. A country may have a social and health ministry that takes charge of early childhood education, while in another the ministry of education may be responsible.

The Core Organising Principles of the Volume

This book is organised into 16 peer-reviewed chapters grouped under three themes affecting early childhood leadership. The parts further explain the leadership conceptualisation, professionalism, and policies of leadership in ECEC in different countries. Chapters in the first part, ‘[Concepts and Interpretations of Early Childhood Education and Care Leadership](#)’, contribute to the theory of leadership in ECEC. The part consists of the following seven chapters.

In the [first chapter](#), ‘Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care Leaders’ Conceptualisations and Understandings of Pedagogical Leadership’, Elina Fonsén, Raisa Ahtiainen, and Kirsi-Marja Heikkinen highlight the several changes the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Finland underwent in the 2010s. Leaders in ECEC play a critical role in developing their centres’ pedagogy and practices. Pedagogical leadership was viewed as a way for leaders and teachers to collaborate on curriculum interpretation.

[Chapter 2](#), ‘Early Childhood Leaders’ Conceptualisation and Understanding of Leadership in Community Centres: The Case of South Africa’, is based on the research project ‘Project in Early Childhood Policy Analysis’ (PECPA) conducted in ECEC community centres in the black settlements of Gauteng Province of the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Using theory from school and centre management, Matshediso Modise, Sharon Mampane, and Nkidi Phatudi explore principals’ conceptualisation of ECEC management. Findings show that principals’ conceptualisation and understanding of leadership practices focus on administrative tasks that exclude distributive leadership. Current conceptualisations thus limit pedagogical and sustainable leadership tasks.

[Chapter 3](#), ‘Wrestling with the Notion of Leadership and Teacher Involvement: Understanding Caribbean Teachers’ Myths and Beliefs

within *Global Perspectives*, by Carol Logie, Lenisa Joseph, Ria Eustace, Altaf Mohammed, and Jovelle Donaldson, presents a survey of 721 early childhood teachers in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, providing data on their myths and beliefs about leadership. Key findings demystify the notion that only positional leaders can lead within ECEC settings. A framework for global progress and help for teachers in developing countries is given.

Ann Kristin Larsen's chapter, 'Leadership in Norwegian Municipal Early Childhood Education Care Centres' ([Chapter 4](#)), discusses the relationship between ECEC directors or owners. The author recommends that a distributed leadership model should underpin the relationship between the director and the owner of an ECEC centre. According to the Norwegian framework, the owners of preschools may offer pedagogical leadership in consultation with directors, or they may delegate pedagogy matters to directors.

[Chapter 5](#), entitled 'Leadership Responsibilities of Early Childhood Directors in Palestine from the Directors' Viewpoint', examines the leadership obligations of early childhood directors in Palestine considering policy frameworks that define such responsibilities but that are not implemented or enforced. In this chapter, Sami Adwan, Karin Hognestad, Somaya Sayma, and Marit Bøe highlight directors' duties under four theoretical topics: the administrator, the integrator, the entrepreneur, and the producer. Directors see their role in setting the goals of their centres as all-encompassing: they must ensure that ECEC is nourished and flourishes within the underprivileged services offered throughout communities.

Geraldine Nolan provides a critical view on how the Irish government has introduced obligatory leadership roles for ECEC services without discussion, research, or training in their chapter, 'Leadership in Irish Early Childhood Education and Care: In Pursuit of Purpose and Possibilities' ([Chapter 6](#)). Interviews with 50 ECEC participants show leadership confusion and marginalised practitioner knowledge. Taking a social feminism approach, the author questions how leadership is conceptualised and practised in Irish ECEC services.

[Chapter 7](#), 'Team leadership and Diversity in Norwegian Early Childhood Education and Care', presents a theoretical discussion of team leadership and the balance between sameness and difference. Cecilie Thun draws upon and extends existing literature on team leadership in ECEC. The ambition is to contribute to theoretical advance-

ment by introducing an intersectional approach to the theoretical framework for research on leadership in diverse societies.

The second part of this book, entitled '[Leadership for Professional Development and Pedagogical Quality](#)', consists of chapters concerning how to enhance the professional development of leaders and teachers, and through this, high-quality pedagogy. The part contains five chapters.

The first chapter of the second part of the book, 'Shadowing Centre Directors as Pedagogical Leaders in Early Childhood Education Settings in Finland' ([Chapter 8](#)), points out three main areas of responsibility for pedagogical leadership: leading pedagogical activities and curriculum work within the centre, leading professional development of educators, and leading pedagogical assessment and development. In their study, Johanna Heikka, Merja Koivula, Merja Hautakangas, and Katja Suhonen show that leaders are in key positions to guide the quality provisioning of ECEC programmes that impact children's learning outcomes.

In their chapter entitled 'Pedagogical Leaders' Use of Professional Judgement in Early Childhood Education and Care: A Case from Norway' ([Chapter 9](#)), Torill Moe and Kjell Aage Gotvassli write about how pedagogical leaders think about the concept of professional judgement, how it can be bad, and how their own work fits in. Pedagogical leaders relate the concept of professional judgement to unpredictability and complex situations that require intuition and immersion. Professional judgement can provide arbitrariness, uncertainty, and insecurity in pedagogical work. The data material consists of in-depth interviews with eight pedagogical leaders. One last finding is that professional judgement depends on how complex the situation is.

[Chapter 10](#), 'School Leaders' Attitude towards the Use of Digital Technology in the Early Grades', attends to the attitudes of leaders towards the use of technology for teaching and learning in a South African study. The message that Roy Venketsamy, Zijing Hu, and Candice Wilson give to administration is that schools need to have the necessary infrastructure in place before technology can be introduced and that leaders should be capacitated in the use of technology.

In [Chapter 11](#), entitled 'Peer Mentoring as a Means of Leader Support in Early Childhood Education and Care', Päivi Kupila discusses how peer mentoring provides a safe space to discuss professional issues and dilemmas. Building on qualitative data, the findings show that

peer mentoring facilitates leadership in ECEC. The results enhance our understanding of peer mentoring from the perspective of the peer mentors.

The last chapter of Part II, ‘Does Leadership Matter? A Narrative Analysis of Men’s Life Stories in Early Childhood Education and Care’ ([Chapter 12](#)), by Joanne McHale, Victoria Sullivan, and Birgitte Ljunggren, examines the narratives of six men who had worked at ECEC centres and their decisions to remain or quit. The males felt exploited in terms of labour rights, labour division, and responsibility. Some of the men succeeded and were portrayed as protagonists with a happy ending. The men had to overcome various challenges, and their leadership tenacity helped them to triumph.

The last part of the book, [‘Governance and Policies in Leading ECEC’](#), examines the governance and policies of ECEC leadership in various countries and how these influence ECEC. This part consists of four chapters.

The opening chapter of the last part, ‘Early Childhood Development Centre Managers’ Provision of Comprehensive Quality Programmes: Policy Implementation’ ([Chapter 13](#)), by Jabil Mzimela, Zanele Zama, and Jongiwe Tebekana, provides discussions by centre leaders in the Eastern Cape province and KwaZulu-Natal province on how to implement comprehensive quality ECEC development programmes in rural and semi-urban settings that align with national early childhood policy. The research employed communities of practice theory. A lack of awareness of national ECEC policy goals led to little implementation and no coordination with other provincial ministries in assuring the development of a quality programme offering.

In their chapter entitled ‘Supervising Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland’ ([Chapter 14](#)), Ulla Soukainen describes the provisions of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 for buildings, learning settings, personnel qualifications, objectives, and quality in Finnish ECEC. Moreover, reviewing and overseeing the supervisory authority is part of the ECEC director’s duties. Children and employees at municipal ECEC institutions are routinely sampled. Top authorities of the Regional State Administrative Agency decide on the appropriate adult–child ratio.

[Chapter 15](#), ‘Owners’ Governance of Directors’ Mentoring Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in Norway’, by Magritt Lundestad, recommends that a distributed leadership model

should underpin the relationship between the director and the owner. Owners of preschools in Norway may offer pedagogical leadership in consultation with directors. Directors may be the municipality that owns half of the ECEC centres, or they may be private owners. The chapter captures the responsibilities of the directors under three themes (the administrator, the integrator, and the producer) based on the theoretical framework.

Eeva Hujala, Janniina Vlasov, and Kirsi Alila describe in their chapter, 'Integrative Leadership Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care' ([Chapter 16](#)), how governance, leadership, and operational culture in the Finnish ECEC context are integrated. Legislation and administrative premises provide the framework for the leadership and management functions, as well as for quality management. The chapter aims to introduce a comprehensive approach to ECEC leadership called an integrative leadership framework.

Finally, Elina Fonsén's [concluding words](#) provide a brief background for the book's originality, purpose, and division, as well as a summary. The book has three thematic parts whereby [the first part](#) contributes to the theory of leadership in ECEC; [the second part](#) consists of chapters concerning how to enhance the professional development of leaders and teachers and, through this, high-quality pedagogy; and [the last part](#) examines the governance and policies of ECEC leadership in various countries and how these influence ECEC.

References

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