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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the importance of leadership in determining the quality of early care and education programs, the International Leadership Project (ILP) was initiated in 1996 to develop an understanding of cross-cultural perspectives on leadership, to develop a conceptual framework of leadership, and to develop cross-cultural methodologies for examining leadership. This volume is based on papers presented at a 1997 meeting in Finland of the project's international research group and focuses on theoretical and methodological perspectives in researching leadership. Following an introduction and background to ILP (Eeva Hujala and Anna-Maija Puroilla), the chapters are: (1) "Problems and Challenges in Cross-Cultural Research" (Eeva Hujala); (2) "Cross-Cultural Methodologies in Early Childhood Education" (Manjula Waniganayake); (3) "Theoretical Perspectives on Educational Leadership" (Veijo Nivala); (4) "Contextual and Situational Perspectives on Leadership in Early Education Centres" (Kirsti Karila); (5) "Action Research in Early Childhood Settings throughout the World" (Jillian Rodd); (6) "Two Conceptions of Action Research: A Continuation of Traditional Social Research and a New, Critical Social Science" (Jouni Peltonen and Terhi Halonen); (7) "Leadership in Early Childhood in Australia: A National Review" (Manjula Waniganayake); (8) "An International Study of Leadership in Early Childhood: The Australian Perspective" (Manjula Waniganayake, Terry Nienhuys, Anthoula Kapsalakis, and Romana Morda); (9) "Leadership in Early Childhood in England: A National Review" (Jillian Rodd); (10) "Towards Understanding Leadership in the Context of Finnish Early Childhood" (Eeva Hujala, Kirsti Karila, Veijo Nivala, Anna-Maija Puroila); (11) "Peculiarities of Early Education Leadership in Russia (the Republic of Karelia)" (Olga Melnik and Olga Sizova); and (12) "Surveying Leadership in United States Early Care and Education: A Knowledge Base and Typology of Activity" (Catherine Rosemary, Kathleen Roskos, Christina Owendoff, and Colleen Olson). Each chapter contains references. (KB)

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TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTEXT

Cross-cultural perspectives

Edited by
EEVA HUJALA &
ANNA-MAIJA PUROILA

Early Childhood Education

ED 438 065

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E Scientiae Rerum Socialium 35

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TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTEXT

Cross-cultural perspectives

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Acta Univ. Oul. E 35, p 7-15

Introduction to ILP

Eeva Hujala & Anna-Maija Puroila

University of Oulu, Finland

1. Background

Questions connected with leadership have interested researchers from different fields for many decades. An abundance of approaches has been typical of leadership research. On the basis of the earlier studies and theory formulations, however, the picture of leadership as a phenomenon remains incoherent and unorganised. A further problem is that the earlier leadership research has provided no clear evidence of the role of substance in leadership. According to Sergiovanni (1994), leadership in educational environments lacks identity. This derives from the fact that the terminology and leadership models of business and politics have been applied to leadership in educational communities without modifications. As Sergiovanni (1994, 214) states:

> *" I believe that educational administration will remain characterless as long as it continues to import its mindscapes and models, concepts and definitions rather than inventing them. As long as it imports, educational administration will remain on the periphery of both social science and education, forever belonging to neither. You can't borrow the character, you have to create it"*

Generally, leadership research in the field of education has been connected with leadership in schools, while leadership research in day-care centres has been scarce. However, the interest in leadership in early childhood arose at the beginning of the 1990s in different parts of the world in response to several experts who emphasised leadership as a factor affecting the quality of early childhood education (Jorde-Bloom 1992, Rodd 1994). This was the stimulus for starting international co-operation concerning leadership research in the early childhood field in 1996. At the beginning, the International Leadership Project (ILP) was planned together with representatives from Finland, Great

Britain and Russia. After that, the project expanded to Australia and the USA. (Hujala *et al.* 1997.)

The cross-cultural orientation of the project derives from the theoretical approach that conceptualises leadership as a phenomenon tied to context and culture. Recently, it has been emphasised that the context of leadership has not been considered in educational leadership. (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, Klenke 1996). The international implementation of the project makes it possible to examine the inter-cultural similarities and differences of leadership phenomenon. From this point of view, leadership research can be seen as culturally oriented research. Furthermore, international co-operation between universities has increased remarkably during the last few years. Nowadays, mutual research projects are important strategies for the internationalisation of universities.

There were two main reasons for the selection of the researchers participating in the project. On the one hand, they represent different societies and cultures. The results of earlier cross-cultural studies (Hoot *et al.* 1996, Hujala-Huttunen 1996) in the field of early education have indicated some culturally different features between Finland, Russia and the USA. On the other hand, co-operation was planned on the basis of earlier connections between researchers from Finland, Australia, Great Britain, Russia and the USA (Hujala *et al.* 1997).

The theoretical framework of the project is the orientation of contextual growth (Hujala 1996, Hujala *et al.* 1998, see also Bronfenbrenner 1979) with Berger's and Luckman's (1966) theory on the social construction of reality and Gidden's (1984) structuration theory. Starting from this basis, leadership is conceptualised as situational, socially constructed, and interpretative phenomenon. From this perspective, leadership is not localised in the leader, but concerns the followers as well (Gronn & Ribbins 1996). In practice, this means that leadership is examined in relation to the day-care community and a wider social and cultural context.

The aim of the project is to examine the nature of leadership in early childhood as a contextual phenomenon starting from the premises of early education. Exploring the relationship between substance and leadership in daycare centres will help us to evaluate the extent to which research on leadership in schools and other communities can be utilized in early childhood. As soon as we are able to define the identity of leadership in early childhood education, early education research will probably have something more general to offer to leadership research and theories, for instance, in the form of a stimulus to paradigmatic considerations of leadership.

The specific aims of the project are:

1. To develop an understanding of cross-cultural perspectives on leadership
2. To develop a conceptual framework of leadership based on contextual elements in different societies
3. To develop cross-cultural methodologies for exploring leadership phenomenon

The project has theoretical and practical interests that support each other. On the theoretical level, the project aims to develop a conceptual framework of leadership based on contextual elements of different societies. A special challenge is to develop cross-cultural methodologies for exploring leadership phenomenon. The knowledge and material produced during the project can be utilised in developing the quality of leadership and professional work in day-care centres both nationally and internationally.

2. Implementation of the project

The project group of ILP consists of national research groups working in each participating country. The national groups bring their own cultural views and theoretical and methodological orientations to the international co-operation. The size and the structure of the national groups vary from country to country. For example, in Finland, Australia, and the USA, the research groups include the ILP researchers and graduate students. In Russia, the research group consists of researchers, teachers, and the rector of the university. The following table shows the national research groups of ILP.

Table 1. National research groups of ILP.

Country	University	Researchers
Australia	University of Melbourne	Manjula Waniganayake
		Terry Nienhuys
		Anthoula Kapsalakis
		Romana Morda
		Graduate student
Finland	University of Oulu	Eeva Hujala
		Anna-Maija Puroila
		Group of graduate students
	University of Lapland	Veijo Nivala
	University of Tampere	Kirsti Karila
		Isa Harisalo
		Group of graduate students
Great Britain	University of Plymouth	Jillian Rodd
Russia	Karelian State Pedagogical University, Petrozavodsk	Alexander Fyodorov
		Olga Melnik
		Olga Sizova
		Raisa Sudakova
		Anatoliy Britvikhin
USA	John Carroll University, Ohio	Catherine Rosemary
	Cuyahoga Community College, Ohio	Kathleen Roskos
		Colleen Olson
		Christina Owendoff

Shaping the national research groups for the implementation of the project has a dual significance. First, a strong national contribution brings a clear view of the national culture of each participating country to the international research project. Secondly, the wide participation utilises international research work and gives a perspective for evaluating the national leadership research in an international framework.

The first international meeting of the project occurred in Finland, April 1996, when researchers from Finland, Great Britain and Russia discussed international co-operation concerning leadership in the field of early education. Later, the project was planned and developed during the following international research visits and meetings:

- August 1996 Olga Melnik and Olga Samsonova in Kajaani, Finland
- August-October 1996 Catherine Rosemary in Oulu, Finland
- August-November 1996 Eeva Hujala and Veijo Nivala in Melbourne, Australia
- October 1996 Catherine Rosemary and Anna-Maija Puroila in Petrozavodsk, Russia
- October 1996 Kirsti Karila in Plymouth, Great Britain

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- May 1997 Manjula Waniganayake, Catherine Rosemary, Colleen Olson, Olga Melnik, and Olga Sizova in Oulu, Finland
- October 1997 Jillian Rodd in Cleveland, Ohio, USA
- November 1997 Eeva Hujala, Kirsti Karila, and Anna-Maija Puroila in Petrozavodsk, Russia
- March 1998 Alexander Fyodorov, Olga Melnik, and Raisa Sudakova in Oulu, Finland
- June 1998 Kirsti Karila in Melbourne, Australia

In addition to visits and mutual meetings, the researchers keep in contact via e-mail. Apart from personal e-mail addresses, the project has a mailing list address (leadersh@ed-tech.oulu.fi).

It is noteworthy that we see the nature of the project as a dynamic process. During the process, the project plan has changed and developed. The project is planned to progress through three phases. During the first phase, we are interested in surveying the different dimensions of the leadership field. In the second phase, we will examine the integration of these dimensions using the case study method. In the third phase, we are interested in developing the quality of leadership and early education in day-care centres. Table 2 shows the aims, research problems, and methods of each phase.

Table 2. Project proposal.

Phase	Goals	Problems	Methods	Data Collection
Phase 1.	a. To survey the field of leadership	What do leaders lead?	Job analysis of day care centre personnel	– Self-study reports – Observations – Interviews
	b. To survey the field of leadership	How do the leaders themselves define the leadership?	Study of subjective definitions of leaders	– Questionnaire
	c. To survey the field of leadership	How does the society regulate leadership?	Regulation study	– Written documents
Phase 2.	To examine leadership as a situational phenomenon	How is leadership constructed in the everyday life of the day care centre?	Case study	– Observations – Interviews – Written documents
Phase 3.	To develop leadership and the quality of early education	How is the quality of early education connected with the quality of leadership	Action research	– Training – Port folios – Diaries – Evaluation

Why do we need this kind of proposal? First, the project proposal makes the aims and the significance of the project visible. It highlights that the project makes it possible to develop the quality of early education in each country by helping to reflect, evaluate, and understand national educational culture in an international framework. Second, carrying out a broad international project requires resources. A carefully prepared proposal is useful when applying for funding for the project. For example, in Finland, the research group has received funding from the Finnish Academy and the EU for international co-operation and the implementation of the project (see Hujala *et al.* 1997).

Until now, we have worked with the first phase of the project at the national level. A special challenge will be to co-ordinate the research at the international level. The

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next step of the project will be to combine the national analyses. Manjula Waniganayake, who has received a grant to work in Finland for one year, will co-ordinate the analyses. We also plan to implement the project with the rarely used shared data idea, which means that all the data from all of the countries will be mutually available (Hujala *et al.* 1997). Utilising the shared data idea allows each researcher to choose a certain theme on the basis of his/her own expertise and interest. For example, the researchers from the USA are planning to utilise the existing data from the job analyses to examine the literacy activities in day-care centres.

3. Publication

This volume on leadership in early childhood is the first publication of the project. It is based on papers presented during the first mutual meeting of the international research group in Oulu (May 26-29th, 1997). The volume attempts to explore theoretical and methodological perspectives in researching leadership in educational organisations as well as to document the progress of the project.

The volume has two broad themes. Part I includes articles on theoretical and methodological issues, while part II discusses in detail the implementation of the ILP in the participating countries. In chapters 1. and 2., Eeva Hujala and Manjula Waniganayake discuss the problems, challenges, and methodological issues in cross-cultural research. In chapters 3. and 4., Veijo Nivala and Kirsti Karila present theoretical perspectives to leadership. The articles offer a conceptual framework of leadership based on contextual, situational, and interpretative approaches. Different paradigmatic ways of understanding leadership are presented in Nivala's article. In chapters 5. and 6., Jillian Rodd, Jouni Peltonen and Terhi Halonen discuss action research, a special methodological approach. Jouni Peltonen was invited to the seminar as a guest expert to comment on Jillian Rodd's paper on action research. As a result, two articles on action research are included in this publication.

In the six articles in part II, the discussion turns to cultural perspectives on leadership in the participating countries. The articles are written by the national research groups of the ILP, and they include national literature reviews on leadership and the preliminary findings of the first phases of the ILP.

The initial international research contacts of the project have indicated how necessary it is to know each other's terminology concerning the early education system. Appendices 1-5 consist of crucial concepts of early education used in participating countries.

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APPENDIX 1.

Early childhood programmes, 0-8 years, Finland.

Administration	Institution	Programme	Staff	Ratio
Ministry of social affairs and health	Day care centre, for 0-6 years	Centre based integated educare programmes	Director, 3 years/ University degree (from 1996) Director's assistant, one of the teachers Preschool teacher, 3 years/University Degree (from 1996) Nurse, 2 years/College Degree	0-3 years, 1:4 3-7 years: 1:7
	Family day care	Family day care programmes	Supervisor of family day care, 3 years/University Degree Family day care provider, 240 h Basic Training Course	1:4 plus 1 half-day-child
Ministry of Eduction	Preprimary school, for 6 years	Preschool	Preschool teacher, 3 years/University Degree (from 1996) School Teacher, 4 years/ University Degree	1:25
	Primary school, for 7-8 years	1. and 2. levels of primary school	School teacher, 4 years/ University Degree	

APPENDIX 2.

Early childhood programmes, 0-8 years, State of Victoria, Australia.

Administration	Institution	Programme	Staff	Staff: child ratio
Department of Community Services	– Child care centres (0-5 year olds) – Preschools (3-5 year olds)	Centre based integrated early childhood programs centre based programs, preparation for school	Centre director (2+yrs training) preschool teacher (3+yrs training) child care staff (untrained or 1+yrs training) + ancillary support staff (eg. cook) Preschool director (3+yrs training) and assistant (untrained or 1+yrs training). Extended day programs may have child care staff.	0-3 years: 1:5 3 + years: 1:15 3-5 years: 1:15
Department of Education	Primary schools (6+yrs)	School age programs	Prep grade or primary school teachers (3 years, early childhood training or primary training)	unspecified

Important: Please note that firstly, these descriptors refer only to the state of Victoria, and does not necessarily apply to the other 7 states/territories. Secondly, that these are the only programs/institutions which come under Victorian state licening regulations. We also have lots of family day care programs and school age care programs (eg. after school and holiday care) non of which are regulated, but do get funding from the national government. Early childhood graduates work in these programs also.

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APPENDIX 3.

Early childhood programmes, 0-8 years, England.

Administration	Institution	Programme	Staff	Ratio
Ministry of Education	Nursery schools (public and private) (3 to 4 years)	Educational focus with Desirable outcomes set as learning targets	Nursery teachers (4 years/university) and nursery nurses (2years/Further Education College)	1 to 23 for teaching (1 to 13 overall)
	Nursery classes (for 3 to 4 year olds attached to primary schools)	Educational focus with Desirable outcomes set as learning targets	Nursery teachers and nursery nurses	I to 23 for teaching (I to 13 overall)
	Reception classes (4 and 5years olds in primary schools)	Introduction to formal schooling and the National Curriculum	Primary teachers (4 years/university)	I to 30/40
Department of Social Services	Day nurseries (public and private) (0-5 years)	Child care service (with public sevices emphasising the care and protection of vulnerable children)	Nursery nurses	Recommended I to 5 (2-5 years)
	Combined nursery centres (O- 5 years)	Combination of care and education	Nursery teachers and nursery nurses	1 to 3 (Children with special needs) I to 2 (0-2 years)
	Childminders (0-5 years)	Child care service	Women at home with short vocational training	1 to 3 under 5 years including own children
	Pre-schools (formerly Playgroups, private and public, affiliated with the Pre-School Learning Alliance {PLA}) 2.5 to 5 years	Loosely modelled on nursery education	Play leaders, PLA trained	1 to 8

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APPENDIX 4.

Early childhood programmes, 0-8 years, Russia.

Administration	Institution	Programme	Staff	Ratio
Ministry of Education of the Republic of Karelia	Preschool Education institution	Kindergarten programme, for 3-6 years	Leader, University Degree 5 years	2:10 (2-18 months) 2:15 (1,5-3 years)
		Nursery school programme, for 0-3 years	Senior teacher, University Degree 5 years Teachers; teacher of art etc., college 3 years or University Degree 5 years Medical nurse, College Degree 3 years SERVICE Staff: assistant teachers, cooks, medical workers etc.	2:20 (3-4 years) 2:25 (5-6,7 years)

APPENDIX 5.

Early childhood programmes, 0-8 years, USA.

Administration	Type of program	Education of staff	Ratio
Department of Human Services	Child care centers	Administrator-2 years college or 18 college credit hours and 2 years of experience Teacher-45 clock hours of training in early childhood education	6 wks-12 months 1:5 12-18 months 1:6 18-30 months 1:7 30-36 months 1:8 36-48 months 1:12 48-60 months 1:14
	Family child care homes	No requirements for caregiver If more than 6 children the caregiver is required to have 45 clock hours of training in early childhood education	1:6 1:7+
Department of Education	Preschool programs	Teacher-2-4 year degree in early childhood with Pre-k certification	Same ratios as child care centers
	Kindergarten-5 year olds	Teacher-4 year college degree	Local district decision
	Primary school-6, 7, 8 year olds	Teacher-4 year college degree	Local district decision

Note: The descriptors refer to public vs. private early childhood programs. Specific regulations vary from state to state. The education qualifications and staff-child ratios refer to Ohio and are considered representative of public-funded programs nationwide.

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Part I:
Theoretical and methodological issues

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Acta Univ. Oul. E 35, p 19-31

Problems and challenges in cross-cultural research

Eeva Hujala

University of Oulu

"We are not aware of our own culture unless we come in contact with another one"

(Triandis 1994, p 3)

Abstract

This article discusses the nature and meaning of cross-cultural studies within educational research. Cross-cultural research embraces a number of different comparative research in which the involvement of the researcher and the involvement of the research target vary. In Safari-research, the researcher is as an outsider acquainted with a culture, and thus it is always in some extent questionable whether the culture really becomes understood. Comprehending cultural research requires researchers from different cultures to share the research process. Although methodological problems in cultural research are mainly the same as in any other research, cultural research has its own particular challenges and problems to solve. Problems in comparative research, which the researcher must acknowledge and find a solution for, are sampling problems, ethnocentrism, relativity and equivalence concerning research material, and practical and administrative problems of shared cultural research in general. However, a real understanding between different cultures can be achieved only by shared research projects, which arise from each culture's own terms and the results of which can be evaluated only through each culture's own frame of reference.

Keywords: culture, cross-cultural research, comparative research, early childhood education

1. Cross-cultural research

Cross-cultural research has traditionally focused on two areas. The first area is cultural comparisons, in which two or more cultural groups are studied focusing on variables of interest. The second area is the study of acculturation, in which the focus is on the culture change of individuals and groups as two diverse cultures meet (Kurtz-Costes *et al.* 1997).

"Culture" as a concept has hundreds of definitions. In most definitions, culture refers to values, traditions, behaviours, and beliefs which are characteristic of a particular group of people. Definitions have been created as tools for specific research purposes and political decision making, or to describe people's everyday activities and habits. Eckermann (1994) has studied the interdependence of culture, society, and education, and uses the term "culture" to describe a specific way of organising people's lives. It includes institutions and social relationships in a society. Eckermann (1994) visualises relationships between culture and society as a cake. Culture represents the ingredients and society represents the shape, structure, and form. In this paper, I use the term "culture" to represent the context where people live and the stimuli which people are influenced by, and which they, as actors, further shape. Culture is developed by society, formed by people in history and today. It is a combination of social habits and their interpretation, as well as knowledge and world views. People, as active individuals, form a society, the functioning of which is based on cultural models and patterns of behaviour.

Cultural comparative studies have typically been driven by two seemingly opposing purposes. On the one hand, some of these studies have sought to identify universals in human behaviour, thus attempting to establish that the research results from one cultural group hold true for other groups. Conversely, other cultural comparative research programs have deliberately sought to identify and explain phenomena that vary across cultures (Berry *et al.*1992, Kurtz-Costes *et al.* 1997). Researching education as a phenomenon considers both purposes important. There are plenty of issues that relate to all people. On the other hand, education is always contextual; it reflects the particular culture where it is happening and similarly it affects the further construction of a culture.

2. Do we need cross-cultural research?

In broad terms, the way we look at education both on national and on international levels is always culturally bound and its comparison is always cross-cultural. It is cross-cultural in the sense that every child brings his/her own life and culture to educational settings, and so the child's culture will pass into the educative interaction between adult and child. The tasks of comparative research in education can be seen in quite the same as any other type of educational research:

a) to investigate culturally connected socialisation processes
b) to test theoretical models and
c) to test methodological issues.

Traditionally, cross-cultural, international, comparative research in education has tried to seek out and analyse good education practices in other countries and tried to relate the findings to the researcher's own situation. The transfer of these results has many

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problems. It requires a thorough understanding of the conditions where the researched society has delivered those "good practices". A country's education system at any time is influenced, in its structure and nature, by its history, politics, characteristics, and values and beliefs of its people. Educational practices are an integral part of the societal system, and they can be understood only as a part of the whole. (Nikandrov 1989, Phillips 1989).

Comparative research in education should take into account the historical, political, and cultural settings and aspects of particular systems. It is only through analysis and understanding of the roots that feed educational systems that we can arrive at a proper understanding of why things are as they are and avoid the pitfalls of too great concentration on description and measurement of perceived outcomes. Outcomes themselves should not be seen in isolation from the processes that have produced them (Phillips 1989).

From a cultural perspective, one of the main challenges in comparative research is to investigate those cultural, social, ecological, and economical variables that influence human growth. In building a theory of education, comparative research, which is based on societal variables, helps us to find out and understand how human growth and behaviour, and the cultural setting around us, are connected to each other. All kinds of cross-cultural interactions put other cultures in perspective, and provide a better understanding of education in different societies. In addition, it presents knowledge from other societies, and helps to analyse our own culture more broadly and deeply than before.

3. Methodology in cross-cultural research

One point of view regarding the nature of methodology used in cross-cultural research is that all research is international in meaning and there are no national borders in science and research work. Politically defined national borders do not define research borders. Qvortrup (1989) says that all research work is somehow comparative and that there is no difference in the theoretical level if the research is implemented by national or international forums. However, Triandis (1994) stresses that training in research and methods are culture bound. Ethical issues in a society also determine the orientation in the implementation of research (Fyodorov 1996). On the one hand, it is easy to agree that all cultures or societies have their own way of explaining human nature, and the ontology and epistemology of knowledge. On the other hand, world wide research interaction has led researchers to transform information and ways of thinking about research to match their own perspective without any criticism. Triandis (1994) gives examples of this and states, for instance, that the western world has created the culture of research and the methodological concepts. My point of view is that although the subjects and topics in educational research are always contextually and culturally based, scientific thinking and reasoning are world wide forces.

Gerber *et al.* (1995) implemented an international survey asking 22 researchers from 13 countries to share their experiences of research methods used in their field. The research concentrated especially on investigating what researchers from different countries believed qualitative research to be in their own educational context. It was surprising to notice in their results that researchers from different cultural backgrounds saw research methods in the same way. According to the respondents of this study, qualitative research

concentrates on investigating the content of the phenomena, while quantitative research focuses on well defined concepts and tries to find numerical indicators of these concepts. Respondents emphasised that most concepts used in educational research are culturally based and best reached by methods focusing on the cultural content of the surrounding reality. In this study, there were seven aspects of qualitative research agreed to by all members of this international research group. It showed that scientific research itself is not culturally bound, but the phenomena which are studied are connected to society as well as to the researchers who view the phenomena.

Little is written in handbooks of educational research about methodology and methods of cultural comparative research. In the 1990's, world wide journals like "Comparative Education" and "Comparative Education Review" have not given much emphasis to articles concerning methodological questions relating specifically to comparative research. The main focus of the articles is on empirical results and in the discussion of the results from the point of view of a particular society. I agree that these high quality articles are important and challenging for modern education around the world to provide a broader view of educational phenomena. But the growing development of international and cross-cultural research requires more careful consideration of its methodology.

Bak (1989) has written about methodological issues from the point of view of her own experiences in international research work. She has been the co-ordinator of a large, cross-cultural family project in Europe. On the theoretical level, she has written an analysis of how organising data collection procedures and implementing research influence the kind of data that is produced. Bak (1989) quotes Stein Rokkan, who has developed a typology for gathering information and data analysis across a number of distinct cultures, societies or nations based on the cross-classification of two major organisational dimensions. The dimensions are the number of nations from which or about which data is gathered, and the number of countries participating in research.

Table 1. Organisation of the comparative research: The co-operative model (Bak 1989).

Involved in the organisation of the study	Sites or units of study	
	One nation	Several nations
One nation	I Single nation	II Centralised crossnational study
Several nations	III Co-operative international research in one nation	IV Co-operative crossnational study

From the perspective of the cross-national discussion, only models II and IV are relevant. Model II, which is named "Safari"-research, refers to the kind of social research in which one researcher or national research team travels to a number of countries to collect data, sometimes with the help of local experts, sometimes without, and then returns home to compare and analyse the results without any further discussion with, or feedback to, the countries concerned. The advantages of this method of research organisation are of course numerous: the conception of the problem and the theoretical

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frame and analysis are made by one person or national research team and thus do not have to contain any cultural compromises.

Most "Safari" research in early childhood is based on study trips for the purposes of acquainting oneself with early childhood systems in other countries. A researcher visits a certain country and writes a narrative about a certain topic concerning childhood issues in that country. This kind of international orientation is very common, especially among the USA researchers and educators, for example, during presentation at ACEI conferences. An example of implementation of model II research involves a member of our research team. An early childhood project implemented in Namibia was researched by Nivala (1994) without visiting that country. The interpretation of collected data was based on consulting people who had worked in Namibia for years. My own involvement in the cross-cultural research project co-ordinated by Hoot (Hoot *et al.* 1996) was implemented according to model II. The aim of the research was to compare how parents, teachers and administrators think about developmentally appropriate practices in centres. In that research, the study plan, the instruments, and the strategy for data analysis were made and organised in the USA. The main responsibility in Finland was to deliver the questionnaires. In the USA-Russia-Finland -comparative study, which I was responsible for conducting, there were some elements from model II but the majority of its elements were from model IV. The main task in that project was to compare early childhood programs, their content and implementation as well as parents' and teachers' satisfaction with the programs. In that research, I made the proposal, but my international colleagues and I built the instruments and gathered the data together. In the USA, I wanted to integrate my project with the ongoing project in order to get better possibilities for comparison, but it was not easy because of different research orientations. During that time I wanted to find a more qualitative orientation. All the projects at the department of psychology where I worked were very committed to quantitative methods.

Model IV is a co-operative model, which involves international co-operation at each step in the research process. The conception of the problem and the construction of the research instruments are based on results of discussions between several national research teams.

Basun project in the Nordic countries (Dencik *et al.* 1989) represents model IV, in which all the participants worked in co-operation from the beginning of the project. The aim of the project was to view modern childhood and its realisation in different environments. Although the data was collected nationally according to mutually agreed principles, the data analysis was based on the shared data idea. This meant that representatives of each country were responsible for a certain problem and its analysis, using data collected in all of the different countries. The Nordic researchers together validated the final analysis.

The research project in which I was involved, co-ordinated by Professor Cochran (1993), was implemented according to the ideas from model IV. There were 29 researchers from different countries collecting data within their own societies for case studies concerning connections between the day care program and the society within which it operated. Preliminary analysis concerning data collected from all countries was done by one researcher. After that analysis, the preliminary findings were processed together, reviewed and corrected, and agreed to by all researchers in the project.

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Bak (1989) uses the Vienna study, "Changes in the life patterns of families in Europe," as a model of cross-national study. In that study, data collection was conducted by national teams in their own countries, using one common research instrument. Interpretation and analysis was done nationally as well as internationally. Bak (1989) describes the organisational model of this Vienna project as decentralised collective research. She emphasises that the project was democratic and egalitarian. All the participants had the same rights and opportunities to influence and steer the research process.

In our International Leadership Project (Hujala *et al.* 1997), although the first steps were taken by Finnish researchers, the aim is to construct together a research project according to the ideas of model IV. The prerequisites for the implementation of model IV are that all participants feel equally committed to the research process at all levels. They know that they can influence the guidelines and strategies of the implementation and thus, they feel like leaders of the project.

4. Problems and solutions in conducting cross-cultural research

We all know that in any kind of research there are many difficult questions to answer and many problems to solve during the whole process. Both in national and international research work, most of the problems are the same, but in cross-cultural work there are more specific problems that are peculiar to this type of comparative research. Especially acute are sampling problems, ethnocentrism, problems concerning research materials and practical, administrative problems (Berry *et al* 1992, Kurtz-Costes 1997, Segall *et al.* 1990).

4.1. Sampling problems

In most cross-cultural studies, "culture" is used as an independent variable. In these studies, national political borders have defined the samples. The main danger with this approach is that the subject samples may differ from one another in more ways than the researcher intends. In one of my earlier cross-cultural studies (Hoot *et al.* 1996), in which we wanted to investigate teachers' views about developmentally appropriate practises guiding early learning in day care centres in Finland and the USA, there was a sample imbalance of this nature. In our study, the use of society as an independent variable was misleading, because the groups differed from each other in background variables. Finnish teachers had more training compared to the USA teachers (Hujala-Huttunen 1996). The differences found in teachers' thinking could be explained by the difference in teachers' training backgrounds rather than in the cultural thinking in a certain society (Hoot *et al.* 1996). Kurtz-Costes *et al.* (1997) emphasise that cultural comparisons can be useful and meaningful when researchers focus on a specific variable that is known to differ across cultural groups. In the case of leadership, differences between societies has been clearly shown in previous research. I found in my international study that early education practises, as well as centre management, differed quite a lot in Finland, the USA and Russia (Hujala-Huttunen 1996). Later, as we got to know Australian leadership research

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(Rodd 1994), it offered a number of new dimensions on leadership. The focus for the cross-cultural study is not only to determine differences or similarities in leadership across countries, but also to find out variations in leadership phenomena, using a sample larger than one nation or one culture. This information gives a broader framework to leadership and so it helps us to understand the profile of our own national leadership.

In cultural comparative investigations, sample selection is one of the major problems that researchers confront at the beginning of data collection. Comparable samples in different societies can be impossible to find. In our leadership project, day-care organisations differ between countries, and thus also the personnel groups that put the work into effect proved to be different. Although in all the societies a group of teacher assistants was working in the day-care centres, their status and education was dissimilar. The biggest sample selection problem arose in Russia, where a group of leader assistants work in day-care centres, and yet this category cannot be found in any other society. Likewise, selection of a sample with similar education proved to be impossible, because in the Finnish day-care system, personnel responsible for the children must have a pedagogical education, a requirement the day-care staff in the USA do not necessarily require.

4.2. Ethnocentrism

A second potential pitfall in cross-cultural research is the danger of ethnocentrism. Whether researchers begin with the goal of finding universals or of pinpointing differences in behaviour, their work usually originates in one cultural setting. That is, researchers generally begin a project with knowledge of what constitutes "normal" behaviour in one culture and take their expectations and presumptions with them to other cultural settings.

Berry (1989) has written about the problem of ethnocentrism in cross-cultural research. He examines ethnocentrism using the terms emic and etic. These terms were originally employed by the anthropologist Pike in 1954 (Berry 1989). These neologisms reflect concepts long used in linguistics to indicate the differences between phonemics (the study of sounds whose meaning-bearing roles are unique to a particular language) and phonetics (the study of universal sounds used in human language, their particular meanings aside). In the study of behavior, emic and etic should be thought of as designating two different viewpoints and level of analysis. The etic viewpoint studies behaviour from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint stems from studying behaviour from inside the system. Berry (1989) examines the research process starting from the point of view that all research must begin somewhere (Fig. 1).

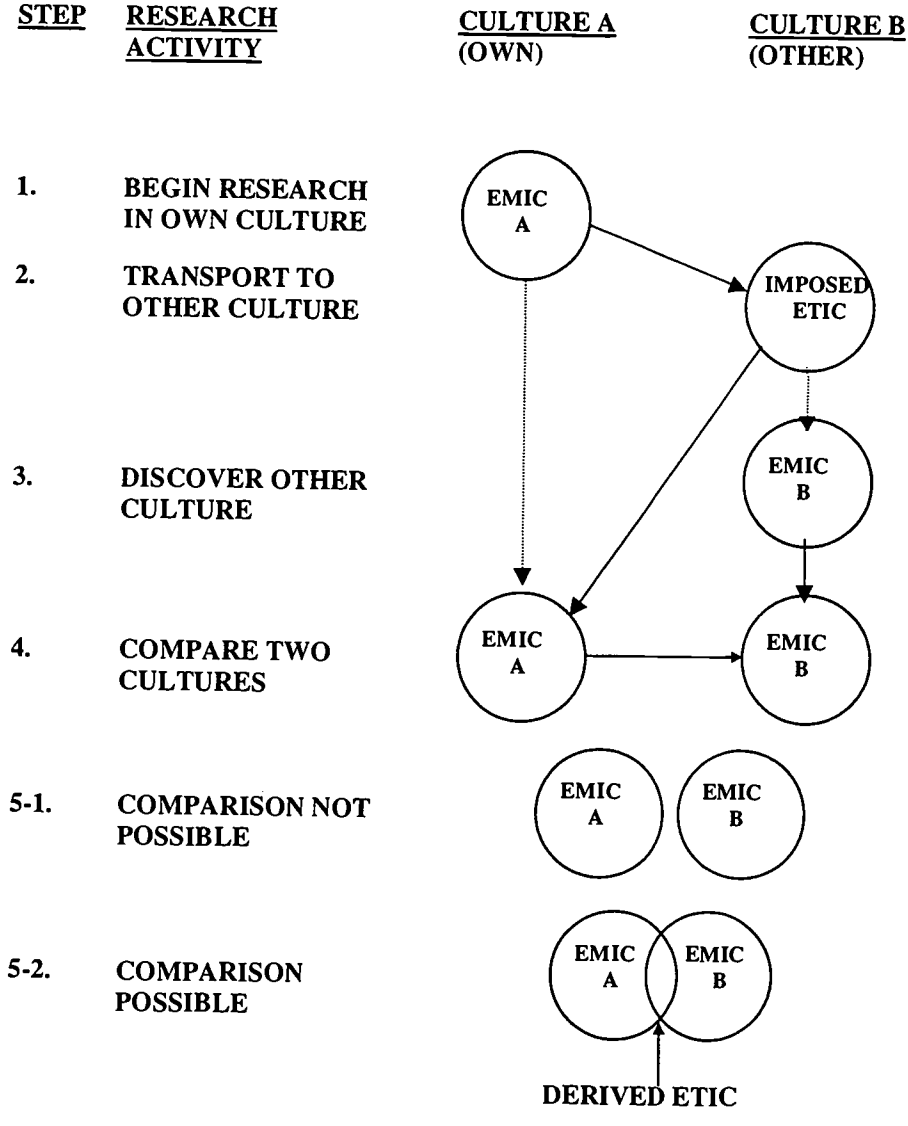

Fig. 1. Steps in operationalizing emics and etics (Berry *et al.* 1989).

Berry (1989) describes five steps in a research project, as shown on Figure 1. The initial step is usually taken armed with a concept or instrument rooted in the researcher's own culture - one that is really an emic concept or instrument of that culture (step 1 - emic A). Step 2 shows that the concept, or instrument, is brought to another culture from outside and used as if it was etic in two senses. Firstly, it is assumed by the researcher to be a valid basis for studying a phenomenon in another culture. Secondly, it is assumed by the researcher to be a valid basis for comparing the phenomenon in the two cultures. Berry has called such a concept or instrument an imposed etic. Obviously, there is great risk in using an imposed etic, since there would be no way of knowing whether it made any sense to use it in any culture other than the original one. Berry advocates that the researcher working in an alien culture strives (through, for example, participant observation and other ethnographic methods) to grasp local points of view in an effort to attain emic knowledge. Berry states that by bringing together the investigator's own emic, and the alien culture's emic, and seeking the features that they have in common, the investigator might then emerge with what is called a derived etic. (Berry 1989, Segall *et al.* 1990). But if there is no commonality in emic A and emic B, the comparison is not possible.

Emic and etic orientations do not form a dichotomy, as both approaches are of value. Emic and etic data often present the same data from two points of view. Berry (1989) emphasises that the choice of a particular emic-etic orientation has consequences for the way the research process is conducted. These consequences become manifest in the choice of theories, methods, and objectives of the investigation. In our project, the standpoint is ecological theory, which stresses contextual and situational aspects of behaviour. Berry (1989) also stresses that each behaviour system should be understood in its own terms. Each aspect of behaviour must be viewed in relation to its behaviour setting (ecological, cultural, and social background). Phenomena and aspects of behaviour occurring in differing settings are comparable only when they can be shown to be functionally equivalent. When the settings are functionally equivalent, then a comparative descriptive framework, valid for both behaviour settings, can be generated from internal description of behaviour within each setting. The phenomenon that is being researched in this project, leadership in the context of early childhood, is functionally equivalent in all the different cultures. It regulates the implementation of the program in the centre, but the nature and method of the leader's work is determined culturally. The purpose of our project is to determine how leadership is materialised in different cultures, the issues that regulate the process of materialisation, and the quality of day-care produced by this type of leadership.

4.3. Relativity or equivalence

A third potential problem for cultural comparisons concerns the equivalence of research materials across groups. One potential problem is language. If research participants speak different languages, verbal research materials must be translated. We know that trying to note one-to-one correspondence across two languages is not easy. Often, an exact equivalent of a verbal expression does not exist in a second language. Or if it exists, it might carry different nuances than in the first language. Also, in the different political

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structures, the terms day-care, kindergarten, and pre-school have different meanings. For example, in Europe, "kindergarten" usually means daycare centre. In Finland, it is specifically targeted at children ranging in ages between 1 to 6 years. In the USA, "kindergarten" is a part of the school system targeted for children one year before compulsory school. In Australia, though the kindergarten year is targeted for children one year before school, it is not necessarily part of the educational system.

Translation of data and analysis from one language to another is problematical. In my USA, Russia, and Finland (Huttunen 1993) comparative study, I asked parents and teachers to rank the daily activities that they would like to emphasise for children in centres. In the questionnaire, I chose eleven different activities to be selected. Those eleven activities were chosen according to observations made in Finnish and American centres. The activities were first designated in English and then translated into Finnish. Later, the questionnaire was translated from English into Russia by my Russian colleague. The translation into Russian was then double-checked by a Finnish speaking Russian teacher. She used the Finnish questionnaire as a basis for her translation. When I analysed the data collected from parents and teachers I realised that there must be something wrong in the translation, because one item in the Russian data, "little chores", was systematically different from the data in Finland and in the USA (see Table 2).

Table 2. Parents' assessment about important and unimportant day care activities in the USA, Russia, and Finland (Huttunen 1993).

Important (%)				Unimportant (%)		
USA	Russia	Finland		USA	Russia	Finland
81.5	88.2	54.8	Outdoor activities	4.4	1.9	12.1
17.3	35.3	13.9	Games	36.8	11.1	47.3
55.6	40.6	55.7	Self-choice activities	16.2	18.5	14.3
42.0	*4.1 !*	46.1	Little chores	17.6	79.0	23.1
55.6	51.8	39.1	Guided activities	20.6	8.6	22.0
14.8	10.6	30.4	Field trips	41.2	60.5	36.3
34.6	50.0	34.8	Arts and crafts	14.7	12.3	8.8
35.8	51.2	42.6	Music	17.6	8.0	17.6
16.0	73.5	20.9	Physical education	50.0	1.2	34.1
65.4	41.9	66.1	Drawing and painting	2.9	12.3	5.5
49.4	38.8	45.2	Storytime	10.3	6.8	8.8
22.2	19.4	40.9	Creative dramatics	50.0	50.6	20.9

Finnish and US parents, as well as teachers in both countries, indicated that "little chores", or work education, was important in programs, but Russian teachers and parents did not emphasise it at all. I wondered why, because work education has traditionally been important in Russian day care centres. The reason was that in Russia, "little chores" was translated as "singing in small groups". This happened even after double checking the translation!

In our ongoing IL-project (Hujala *et al.* 1997), when we translated Jillian Rodd's questionnaire into Finnish and Russian, we experienced difficulty in reaching an agreement about meanings and ideas in a questionnaire designed according to Australian

leadership culture in centres. We understood the words used in the questionnaire, and yet it was difficult to translate the concept that was investigated in the preliminary research form. It was difficult for us Europeans to apprehend the ecology of the leadership culture in Australia, and to share the thinking created in this context. The terms director, leader, manager, and co-ordinator were quite confusing, because they were based on a different paradigm of leadership culture which had different meaning across societies. Translation in comparative study is not only translating the words. The challenge is to try to achieve a good balance between instruments and the subject-in-context in a particular culture.

4.4. Practical, administrative problems

In addition to the theoretical and methodological problems in cross-cultural research, researchers who work in various societies and different research cultures have many problems that members of the international research group have confronted. The main problems are in the resources for international research co-operation. Today, all universities emphasise international co-operation, but their readiness to implement it does not match the rhetoric! For example, although the University of Oulu and the Karelian State Pedagogical University have agreed to co-operate, the researchers, especially in Russia, have not received enough possiblities to implement the project. Although universities have new and innovative ideas, the ideas are often overruled by the old organisations and structures, and thus get no support.

Another problem is the different research cultures that determine the work in the research project. Although the rules for science are basically the same, each research society has its own research culture, research issues, and national regulations that are considered as central. During the Finnish researchers' visit to the University of Melbourne, the ethics committee of the university was a very interesting experience. It plays a key role in determining the nature of research that is conducted by its academic staff. In Melbourne, the fieldwork for the project was not possible until the ethics committee gave permission to proceed with the project. In Finland, the responsibility for research ethics is given collectively to the whole research group. In Finnish research culture, we emphasise working together as a research group, which consists of students and professional researchers, so that all of the guidelines for practical work are made together.

Communication and co-ordination of a group from many countries and universities is time consuming and complicated. Although new telematic systems make the connections easier than before, the cultural and language problems are always present. They are at the same time problematic and challenging. One challenge is to examine together how we can create for our group a discussion culture using the telematic networking system. Meetings are always beneficial, but long distances and expense make it impossible to meet regularly and often.

5. Challenges for cross-cultural research

The main goals of early childhood education research are to strengthen its theoretical basis and to create a sound base for early childhood education practice. In the international leadership project, the focus is on the contextual theory of the leaders' work as well as the work of the staff. Using cross-cultural research designs to study early childhood culture and leadership will enable the cultural connection between behaviour and settings to become more visible. This gives us a basis to analyse the cultural connections between education and its settings.

The methodological challenge is to reach "cultural truth" by working through a particular culture in its own terms. This requires producing data from each culture about its own terms and notions. Ready-made measurements and scales do not work without being validated separately in each culture. One method that could be used in cross cultural research is triangulation. The phenomenon is examined from several points of view by using different methods of data collection and analysis. Even more important than the number of different data collection methods is the participation of the researchers representing different culture; their participation in the planning and implementation of the research, development of the research methods, and analysis and reporting, hold the key to effective research development. A prerequisite for understanding culturally bound issues is to come up with a phenomenon which is researched as a culturally shared research process.

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Cross-cultural methodologies in early childhood education

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of contemporary literature on cross-cultural studies in early childhood. The discussion is based on 60 documents published over a ten year period, including books, research articles, papers written about study tours and those based on personal reflections on various aspects of diverse cultural contexts. Problems of methodology and gaps in theoretical advancement based on comparative studies are highlighted. Strategies to overcome dilemmas of comparison in cross-cultural research is presented for further discussion and debate.

Keywords: cross-cultural studies, early chidhood, review

1. Importance of cross-cultural research in early childhood

All research have a purpose. Research may be undertaken by a student as a part of fulfilling the requirements of a particular course of study. Governments may commission research to assess the impact of public policies and programs either before or after the implementation of a particular program. An individual may undertake research to test a particular hypothesis or theory or raise awareness in an area where there is limited understanding. Whether it is an individual's personal motivation or a group investigation, the search for new knowledge and understanding are the key drivers of research development. This search will be coloured by aspects such as the researcher's beliefs, theoretical orientation as well as resource availability (including time and funds) to manage the project. Comparative research or cross-cultural research offers one of the best means of exploring cultural diversity in early childhood across and within various societal contexts.

The term 'cross-national research' is used more specifically when comparing issues in two or more countries.

Cross-cultural research may be defined as research which is based on two or more cultures. It is different from any other type of research because of its focus on the impact of culture, as against other variables such as physical, historical, economic or political factors. It is sometimes described as 'comparative research' as it is concerned with isolating common patterns by comparing and contrasting various phenomenon in a variety of cultures. In essence, however, cross-cultural research "involves a different orientation toward research more than it means applying a specialised set of techniques" (Neuman 1991,407). Such an orientation allows the researcher to develop a more expansive world view when considering future directions in education.

It is generally acknowledged that cross-cultural research is "more difficult, more costly and more time consuming than research that is not" (Neuman 1991, 397). Historically, cross-cultural research has been generally equated with the work of Anthropologists interested in studying the cultural mores of isolated "primitive" people in remote parts of the world. These studies show that it takes time to adjust to a life in an unfamiliar cultural context where the researcher has limited resources and where difficulties in both spoken and unspoken communication may be compounded by differing expectations of interpersonal contact. Establishing the boundaries of study is problematic (for example, do you define a culture on the basis of citizenship, geography, language or religion) and the absence of cultural equivalents in certain behaviour or concepts can also impede research design, fieldwork and analysis.

Nevertheless, from the onset, cross-cultural research allow us to improve research design, measurement and conceptualisation by forcing the researcher to ask questions which test the validity of the range of variables being studied across two or more cultures (Neuman 1991, 396). This inbuilt quality control mechanism is one of its strongest features. This also enhances theory building and expansion as it "can eliminate or offer alternative explanations for causal relationships" (Neuman 1991, 397) by testing the same phenomenon within a variety of cultural contexts.

Welch (1993,19) however, has expressed concern that cross-cultural researchers who are driven by the method or technique of study "distorts the "object" of study". He adds, "For real understanding to occur, it is argued, other cultures cannot simply be seen as objects, to be "known", controlled and manipulated." Accordingly, researchers must be cautious in defining the aims and purposes of their research. It is a nonsense to believe that cultures are value free and therefore can be objectified. Rather, the emphasis should be on establishing mutual understanding through open-dialogue, for there are no "absolute answers" (Welch 1993, 22). Application requires appropriate adjustments to match contemporary contexts in any given environment.

There is unanimous agreement amongst researchers about the benefits of doing cross-cultural research (from here on referred to as CCR) in early childhood. The approaches adopted by researchers examined in this paper show that CCR can

- be "a point of reference to analyse our own systems, its values, beliefs and norms" (Huttunen, 1993, iii);
- provide "straightforward new knowledge" about diverse cultures, giving an insight into patterns and issues which are not so obvious unless there is comparative material (David 1993,1);

- enhance our understanding of cultural diversity by enabling us to view a range of variables and processes which cannot be easily studied under formal laboratory conditions (Crahay 1995, and Kamerman & Kahn 1995);
- create a "broader appreciation of the role that early childhood programmes play in a particular society." (Carlson 1993,24)

It is also recognised that "looking beyond national boundaries is a vital ingredient in early years teacher education" (David 1993,6). Improved awareness and better understanding of diversity within and across cultures are necessary prerequisites in the development of better quality programs for children and families.

Those undertaking CCR, by its very nature, must operate within a comparative framework, aware that from the start there is more than one frame of reference, world view, within which the search for explanations will take place. The extent to which one could prepare and plan ahead for the forthcoming "culture shock", is difficult to predict. There is real excitement in the shock or the surprise in finding something significantly similar or different between two or more cultures. The greater the difference in cultural contexts, the bigger the sense of excitement in finding something similar.

For the outsider, the associations, whether they are similarities or differences with her/his own culture may at first seem more marked. The search for answers to explain the meaning and reasoning for such differences/similarities can bring forth new ways of understanding one's own culture. Trying to explain to an outsider "why you do what you do", can be a challenge in itself as it makes one question so much of the taken for granted assumptions about one's own culture. This may open new avenues of self discovery for the informant as well as the researcher. It is a two way learning process. That is, CCR is dynamic and vibrant because of its diversity and its inbuilt capacity for teaching and learning at the same time.

2. Review of existing literature on CCR in early childhood

For the purposes of writing this paper, a random sample of cross-cultural publications published during the ten years between 1986 and 1996 was selected. It consisted of a total of 60 documents, which were then categorised as books (n = 10 or 17%), research documents including journal articles, book chapters and conference papers (n = 21 or 35%), papers based on study tours or visits to a particular country (n = 11 or 18%) and papers based on self reflections of an author(s) on a variety of issues including cross-cultural methodology and policy overviews (n = 18 or 30%). It is difficult to assess the extent to which these 60 documents are a representative sample of cross-cultural publications relevant to early childhood education. By evaluating the content of these documents, it was possible to (i) identify some common concerns and approaches adopted by early childhood researchers interested in cross-cultural matters, and (ii) to ascertain the nature of research methodologies currently being utilised in the field.

2.1. Books

The ten books included in this review show that one of the most common ways of documenting cross-cultural variability is to get writers from particular countries to describe and/or analyse developments in early childhood in his/her own country. These insider presentations of country case studies formed the basis of the majority of books in this literature sample. Table 1 illustrates the types of countries which were generally selected for inclusion in books comparing early childhood studies from an international perspective. The two most extensive volumes included in this review were edited by Cochran (1993) whose book covered 29 countries and Woodill *et al.* (1992) collection of papers based on 45 countries. As Cochran (1993,2) puts it, clearly the basic purpose of books such as these was "to serve as a library resource". They demonstrate unambiguously that early childhood policies and practices are "intimately tied to that unique combination of broader cultural, historical, political, economic and social dynamics that defines the given society" (Cochran 1993,1).

Table 1. Selection of countries represented in books published on CCR in early childhood during 1986-96.

	Chan (N=23)	Cochran (N=29)	David (N=8)	Hujala N=11)	Kamerman *et al.* (N=7)	Lamb *et al.* (N=8)	Melhuish *et al.* (N=5)	Olmsted *et al.* (N=11)	Tobin *et al.* (N=3)	Woodill *et al.* (N=45)	Total
Asia/Middle East											
China	x	x				x		x	x	x	5
Hongkong	x							x		x	3
India	x	x								x	3
Israel	x	x				x			x	x	4
Japan	x	x				x				x	5
Malaysia		x						x		x	2
Thailand	x										2
Afrika											
Kenya		x								x	2
Nigeria								x		x	2
South Africa	x	x								x	3
Sudan	x									x	2
America											
Brazil		x				x				x	3
Canada		x		x		x				x	4
USA	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Pacific											
Australia	x	x		x		x				x	5
New Zeland	x			x						x	3
Europe											
Belgium	x	x	x		x			x		x	4
Denmark	x	x	x		x		x				4
France	x	x	x		x					x	6
Finland		x		x	x		x	x		x	5
Germany	x	x	x		x			x		x	7
Hungary		x								x	2
Italy	x	x	x		x	x		x		x	7
Netherlands	x			x		x				x	4
Poland	x	x									2
Spain	x		x					x		x	4
Sweden	x	x	x	x		x	x				6
UK	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	9

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Books edited by David (1993) and Melhuish and Moss (1990) focus on policy developments, and are similar in format to Cochran (1993) but cover only a small number of countries (ie, 8 and 5 respectively). In contrast, the inclusion of countries from all over the world, particularly from the African and Asian continents, makes Cochran (1993) and Woodill *et al.* (1992) far more internationally representative, especially compared to similar books that were published in the 70s and 80s. Nevertheless, Table 1 illustrates clearly that input from writers from Asia, Middle East, Africa, Pacific and South American nations have so far received limited coverage in cross-cultural publications on early childhood. It appears that writers from Northern European countries and the USA tend to control the editorial and content matters of these publications. Perhaps this was a reflection of the improved documentation and reporting available in these countries (Kamerman & Kahn 1995,22) and the expertise these authors have accumulated through cross-cultural collaboration and networking over many years.

Lamb *et al*'s (1992) book which covers 18 countries in five continents tend to follow the conventional country profile approach but with a slight variation. It differs because of the inclusion of summative commentaries collated under various geographical regions, and these have been written by non-native authors who were experts in particular aspects of child care. They provided a useful analytical reference, as there was open acknowledgment that "the topics/issues selected for discussion" as individual case studies "are highly subjective" (Lamb *et al.* 1992,509). The editors concluded by stating that "available data also point to the existence of large differences within countries, which underscores the importance of being cautious when attempting to generalise findings from one country or one subculture to another"(Lamb *et al.* 1992,515). This is indeed sound advice, given that much of the fine detail within a country can be lost in the brevity of overview presentations.

The edited volumes by Chan (1990) and Hujala (1996) were based on papers prepared for two international conferences held in Hong Kong and Finland respectively. Accordingly, the various authors included in each volume have adopted different styles of writing and present information on a range of topics and issues as determined by the conference aims. Some draw on their own primary research work and others refer to policy developments in the field. Drawing comparative commentary from these two books is essentially the reader's task and this may be somewhat ambitious given the great diversity in writing styles and content of such publications.

On the other hand, Kamerman and Kahn (1995) well known for their comparative work in family policy, analyse provisions for under three's in the USA, their homeland, by comparing it with experiences of other countries. They believe that this method of assessing family policies of other countries against the backdrop of one's own country, provides useful insights as it alerts one to "a particularly rich array of child and family options" (Kamerman & Kahn 1995, 21) through a more meaningful comparative lens. That is, in this case, American researchers would benefit most from Kamerman *et al*'s study as they can examine the context of care for under 3s in other countries, by first drawing on their knowledge of the situation in their own country. In this way, they can respond to the question "what can we learn from x or y country?" in a more meaningful, purposeful way. In this study, Kamerman and Kahn's analysis was limited to 7 European countries.

The two publications by Tobin *et al.*(1989) and Olmstead and Weikart (1995) stand apart in this selection of publications because both books were written on the basis of primary research. The comparative focus of Tobin *et al* 's (1989) study is limited to a particular early childhood context, a preschool in China, Japan and the USA. In contrast, Olmstead and Weikart (1995) were interested in the multiplicity of early childhood services being used by four year olds, and they surveyed families in 11-15 countries. These two books are of particular significance because both provide detailed commentary on research methodology used in their work. For instance, Olmstead and Weikart's (1995) comments about the planning and preparation which was undertaken by the research team prior to launching the field work, provide useful insights on difficulties encountered at the initial design phase of the IEA project on early childhood.

Taken together, these ten books reveal that whilst there may be similarities in terms of the types of programs and ideological directions governing policy development, there are also fundamental differences between cultures, which bring into question universal notions of childhood and child growth and development. As Prochner (1993,11-12) declares, "in all cultures mothers are the principle caregivers of children" may be an accurate assessment, but "a universal definition of early childhood is impossible."

It was left largely up to the reader to analyse the nature of similarities and differences across various nations as discussed in these books. Cochran (1993,3) for example, urges the reader to consider the information from a variety of perspectives such as geographical proximity, cultural history and common language. His own analysis had lead him to identify 60 cross-national themes. David (1993) and Woodill *et al.* (1992) also referred to issues of comparison or themes. Parent participation in services and ideological directions underpinning government policy were two of the more common axis of comparison used by these editors. Cochran (1993) however was alone in attempting to develop a conceptual framework to advance theoretical development in cross-cultural studies in early childhood.

By and large, all of these books have tended to adopt a child centred orientation, and consideration of issues from the adult's perspective was generally confined to parents. Examination of staff issues tended to revolve around descriptions of preservice training methods as reported in country profiles (see for example, Cochran (1993) and Woodill *et al.* (1995)). Clearly, this reveals that examination of on professional development and training matters as well as the working conditions of early childhood professionals were major areas of deficit in CCR in early childhood. Accordingly, the current project on Leadership in Early Childhood is indeed an international first, a much needed aspect of investigation in cross national studies.

2.2. Papers based on study tours/visits

Articles written on the basis of a visit to a foreign place, tend to be subjective, based on relatively brief observations much like a journal of a tourist visiting places of interest in a foreign country. Indeed, Gargiulo and Graves (1993,36) describe this methodology as a "snapshot approach". In the majority of cases, the author had been to a country which was culturally very different from her/his own, such as an Australian visiting

China (Fell 1990) and an American visiting France (McMahan 1992) or Italy (New 1990). Accordingly, these papers were written from the perspective of an outsider, usually performing as a non-participant observer in a research setting.

One could be forgiven for saying that such reports were written almost like a "thank you" to the hosts, as the writers have strived to retain a sense of optimism. Each writer refers to at least one or more surprises encountered during the visit, and these range from noticing that "there were no displays of glitz, commercially made cartoon characters and smiling animals" as reported by Katz (1990,11) on her visit to Reggio Emila in Italy, to Udagawa's (1994,11) reflections on cultural variations about commonly accepted terms such as free play, which in Japanese preschools meant "the children could run wherever they liked within the yochien's grounds."

Most of these writers had adopted an informal journalistic approach, presenting a cheerful and favourable perspective on the country that they had visited. Great care is needed in the use of information contained in these papers particularly because of the difficulties of identifying the boundaries of time and sampling characteristics. That is most of these writers did not specify the length or duration of the visit nor the towns or regions visited, making it difficult to gauge the extent of compatibility on a systematic basis.

Overall, these outsider accounts of early childhood services may be described as impressionistic borrowings or learning on the run. Most writers were aware of the pitfalls of this type of instantaneous cross-cultural methodology. Howes and Marx (1992,348), for example, who were swamped with written material as well as information collated through interviews and systematic observations of child care centres, acknowledge that their trip was not intended to be a carefully designed research study. In documenting their perceptions of child care services in France, rather than making any conclusive judgements, these two researchers hoped to "spark and illuminate debate around markers of quality child care in the US" (Howes & Marx 1992,348), their homeland.

It is worth highlighting the approach taken by two of the papers in this group. Firstly, Howes and Marx's (1993) involvement in doing systematic observations of teacher - child interactions during their visit to French child care centres, was rather unique in this type of study tour. Udagawa's paper was also worthy of special mention because it was written on the basis of the author's children's attendance at a Japanese preschool. Her conclusion was particularly poignant as it affirmed the ultimate value of cross-cultural learning from a child's perspective: "their eyes have been opened , ... to the fact that there is more than one way of doing things" (Udagawa 1994,11).

2.3. Self-reflections

Self reflections consisted of individual author's comments and analysis of a specific issue(s) or developments in early childhood in a particular country, usually where s/he lived and worked. About half of these publications consisted of oral presentations to foreign audiences (such as Fujikashi (1993) on Japan and Korintus (1994) on Hungary) with the aim of raising awareness and providing information on current developments in one's homeland. Some of these authors provided an overview of early education and

others dealt with a single aspect such as rights of the child. A few had extended their analysis by adopting a comparative approach in their presentations (for example, Fujikashi (1993)).

Some of these papers which looked at particular issues such as child protection in Vietnam (Ngo 1994) and the play environment in high rise buildings in Singapore (Yuen 1994) help extend the reader's knowledge about aspects where published information was scarce and retrieval difficult. Others such as Dalli (1990) provided an overview of policy directions in a particular country such as New Zealand. Reflective commentary by those such as Butler (1993) who wrote about Australian Aborigines and early education and Lynch *et al*'s (1996) coverage of infant care patterns in African American and Latino American families, help remind readers about the importance of taking into account cultural variations within one country.

The main weakness of self reflective papers included in this sample, was that the content become dated as they deal with a particular time period, often not clearly specified by the author. They were essentially subjective commentaries, and failed to consider alternative view points or arguments. The quality of presentation was also highly variable, depending on the place and type of publication. Therefore, much care is required in the interpretation and use of findings as documented in these types of CCR publications.

Also included in this self reflective category were journal articles (such as Melhuish 1993 and Phillips 1989) which explored various aspects of CCR. Some referred directly to cross-cultural research in early childhood (such as Melhuish 1993 and Pence & McCallum 1994) and others were written by educational scholars outside the early childhood field (such as Featherstone 1989). Issues raised in these papers will be more closely examined in the next section.

2.4. Research papers

Over one third of the documents in this literature survey (ie, n=21 or 35%) were written on the basis of primary research conducted by the authors. The majority of the researchers were Westerners, mainly of Australian or American origin. Conspicuously absent were early childhood researchers and research based in African and Latin American countries. Over half of the papers were based on comparing two cultures, such as Swedish and American parents' perceptions by Carlson and Stenmalm-Sjöblom (1989) and American and Italian teachers' expectations by Edwards and Gandini (1989). A few included three or more cultural variations , such as Lubeck (1995) who compared child care in the USA, France and Germany (GDR) and Pascal and Bertram's study (1993) which included 11 European countries. Others, such as Lin (1990) and Malin *et al.* (1996) compared different minority groups (either indigenous or immigrant) within one country.

Usually, these studies were undertaken in partnership with local researchers in each country. However, those such as Rodd (1993) and Waniganayake (1995) had undertaken research overseas by directing the project work away from their own homeland. Both researchers were Australians conducting research in Singapore. Both used postal questionnaires and Waniganayake (1995) supplemented this data with follow-up visits and interviews with directors at the research sites, the work-based child care centres in

Singapore. As foreign researchers, both Rodd (1993) and Waniganayake (1995) relied heavily on local informants to assist in the project work. It was found that issues of protocol and researcher status can influence gaining access to research sites and participants, and therefore can impact on sampling and response rates.

Dominance of particular world views was a perennial problem confronting early childhood educators involved in CCR as well as in directing programs or policy development. Fleer (1996) for example, attacks the ethnocentric approach adopted by Western researchers in defining scientific experiences to and for children. She makes clear how "those views which do not fit within a western framework are labelled as alternative" (Fleer 1996,14). Continuation of such discriminatory practices is reprehensible and comparative research studies can play a key role in broadening our appreciation of cultural diversity in all aspects of professional conduct in early childhood. In this way, cross-cultural researchers can

> "contribute to a better understanding of priorities and practices different from those of other cultures, and provide non-Aboriginal professionals with an alternative explanation... for some cases that are presented as "problems" in children's and family services." (Malin *et al.* 1996,47)

Adults, consisting of parents and professionals, were the focus of about 75% of these research papers. In some studies, obtaining the beliefs, attitudes and expectations of either the parents (eg. Farnill 1986) or the early childhood professionals (eg, Clyde 1994) formed the central objective of the study. In other studies, especially those on child rearing (eg, Lin 1990) parents were used as informants to study a particular societal process or phenomena. Very few researchers have used children as participants in the data collection phase. Observations of child-adult interactions or use of various test materials to direct interviews were the most common forms of child involvement used by cross-cultural researchers included in this literature survey (see Fleer 1996 and Sparrow 1991).

The work of Australian researchers such as Fleer (1996) and Glover and Black-Gutman (1996) consisted of direct participation of mostly primary school children in structured interviews. It is worth noting that these particular studies were conducted with various groups of Australian Aborigines and all of the researchers were of Euro-Australian backgrounds. Glover and Black-Gutman (1996,4) refer to the poor record of non-Aboriginal researchers' involvement with indigenous communities in Australia - particularly their lack of awareness and respect for cultural customs and values. Accordingly, one needs to take heed of Glover and Black-Gutmman's (1996,5) warning that "when researchers and study participants belong to different groups, questions about who determines and defines the research, who owns it, and how the research data is used, all need to be addressed."

In contrast, Pence and MacCallum (1994) refer to their model of "caring research" based on a successful partnership between Canadian First Nations tribes in British Colombia and the University of Victoria. They argue "that the success of the Project is based as much, or more, on the partners' awareness and appreciation of what is not known, as on what is known." They emphasise that

> "it was this acknowledged lack of knowledge (original emphasis) that was essential to the formation of a strong partnership - a partnership based as firmly on necessity as on desire." (Pence & MacCallum 1994, 118)

Those researchers who adopted an ethnographic approach (such as, Kobayashi-Winata and Power 1989, and Malin *et al.* 1996), used a variety of techniques to collect data, including questionnaires, interviews, child tests and video-recordings. Malin *et al*'s (1996) study comparing child rearing in Australian Aboriginal and non-aboriginal families is of particular significance. It was based on "more reciprocal and less coercive cultural relations" (Welch 1993,7) much like Glover's study (1993) aimed at identifying early childhood service needs of Aboriginal families in six South Australian rural communities. This appears to be as Welch (1993,7) states "one means to develop new forms of comparative research."

It appears that the use of multiple methodologies to collect data, offers one of the best means of collecting appropriate and relevant information incorporating diverse perspectives. For example, Malin *et al.* (1996), Spindler and Spindler (1993) and Tobin *et al.* (1989) used participant observations supplemented by video/film and audio recordings and extensive field notes. Moreover, Malin *et al.* (1996,45) stated that

> "all findings have been corroborated by a number of informed people from both cultural groups; including the family members studied. They are consistent with the findings of other studies of Aboriginal families both urban and remote areas."

Similarly, in their study Tobin *et al.* (1989) returned to the preschools with edited versions of their videotapes to ascertain the views of the participants - the children, parents and staff, to validate the accuracy of what was captured on tape. The reactions of about 300 respondents in each country were recorded and analysed using rating sheets and questionnaires.

Spindler and Spindler (1993) used film or video footage as "evocative stimuli" in much the same way as Tobin *et al.* (1992). The difference being that Spindler and Spindler (1993) also involved the children and thereby were able to see that interpretations of the same content reflected in the positional situation of the respondents. What the children saw and emphasised was different to that of the adults' perceptions. Based on a study of preschools in Germany and the USA conducted over several years, Spindler and Spindler (1993) demonstrate a particular type of research technique which they believe empowers the respondents to actively participate in the data collection and analysis. Described as Cross-cultural, Comparative Reflective Interviewing (CCRI) this method of study is "designed to stimulate dialogue about pivotal concerns on the part of natives in comparable cultural systems"(Spindler & Spindler 1993,107).

Taken together, this collection of research papers suggest that cross-cultural researchers in the early childhood field have tended to favour quantitative methods, especially pen and paper questionnaires as their primary data collection tool. Exclusive reliance on postal questionnaires by non-native researchers can however colour the nature of data analysis and interpretation. Aware of their inability to verify the reality of how parents used different techniques of compliance, Kobayashi-Winata and Power (1989) for instance, acknowledged that lack of observational data was a major design problem in their research. Similarly, O'Reilly *et al.* (1986) who studied parental valuing of social competence amongst different immigrant groups in the USA stated that observations of day-to-day family life experiences were needed to validate the persistence of patterns of behaviour across generations.

Quantitative methods typically based on hypothesis testing were however rare in early childhood cross-cultural research. Typically, most studies focussed on a particular cultural

artefact such as child rearing, and the aim was to extend our knowledge and understanding of cultural variations. Ethnography and case studies, appear to be gaining more popularity and were more easily found where the focus was understanding in some detail, particular cultural contexts or settings of early childhood services or phenomena.

This collection of research papers indicate clearly that attempts at theory construction or testing using CCR evidence has so far been dull and progress, slow. Lubeck (1995) who uses nations as the context of study, was alone in attempting to advance a particular conceptual framework to analyse cross-cultural data. Welch (1993) however, argued cogently that reliance upon the nation or country as the basic unit of analysis was highly problematical, especially in today's political climate. He stated that on the one hand, moves towards the formation of the European Community illustrated how national/state boundaries can be integrated or lost under a single collective, at least for economic purposes. On the other hand, minority claims for separate states challenges conventional territorial boundaries of countries as nation states. Lubeck (1995) however does not debate the pros and cons of objectifying nationhood; but merely uses 'nation as context' as an approach or analytical technique. She concluded by emphasising the need to examine the underlying processes which created different contexts for child care policy development across nations.

3. Some strategies to overcome the dilemmas of comparison in CCR

Growing interest in CCR as a specialist field of study is reflected in the publication of journals such as "Comparative Education". In 1989, Comparative Education devoted a whole journal to debate the question "Why is it that particular countries at particular times become interested in the educational systems of other countries?" There appears to be general consensus that

> "many of the immediate 'attractions' of various features of other countries' education systems are sparked off by purely political motives: what might appear as fairly arbitrary policy decisions at home need legitimation, and perceived success of the same or similar policies in other countries may be imagined to serve that purpose well" (Phillips 1989,272).

Comparativists who are aware of the attractions of borrowing or learning from other cultures, are sceptical about the extent to which knowledge could be transplanted in another setting without careful and rigorous assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of such a move.

The preceding discussion of existing literature showed that cross-cultural researchers in early childhood have tended to favour quantitative methodology, using survey instruments in particular. The difficulties encountered in modifying and translating survey questionnaires is well known as experienced by those such as Clyde (1994), Farnil (1986) and Glover and Black-Gutman (1996). Great care is needed from the start in designing appropriate research instruments because the nature of difference or similarity between two or more groups may not necessarily be one of cultural bias, but as Farnill (1986,215) comments, it may be more indicative of the way a particular variable or phenomenon has been expressed in the survey instrument.

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Moreover, in our eagerness to objectify research, Welch (1993,7) claims that "much of the realities of other cultures is lost, or misconceived" and as a consequence many cross-cultural researchers have failed to address the connections between class and culture. Certainly, when it comes to debates on class, early childhood comparativists suffer from "profound myopia" (Welch 1993,12). The literature survey undertaken for this paper, show that only one study, that of Tobin *et al.* (1989), refers to social class issues, albeit superficially.

As a way of dealing with the dilemmas of comparison in CCR, a number of strategies have been put forward by various researchers. David (1993), Lubeck (1995) and Phillips (1989) have all stressed the importance of taking into account the societal context and the processes which created the particular outcomes. Lamb *et al.* (1992, 515) reiterated the need to keep in mind intra-cultural variations, as much as inter-cultural diversity. Similarly, Crahay (1995) has noted that dealing with differing ideological dissensions which govern ECE programs between and within countries was a major design challenge for the IEA project team. Accordingly, these researchers recommend that particular attention be paid to analysing the underlying objectives or aims of providing ECE programs in different cultures. This view is reinforced by Carlson (1993), who like David (1993), used an ecological approach in her work, and recommended the application of macro-system analysis, which would enable researchers to consider the impact of different societal orientations on ECE programs.

Clearly, cultural views about the training of early childhood educators and their employment conditions is an area which requires further investigation by cross-cultural researchers. There is strong cross-cultural evidence to indicate that early care is linked with mother care and that in most countries it is often perceived as essentially women's business (see Ochiltree 1995). As a consequence, comparative social policy is now being linked with feminist literature because of the common concern for children, especially the very young (Kamerman and Kahn 1995,27). It is possible that methodologies used by feminist researchers as well as those in related disciplines may offer alternative perspectives to enhance future directions in CCR in early childhood.

It is also evident that the development of CCR focusing on the professionals who provide the services is hampered by problems of diverse nomenclature and terminology as well as the absence of a central agency which regularly collects data on staff characteristics on a national basis (See David 1993, and Olmstead & Weikart 1995). The institutional diversity and variation in sponsoring agencies found in different countries leads Crahay (1995,7) to conclude that "essentially preprimary services are less homogenous and monolithic within and between countries than are elementary or secondary education services."

The search for the 'right' words can be time consuming and may involve extensive piloting of research instruments with different populations. Most researchers tend to use an existing document such as an international scale or test as a starting point. In responding to the questions of "why bother?" and why not develop something appropriate to that culture which is being studied? Glover and Black-Gutman (1996,3) argue that it is better "to use an instrument that has been developed over a period of time and validated in a variety of institutions." Accordingly, the importance of testing and refining the research instruments cannot be underestimated.

It appears that there is a relationship between the number and type of data collection techniques and the size of the sample. That is, the greater the variety of research instruments used in data collection, the smaller the number of respondents participating in a study. Without a bigger sample of research studies, it is however, difficult to say whether this trend is particularly pertinent to CCR in early childhood.

The use of video/film footage enables the researcher to access divergent interpretations more easily and repeatedly revisit and review the same data set in order to clarify and refine any conclusions or particular aspects of inquiry. In this sense, the studies of Malin *et al.* (1996), Spindler and Spindler (1993) and Tobin *et al.* (1989) augurs strongly for corroboration of findings through a variety of means, especially through the direct participation of the respondents in data analysis.

Spindler and Spindler (1993), who used video material extensively, were aware that their technique of CCRI did not provide a way of determining the extent to which their native informant's interpretations were typical or representative of his/her country or culture. In fact, their findings reinforced the view that "the position of the observer vis-a-vis the action, actors and setting, as well as training and personal experience , do affect the interpretation (and cultural translation) represented in the writing of ethnography." They found that the interpretation of the same video footage by children, teachers and administrators varied because what each considered to be important or chose to discuss were very different. The significance of this study is that "the 'native' is doing his/her own cultural analysis by engaging in discussions about the self and other. Under ideal conditions the ethnographer is almost a bystander." (Spindler & Spindler 1993,122.)

In writing about the development of the IEA early childhood study, Crahay (1995,4) noted the absence of cross-cultural studies using a parental focus. However, the preceding literature survey indicated that parents' views have been consistently used to document societal values and beliefs about child rearing practices. The absence of children as key informants in all aspects of CCR is however far more profound. As professionals working with children, there is a strong case to be made that cross-cultural researchers should find ways of involving children as partners in research. Closer examination of the methodologies used by those such as Fleer (1996), Spindler & Spindler (1993) and Waniganayake (1992) may be useful in developing techniques to improve research collaboration with children.

In this regard, Pence and MacCallum's (1994,21) suggestion that partnership research must endeavour to be inclusive and accepting of diverse perspectives, as there is much to be gained "from the broad circle of child care stakeholders" requires serious consideration. Welch (1993,22) who also advocates mutuality and partnership in research, believes that "genuine bilateral development programs need to be negotiated, and their implementation tested against the wishes of local inhabitants." The work of those such as Glover (1993) and Pence *et al.* (1994) show that such an approach of open dialogue is achievable and effective in developing relevant and meaningful policies and programs. Of course, the development of trust, empathy and commitment, which are necessary prerequisites of successful partnerships, takes time, effort and energy. The neglect of longitudinal studies by most cross-cultural researchers, is therefore an issue of grave concern.

Researchers must be vigilant about the pitfalls of comparative research where the apparent focus on novelty or exotic features of particular cultures could result in glossing over variations between cultures "in favour of an optimistic belief in shared meaning

and understanding" (Prochner 1992,11). Featherstone (1989,339) aptly describes such positivist endeavours as 'playing Marco Polo' by "making other countries into prophetic fictions." The aim of such studies was to 'bring home only the best' and to use these features as a benchmark or "as a kind of an ideal toward which one wants to propel the home culture" (Featherstone 1989,339). Critical of such approaches, Prochner (1992,11) fears that researchers may underestimate or ignore the failures or weaknesses of ECE programs. This line of argument was extended and tempered by Kamerman and Kahn (1995,25) who concluded that

> "we can affirm that increasing heterogeneity complicates programming and very much challenges the social solidarity on which family and child policy rests, but does not cause countries to lose confidence in their systems or invalidate our efforts to enrich the discussion with experience from other countries."

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Theoretical perspectives on educational leadership

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Abstract

This article deals with a variety of ideas and statements about leadership. Four "discourses" in the leadership area are introduced. The paper considers leadership as a contextual phenomena and shows theoretically how the responsibility of good leadership is shared with different actors connected to leadership. This paper suggest that children and parents must also be seen as parts of the educational culture of a day care centre. It also suggests that the organisational culture of a day care centre and the educational culture of the centre integrate. The main concepts of leadership are discussed, which are leadership, management, and administration.

Keywords: leadership, contextual leadership, leadership discourse

The purpose of this paper is to make some theoretical statements concerning leadership and to present some ideas about the main concepts in the leadership area. This paper is also written for the internal discussion about the details of our International Leadership Project (ILP). One of the main aims of this paper is to consider whether a project like this should make an agreement concerning the basic concepts we use in this project. If the answer is yes, it means that all project members should learn certain contents to each concepts. If the answer is no, the members must get acquainted with the differing views the members have about the concepts. Referring to the first case, this paper introduces the arguments concerning the basic concepts of ILP.

Leadership is an interesting, multidimensional issue. When reading leadership books, one will 'face a jungle'. The number of books is vast and include a variety of ideas and statements about leadership. How is it even possible for a novice leadership researcher to form his/her point of view of leadership? What is the leadership theory that can be

found behind the different leadership ideas and statements? I hope this paper can offer a few theoretical ideas about the ever so difficult leadership area.

1. Leadership discourses

If we had to determine a specific time for the birth of theory in the field of modern management and administration, it would be the year 1911, when Taylor's 'Principles of Scientific Management' was published. The book established Taylor as the father of scientific management (Robbins 1980, 36). The rise of the Theory Movement in the late 1940's and later can be seen as the beginning of educational administration research (Evers & Lakomski 1991, 2). Since then, leadership has been considered an important element in quality of work. Today there are several hundred theories or ideas in the leadership area (Nikkilä 1994, 61).

> *"Recent studies on leadership theory unapologetically admit that research on leadership is ambiguous, unclear, inconclusive, and desperately in need of a new beginning. This impasse in knowledge has spawned a number of "new" theories of leadership. However, the "new" theories are more concerned with what leaders do than with what leadership is." (Mitchell 1990, 1.)*

Mitchell's idea could be considered as a general concern about the state of educational leadership research. What he describes can be understood by the existence of different discourses on the field of research. There is no main discourse or paradigm in leadership research. (See also Kets deVris 1995, 193.) Mitchell's statement may also be a sign of the young research tradition in leadership.

The ambiguous and unclear research tradition in leadership can also be seen in the way main concepts are used in the leadership area. The use of these main concepts is introduced later in this paper.

We may also ask whether different ideas or theories in leadership can seriously be regarded as theories. For example, the positivist and the phenomenological theories in educational administration can be seen as two different perspectives concerning how to think about the world. By themselves, they do not constitute a set of immutable rules or laws. (Lane 1995, 64.) This applies to many writings concerning leadership.

Thinking about the number and quality of writings in leadership, we should call those writings or theories, 'leadership discourse'. The term discourse indicates a conversation or to the concept 'small stories' (Koskiaho 1990, 81), and as such it can be utilised to encompass the different ideas, outlines, and statements that have been expressed in the leadership field.

This discussion paper concentrates on four leadership discourses in the leadership field: 1) the consult discourse, 2) the every day discourse, 3) the fragment discourse and 4) the paradigm discourse in leadership. The organisational culture-discourse in leadership is also a very important issue and will be discussed later.

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1.1. Consult discourses in leadership

Consult discourses in leadership are discourses which have arisen from different developmental processes in organisations. These processes have been led by organisational or leadership consults (see also Schein 1991). There may be some theoretical hypotheses or definitions behind these discourses. Some of these discourses have verified their places as very popular organisational theories or as ways to think about organisations, like management by objects and management by results, which are among the most popular in Finland. Furthermore, quality thinking, e.g. Total Quality Management (TQM) (see Bradley 1993, Lee & Lazarus 1993, Sallis 1993) can be included in consult discourses in leadership. The ideas of TQM have been transformed to educational leadership as Total Quality Education (TQE) (see e.g. English & Hill 1994).

Total quality discourses are mainly based on system theory. They consider organisations as systems consisting of different subsystems, such as customers, organisation structure, and leadership. The quality of production , the product or the service, depends on the function or on the relation of all the subsystems. .

1.2. Everyday discourses in leadership

Everyday discourses in leadership mean discussions taking place in centers, in policy making, in community administration, in staff training, and among scientists in different countries.

In these discourses, leadership has as many meanings as there are interpreters explaining it. Meanings are mostly based on everyday leadership experiences, on fragmentary leadership (in service) training, and on what people have read about leadership. Thus, these meanings are only weakly based on theoretical definitions about leadership and they could be interpreted as people's opinions about leadership. Usually, in everyday life, people speak about the leadership task as a practical issue, e.g. how to plan a budget, what are the regulations demanding child care etc.

In the Finnish everyday discourses, people talk about 'office tasks' or 'office exercises'. These tasks do not carry any leadership approaches. Instead, they are work exercises meant to be done by a chancery officer. These office exercises are quite time consuming, and so it means that instead of leading a center, a leader is tied to irrelevant tasks during a working day.

Everyday discourses in leadership are very important from the point of view of leadership practice. Everyday discourses in educational leadership can be seen as artifacts (Schein 1991, 32) in the culture of an educational organisation. They show the epistemological and ontological definitions which the members in an educational organisation possess. These discourses are signs of social reality, where the care or education of children also takes place.

Like Evers (1995, 10) says: 'success in getting around in the world is a statistical matter, a matter of behaving now'. That is quite true, and therefore, theories in leadership must take into consideration everyday tasks. Duignan & Macpherson (1992) call their

theory of educative leadership a practical theory for administrators and managers. The same idea is included in coherence theory (Evers & Lakomski 1991).

The context of leadership offers new challenges to the leader. According to research (Nivala & Hujala 1996), subordinates in a Finnish day care center interpret the quality of leadership (more accurately: management) according to how the leader is responding to everyday challenges, e.g. their suggestions and demands. This 'quality control' happens and extends in everyday discourses.

1.3. Fragment discourses in leadership

Sergiovanni (in Evers & Lakomski 1991, 124) says "each theory of administration is better able to illuminate and explain certain aspects of the problems administrators face but not the others". Leadership phenomena is fragmented in different extents. In these fragment discourses, the researcher, or anyone working in the leadership field, pays attention to specific points in leadership. Leadership is not considered a holistic phenomenon. Thinking about leadership as a whole, we could in fact talk about several disjointed topics in the leadership field.

Fragment discourses can be regarded as traditional approaches to leadership. They are very broad and have produced different kinds of lists concerning the characters of a good leader and the working culture's stages of development. Most of the business management 'theories' can be regarded as fragment discourses.

Fragment discourses in leadership can be classified in different ways. Firstly, they can be reflected under two rubrics: "leaders are made" or "leaders are born" (Mitchell 1990, 7). Here the attention is in the leader and in his characteristics. Secondly, these discourses can be observed according to how they view leadership: leadership as traits of character, leadership as behavior, and leadership as a function of culture/climate (Maxcy 1991, 2). Thirdly, these discourses have been introduced by different movements (Robbins 1980), or 'paradigms' (Manninen 1992, 28, Määttä 1996, 33). These movements are types of research trends, such as 'decision-science movement', 'human-relations-movement', 'organisational-humanist-movement', and 'system movement'.

Here I have used the word 'paradigm' in quotation marks, because the used paradigm grouping differs from the common research paradigm classification. Different research paradigms give different answers to ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 108). There are other discourses in leadership, which are based on different research paradigms.

1.4. Paradigm discourses in leadership

A paradigm is one kind of model which steers our action. Usually, paradigms are linked to the scientific research argumentation, mainly to methodological issues. Thus, they give an action model to our relations to art, ideologue/religion and every day life. These paradigms can be called macro paradigms. (Venkula 1993.)

These macro paradigms include an articulation of 1) the nature of reality, 2) the impression of competent knowledge concerning the nature of reality, 3) the way to receive the knowledge and 4) the way to describe the knowledge. This means that each paradigm has its own ontology, epistemology, methodology, and symbolic system. (Ibid.)

In the field of education, it is very common to talk about two different or even competitive paradigms: the positivistic, or empiristic paradigm and the interpretative, or hermeneutic paradigm (e.g. Evers 1995, Mitchell 1990, Lane 1995, Venkula 1993). Lane calls the interpretive paradigm a cultural paradigm.

There is a broad paradigmatic discourse in leadership research. Some researchers follow positivistic or interpretative paradigm but some also follow the ideas of chaos theory and critical theory (Chicago School) etc. (Educational Administration...1995, Educational Management and ...1993, Evers 1995).

Positivist leadership research has been very influential both in common and in educational leadership research. This research tradition is based on definitions of logical empiricism (Evers & Lakomski 1991, 3, 1993, 141). According to logical empiricism, scientific theories have three main elements. Firstly, they consist of a set of topic-specific empirical claims that are hierarchically arranged. Secondly, they are testable and are justified by a process of empirical testing. Thirdly, all key terms in the theory rely on empirical definition - definition with reference to some set of observations. (Evers 1995, 2)

Mitchell (1990, 6) argues:

> *"...certain biases are prominent in most studies of leadership. First, most of the definitions of leadership deal with facts about leaders instead of meanings of leadership. Second, leadership is described in terms of observable behaviors instead of in terms of states of existence of persons who are leading followers. Third, leadership is identified with the power to cause followers to change or to perform what leaders want them to do instead of with a voluntary choice of a person to follow a leader."*

The positivist research tradition has been criticized because it excludes values. It presents reality as an objective element, where facts and values are sharply distinguished. Values are inner subjective reactions to facts, not facts themselves. (Evers 1995, 4.). Following the ideas of positivism, 'a truth' can be found existing somewhere in this 'real reality'. A leader must find out what is good (right) leadership, then she/he develops his/hers skills in that direction and becomes a good leader.

Thinking about positivist leadership research, we can say that there is an ideological connection between positivist leadership research and fragment leadership discourses. Positivist research tradition, or fragment leadership discourse, has produced a variety of material for in-service training: self-test-forms, leadership style descriptions (e.g. Rodrigues 1993), 3-dimensional leadership model which demonstrates the connection between leadership style and effectiveness, lists of the characteristics of a 'good leader', and lists of good leadership 'facts'. This tradition has also produced very popular leadership models, such as the situational leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard 1990, Hersey 1984).

Post-positivist paradigm denies the positivist absoluteness. Reality is presented as alternative and relative. According to the contingency approach, it is difficult or impossible to make broad-based generalizations about administrative practices that are applicable to

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all situations. That is why this movement presents only a range of variables, which seem to occur regularly in organisations, and which have something to do with leadership quality, e.g. organisation's size (small or large), administrator's position power (low or high) etc. (Robbins 1980, 46-47, see also Clyde 1985, 71.)

Evers & Lakomski (1991, 214) present three different perspectives to the paradigm discussion. First, the main paradigms, positivist and interpretive, can be seen as opposite to each other because they present different types of knowledge. Second, these two paradigms can be viewed as complementary. The third view introduces the unity thesis, which denies the epistemological diversity of the two paradigms. In other words, different research methods cannot be grouped under incommensurable paradigms (Lane 1995). The so-called paradigm theory, or P-theory, the theory of competitive paradigms, is largely responsible for structuring differences among research traditions into putative paradigms (Evers & Lakomski 1991, 226). Differences exist, but instead of paradigms, the differences occur between theories, concepts, hypothesis and methodological rules (Ibid., 232).

Evers & Lakomski replace the paradigm-theory with a holistic post-positivist coherence theory.

> *"Here our epistemology would lean on a theory of evidence and experiment, on the pragmatic relations between 'theory' and 'practice'."* (Ibid., 232)

Thinking about the approach of coherence theory of justification in educational leadership, the important factor in leadership is knowledge; knowledge itself, the growth of knowledge, and the assessment of knowledge. One must also understand that a leader makes decisions with realistic matters and acts in a social reality. So, the theory of educational leadership must offer a solution to problems, which happen in a practical action. It must also help the leader to distinguish real problems from pseudo problems. The theory can help the leader to formulate problems usefully.

> *"This kind of justification stipulates that an administrative theory ... be a continuous part of our most global theory of the world, that it be part of our seamless web of belief. Because the web of belief will include our accounts of nature, administrative theory can be both scientific and naturalistic." (Lakomski & Evers 1995, 17.)*

There has been a change both in the conceptualization of leadership and in research methodological approaches in leadership. The approach to leadership is nowadays more holistic than earlier. Leadership is studied in the context of organisational and societal culture. (Slater 1995.) Interpretive approaches have become more and more important (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, Juuti 1996).

The *interpretive* research tradition in educational leadership was developed in the 1970's by critics of the positivist research tradition. This research tradition discards the ontological definitions of the positivist tradition, which sees reality as an objective element. Here, reality is socially constructed. (Berger & Luckman1994, Greenfield... 1993, Mitchell 1990) The value-based activities become important elements in producing the functioning of an actor. (Evers & Lakomski 1991, 110, Hodgkinson 1991.)

If we consider reality as socially constructed, we should also study the cultural context of leadership. This means that, in an educational organisation, we must study the educational thinking of the staff. All in all, the quality of leadership may differ in different organisational contexts, e.g. democratic or bureaucratic-hierarchical organisational cultures. (Duignan & Macpherson 1992, 83, Sarala & Sarala 1996.)

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Mitchell (1990, 21) offers a paradigm for leadership research, a paradigm that explains the nature and meanings of educational leadership. He analyses educational leadership by using the phenomenological method. That method emphasises subjective experience and consciousness and considers leadership as a micro level contextual phenomenon.

2. Contextualising the leadership

A model for the contextual (and phenomenological) approach to leadership (Nivala 1997) in day care centers is presented below. This model is based on the contextual and ecological approach in education (Bronfenbrenner 1979, Hujala 1996, Hujala *et al.* 1998, see also Hayden 1996).

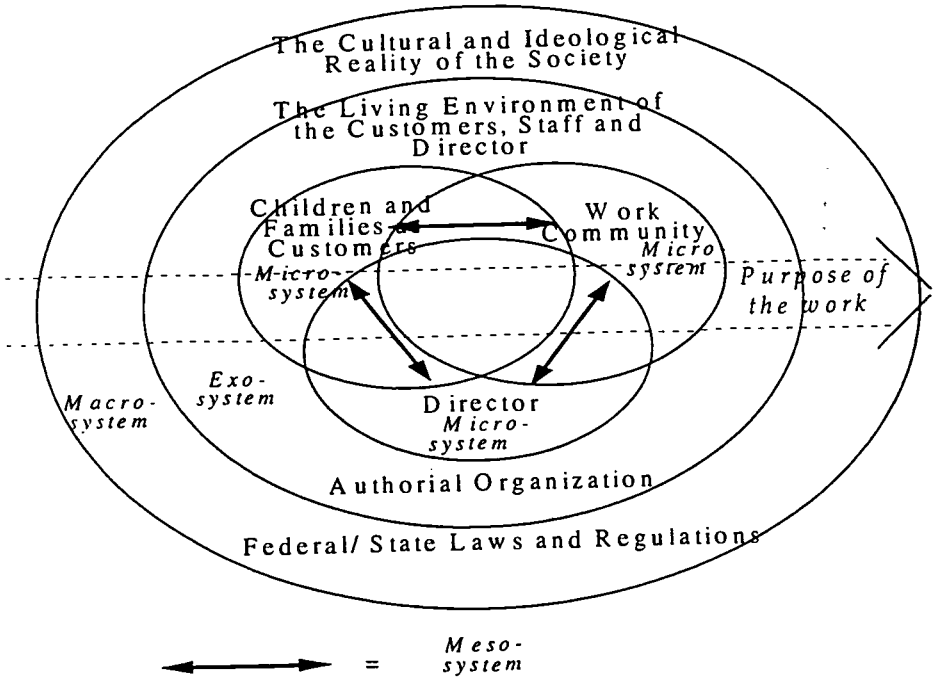

Fig. 1. The contextual approach to the leadership in day care centers

In the contextual approach, leadership in a day care center is seen as a part of the cultural reality of the center. This cultural reality constitutes not only from all the systems from micro to macro level but also from the purpose of the work. In this model, leadership must be considered as a holistic phenomenon. The traditional 'problems in leadership' must be studied as problems in any of the systems and especially as problems between the systems. Problems are tensions between different expectations, goals, and values of actors in the systems.

When talking about a day care center, we could say that the micro and mesosystems (leader, parents, children, staff, and the relations between these) are the elements of the primary culture of a day care center. The concept primary is used, because on this level, every day communication and immediate contacts are constantly constructing social reality. The other ecological levels form the elements of the secondary culture of the center. On this level, there is a lot of communication, e.g. between politics and administrators, which takes place outside the social reality of the center. The output of this communication, e.g. laws, directs the social reality of the center.

There are two main conclusions that can be made according to this model. First, the organisational culture of a day care center constitutes not only from the leader and the staff, which actually is a very traditional way to think about organisations, but also the children and parents must be considered as parts of the organisational culture.

The culture in an organisation arises in cooperation between the members of the organisation. Cooperation in (educational) organisations can be classified into three dimensions. Firstly, cooperation may be based on specialisation, where different individuals or subsystems have different goals in work. Here, cooperation does not mean 'working together'. The common outcomes of the work means fitting together outcomes of specialised working tasks. This kind of cooperation is typical for a totalitarian organisation (society), where leadership means dictatorship. Secondly, cooperation may be institutional, which means that there are some joint regulations, laws, norms, or goals steering the individual's work. That is why some communication is also needed between the individuals. Here, leadership is hierarchical. because those who are making the laws and orders have the power. Thirdly, there may be 'conscious' organisations, which means cooperation where the goals of the work are formulated and achieved through free communication. That is why the goals are undetermined. In these cases, power is distributed to the whole organisation. Leadership is not focused in an individual, but on a common interest. (Järvilehto 1996.)

This outlining seems to be very suitable when we talk about educational culture in day care centers. These dimensions define an actor's place in the organisation. They also show the place of the power inside the organisation. Most importantly, these dimensions also respond to learning. According to the theory, the growth of the actor's consciousness is possible only in communicative cooperation.

A day care center should be seen as a learning place for children. This means that the cooperation between staff and children should be organized based on the principles of communicative cooperation. Here we come to my hypothesis and to the second conclusion of the model: *the organisational culture of the day care center and the educational culture of an educational organisation integrate*. The behavior between the staff and the leader is integrated in the behavior between the staff and the children, or at least, this connection is hard to avoid. Basically this means that in educational organisations, the theory of education and the theory of educational leadership integrate. (See also Sarala & Sarala 1996.)

When looking at co-operation, e.g. in 'International Leadership Project', it is important to realise that all individuals have different ideas about leadership. These ideas are based on distinct paradigms that each individual considers important. The research philosophy, the research paradigm, or the theoretical thoughts that researchers possess, also guide research methods they use (Greenfield... 1993, 12). Therefore, it is important for them to acknowledge their own paradigmatic approach to leadership. In an international research

project, this is extremely important, because in different countries the research traditions may vary. We must try to release ourselves from the 'slavery' of tradition to get a better understanding of each other's research interests.

3. Main concepts in leadership

The International Leadership Project (ILP) focuses on leadership in early childhood centres. Because leadership is seen as a contextual and socially constructed phenomenon, the project will also study cultural and organisational phenomena connected to leadership in centers. The project also considers leadership in different societies. That is, leaders and phenomena studied in this project are under different administrative demands, and the goals and ideas of the work may differ because of societal or governmental reasons (see also Duignan & Macpherson 1992, 83).

This short introduction to the project is to show that this project will be full of concepts, such as leadership, organisation, and culture, which are heterogeneous by their definitions. It means firstly, that those involved in the project may have different ideas about the concepts. Secondly, those who will read the papers produced by the project also have different ideas about the concepts used. That is why I want to recommend that the project should make an internal agreement concerning the essential concepts used in the target study area. Through espousing a theoretic concept family, the *communication and interaction between project partners may become easier.*

The definition of basic concepts of leadership used in the project is also a *definition of human nature* the project expresses. Conceptualizing is scientifically important to the project. General concepts give to the project a *methodological tool for international comparison concerning the details of leadership phenomenon.* Espousing the basic concepts in the beginning of the project facilitates the project process. The content of the concepts may differ from the espoused in the end of the project. That is, the concepts should be open to be specified and clarified throughout the project.

I discuss several main concepts in the educational leadership area like leadership, management, and administration. I also focus on the concept 'educational'. Some other important concepts which are connected to the organisation and its culture are discussed elsewhere (Karila 1997).

It is difficult to define exactly the concepts connected to 'leading a centre', because the meanings of those concepts are changing. There seems to be two leading ways to use the main concepts. Firstly these concepts can be used synonymously (see e.g. Clyde 1985, Robbins 1980, Strain 1996, 49). Like Hodgkinson (1991, 53) says:

> *"Administration is leadership. Leadership is administration".*

According to the second explanation, some theoretical differences between these concepts can be found. Leadership points to the future (Gronn 1996, 15, Rodd 1994, 2), while management points to the present time (Manninen 1992, 23, Rodd 1994). We may also say that leadership has more to do with broad issues and people, while administration has more to do with concrete things and the organisation's every-day life. Administration emphasises an organisation as part of a larger organisation. It also stresses the function of the organisation (see Rizvi 1986).

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'Pedagogical leadership' has been used in two different meanings. It has meant the nature of the leader's behavior (Their 1994). It is the leader who takes an educative role in the organisation. This theory stresses the leader's personality. As such, it can be seen as a very traditional and positivistic way to theorise leadership, and is therefore in conflict with the basic theories of this project.

In everyday talk in Finland, the concept 'pedagogical leadership' has meant one part of the work of an early childhood centres' leader. In these discussions, the term has been used to distinguish two aspects in a leader's work: service and pedagogy. The term 'pedagogical' has more to do with the pedagogical aims of the work. That is only a part of a leader's work in a Finnish day care center. Unfortunately, there is very little research or theoretical texts concerning this issue in Finland.

Being critical, one could ask why the substance of work must be seen in the definition of leadership. A leader as well as the staff endeavor to achieve the goals of work, or at least they should. This is a natural requirement of their job. To understand the use of the concept 'pedagogical leadership' in Finnish early childhood centres, it is important to know that day care centres in Finland are a part of the public services. This means that they function under the administration of the public sector, which has been found to be very hierarchical and bureaucratic (Nikkilä 1994, 64). Hence, many leaders in centers, in order to survive administrative stress, emphasise administrative leadership instead of pedagogical leadership (Nivala & Hujala 1996). The use of the concept 'pedagogical leadership' highlights the 'lost' aim of work.

The theory of 'educative leadership' (Duignan & Mcpherson 1992) sees leadership as a part of the process of modifying or maintaining an organisational culture. The focus is on the subjective and interpretative aspects of organisational life. Educative leaders pay attention to the organisation's cultural details. This links leadership to the statements of the learning organisations (see Sarala & Sarala 1996). It emphasises a shared reality of meaning and stresses that what is right is regularly renegotiated and reaffirmed. Here the concept 'educative' is used because it

> *"...implies the active involvement of all members of an educational organisation as philosophers, planners and policy makers. Educational leadership is, therefore, concerned about right and wrong, justice and injustice, truth, aesthetics and the negotiation of practical ideals in education."* (Duignan & Mcpherson 1992, 4.)

Thus, within the main concepts in leadership, three theoretical elements can be found: leadership, management and administration. The following figure shows the relationship of these elements.

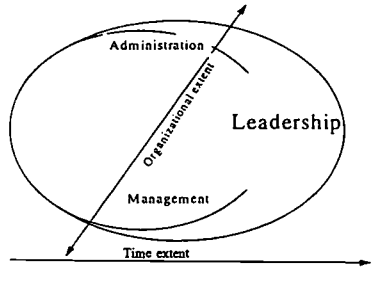

Fig. 2. The relations between leadership elements

Leadership is the largest of the elements concerning the leading of a centre, the sub-concepts of which are management and administration. Leadership means working both with day-to-day tasks and those tasks that have their focus in the future. Leadership is more than a set of social or management techniques or skills (Duignan & Macpherson 1992, 5). It is more than just actions occurring within an early childhood centre. One of the most important responsibilities in leadership is that the leader is consciously responsible for the future of the centre. This is because the context of the work in early childhood centres is under pressure of continual change: expectations of parents, governmental demands and staffs' requirements, as well as the challenges resulting from the changing philosophies of children's learning (e.g. Duignan & Macpherson 1992, 83.) Leadership means both managing today and navigating the centre to the future.

Management focuces on the day-to-day tasks. Therefore it refers to the immediate everyday context of work. The relation between administrative and managerial work of the leader is defined through the nature of the work: the more the every day working tasks of the leader are useful for the centre, the more they carry a managerial idea. Managing a center means working for the centre.

Administration is working with community-based tasks, which are important to the organisation as a whole. Taking part in different kind of meetings outside the centre has much to do with administration. One could say that administrative work is indirectly connected to the aims of a centre's work. Respectively to the management, the more the every day working tasks are 'only' for the bureaucratic and out of the centre, the more they carry an administrative idea.

Educational leadership means leadership as a social constructed (cultural) phenomenon in the context of an educational organisation including managerial and administrative work in the organisation.

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Acta Univ. Oul. E 35, p 63-70

Contextual and situational perspectives on leadership in early education centres

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Abstract

Leadership is a phenomenon that has been investigated from various theoretical perspectives and in many methodological ways. Due to the diversity, it is important to clarify each leadership project's place in the field of leadership research. In this cross-cultural project, leadership has been defined as a contextually, situationally and socially constructed phenomenon. What do the concepts, contexts, and situations mean in relation to leadership? The article discusses the meaning and significance of these concepts in leadership studies. Several methodological solutions required in contextual and situational leadership studies are also discussed. In the article, attempts are made to clarify a contextual orientation to leadership from two viewpoints: Firstly, the content, meaning, and significance of context in leadership are discussed. Secondly, the relationship between the persons, communities, and context are considered.

Keywords: contextual leadership, situational leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership is a phenomenon that has been investigated from various theoretical perspectives and in many methodological ways. Due to the diversity, it is important to clarify the present project's place in the field of leadership research. In the project, leadership has been defined as a contextually, situationally, and socially constructed phenomenon. What do the concepts, *contexts*, and *situations* mean in relation to leadership? On the basis of a review of research literature, it is obvious that the concepts can be defined in many ways. Due to the variety of the definitions, it is important to explain how the key

concepts are defined in each connection. The paper discusses the meaning and significance of these concepts in leadership studies. Furthermore, some methodological solutions required in contextual and situational leadership studies are discussed. To my mind, the contextual orientation to leadership must be clarified from at least two viewpoints. Firstly, the content, meaning, and significance of context in leadership studies must be discussed. Secondly, the relationship between the persons, communities, and context needs to be elaborated.

2. Contextual leadership

Context is one of the concepts that has been used to link the person/individual and society. The other concepts belonging to this group are Lewin's field, Goffmann's frame, Bronfenbrenner's macro, meso and micro systems, Lave's arena, and the action used in the field of activity theory. (Engeström 1995, 72-73.)

Context has been considered in research literature from multiple perspectives. Culture has often been understood as similar to context (Rogoff 1984). Context has also been defined as an abstract "situation", as background information researchers recount in order to describe the context of the sampling, as socio-cultural circumstances, or a certain physical or social environment of the work task (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, 455).

The aim of the present study is to investigate leadership as a contextual phenomenon. According to the research plan, leadership is not localised in the leader but in the social interaction and the day care centre community. Therefore, the actions of the leader must be examined in relation to the day care centre community and a wider social and cultural context. Furthermore, leadership is considered a cultural phenomenon connected with the basic function of the educational organisation. (Hujala *et al.* 1997.)

Consequently, the interest of the present project focuses on contextual leadership from the multilevel point of view. In our research plan, context has been considered both from the macro level (society and its culture) and from the micro level (work community). In the next pages, I will concentrate on both of these contextual levels and their connections to leadership in early childhood settings.

3. Macro level context and leadership

Naturally, we can ask if it makes any sense in leadership studies to conceptualise context so broadly that even the macro level of the context must be taken into account. To my mind, it does make sense. Let me argue a little.

One significant motive to investigate the macro level context arises from the very nature of meaning. Mitchell (1990, 21) has proposed that the subjective dimensions of educational could be as one paradigm for educational leadership. This paradigm asks: What are the meanings of leadership which the leaders and followers experience in the context of an educational situation? In our study, meaning is interpreted as socially and culturally constructed. It requires us to investigate the educational situation as a broad phenomenon and ask further questions like: What is an educational situation? In what

kinds of wider contexts or circumstances does an educational situation take place? What is the relationship between an educational situation and its wider, social context?

The meanings are seen to be constructed in a life-long enculturation process. Also, the significant influence of the macro level context is related to the enculturation process of the persons working in early childhood centres. The very nature of early childhood education is socially and culturally constructed. The staff's conceptions and meanings of early childhood, as well as the educational goals and methods, are seen to be constructed in this enculturation or socialisation process. Consequently, the staff's conceptions are interpreted to represent the cultural values of the society the persons are living in. It is a very interesting question if there is some similarity in the staff's conception that exceeds national cultures and may be considered to represent professional cultures of early childhood education all over the western world. I suppose that at the end of the project we will have a better understanding of the many cultural contexts in which early childhood education and leadership take place.

Apart from the influence of the leaders' and their followers' meanings, the macro level context also has another influence. The macro level context consists of the structures, values, traditions, laws, and norms of society.

These elements of society define many ways both early education and leadership in early childhood centeres. For example, the basic function of the early childhood centre that the leader is leading is assumed to be varied in the societies participating in the study (Australia, England, Finland, Russia, and the USA). Thus, the work and leadership in the area of early childhood education are also assumed to be varied.

The definition concerning work and leadership in early education is also carried out by national and local regulations. State regulations, laws, acts, different kinds of steering systems, directives concerning the qualification of the staff, the child-adult ratio, and the environment from the health viewpoint are also assumed to be varied. Apart from the national culture, the culture at local level also includes many regulations.

At the local level, national cultures are connected to local organisational cultures. For example, the amount and nature of the leaders' power partly depends on the content/quality of the local steering system.

The cross-cultural research design of the present study gives a fruitful opportunity to take the macro level context into consideration by investigating leadership in different societies and in different cultural contexts.

4. The relationship between the person and her/his environment

The relationship between context, communities, and persons living in certain contexts can be understood in different ways. From the interpretative perspective, context is a relative phenomenon and the relationship between context and actors in context is seen as interactive. This is how context is also related to leadership. On the one hand, leadership is taking place in a frame grounded by regulations. This frame offers either opportunities or limitations both for work and for leadership carried out in centres. Furthermore, the regulations at state and local levels also reflect the expectations that are directed at leadership from society. On the other hand, persons and organisations form their own

interpretations of context, its regulations, and expectations. Centres, staff, and leaders are seen as active subjects acting in the context. All this means that the individual and the social element of the world are very closely related to each other, which also has to be taken into account in methodological decisions. Both the environment and the persons have to be studied. According to Alasuutari (1995, 35), even the seemingly most individualistic interpretations of the world are never truly and thoroughly individual and unique. On the other hand, the "deep structures" of culture only exist as people act and behave in accordance with those structures or make use of them in their activity.

Gronn & Ribbins (1996, 453-455) have seen the link between human agency and social structure as one central question in contextual leadership research. Their analysis indicates that one part of leadership studies has "psychologised" leadership and emphasised the subjects' role, while the other part of the studies has focused on the relationship between task stratifications, and system and environmental complexity (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, 453-454). Unfortunately, such issues as the relationship between levels of social analysis, their link with structure and agency, structuration, cultural dynamics, and analytical dualism are often not considered in leadership research. The need to link the issues to leadership is very clear. (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, 453-454.)

The relationships mentioned above are very complicated ones. In the studies of distributed cognitions, there are many different ideas concerning the very nature of the relationship between individuals and distributed cognition and cultural surroundings (Salomon 1993). Leadership has many links to distributed cognition. Leadership takes place in a society, which has its own socially shared values. Also, the organisational cultures of the centres are full of distributed cognitions. Therefore, we must explore these issues in the present leadership study, too.

5. Micro level context and leadership

In the research plan, leadership is seen as being localised in the social interaction of the day care centre community (Hujala *et al.* 1997). This issue focuses the interest on organisational cultures and professional and personal modes of action carried out in the centres.

In earlier leadership literature, the micro level context has notably been considered in the situational approach. The situational approach has usually been connected to the contingency theory of leadership (Silver 1983, 152-154, Yukl 1981, 132). The main focus in these studies has been the dynamic interaction between the leader and the situation. The group's success is seen to depend on the appropriate matching of the leader and the situation.

In the situational approach, the leader and the situation have been seen as separate entities. This approach differs from my ideas concerning the interaction between the leader and the micro level context. I will try to explain my idea by describing my earlier studies on expertise conducted in the field of early childhood education.

In my earlier study (Karila 1997), expertise is seen as a contextual, situational, and cultural phenomenon. Three main elements are essential in the construction and development of expertise, namely the personal dimension, in the study referred to as the

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person and her/his life history, the domain-specific knowledge, and the working environment. The interaction between the three elements is also significant for the construction and development process of expertise. The above-mentioned elements and their interaction form a situation. The situation takes place in a certain context, which gives a frame for the situation. Thus, in investigating expertise, the focus is not only on the individual skills of the expert/professional her/himself, but also on the nature of the working environment and the context. The nature of interaction between the person, the working environment, and the macro level context is also a significant object of the study. In my nomenclature, the situation is understood as an analysis unit of expertise. The situation and the leader are not seen as separate entities, but the leader is seen as one part of the situation. The model described in Figure 1. links the individual and social aspects of expertise together (Karila 1997). The model was developed using grounded theory protocols. A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Strauss & Corbin 1990, 23).

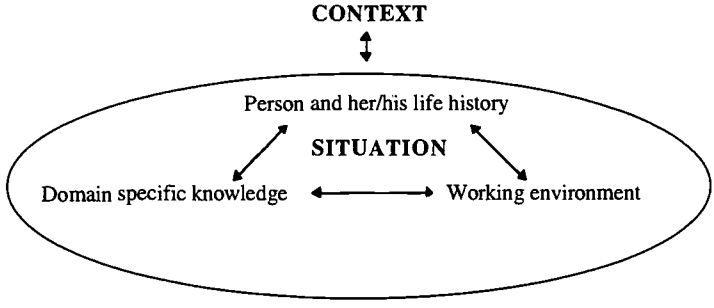

Fig. 1. The model describing the nature of expertise.

The model has many links to the biographical approach. In addition, it provides an opportunity to analyse the contextual and situational aspects of expertise. It also provides an opportunity to better understand the interaction between the personal life/work experiences and the different environment levels. In the present study, the model can help to elaborate the significance of different contextual levels in which leadership takes place. The model also offers the concept of situation as a means of analysing multilevel, contextual leadership. According to Gronn & Ribbins (1996, 452), ethnography and biography are the two methodologies that acknowledge the importance of context in the social construction of leaders and leadership systems. This argument also gives support to the use of the model in the studies of leadership.

A situational perspective on leadership requires that the significant others working or acting in the situation are taken into account. From the interpretative point of view, contextual means an entity, like a container, bound in the particulars of time and space within which organisation members negotiate meaningful action (Gronn & Ribbins 1996, 455). This means that the lived experience of situationally embedded, real-world actors is highlighted. The culture of each society is mediated in many ways to the every day life in the centres. Consequently, the situation gives information on the ways the

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expectations from the macro level context are mediated to the every day life. The situation also gives information on the interpretations made by the persons involved in the situation.

Each situation of leadership takes place in a certain culture. It is therefore important to understand the nature of these cultures. Each early childhood centre has its own history and present working and educational culture that forms both a frame and a partner for the leader. On the basis of my earlier study, the organisational cultures (the combination of educational and working culture) in the Finnish day care centres have been found to vary from being innovative, to being in transition, to being reactionary (Karila 1997). The results showed that the nature of day care culture was significant for the nature of expertise (Karila 1997). Therefore, it can be assumed that leadership in each centre is partly influenced by the organisational culture of the centre.

In the project, we are interested in leadership especially in the area of early childhood education. Therefore, the educational cultures of the centres are significant. Apart from the educational cultures, the working cultures of the centres are also important in the construction process of leadership. I have defined the concept of working culture as follows: The practices used in working situations as well as the meanings related to these practices. The most important categories describing the working culture in Finnish day care centres are the conception of the work in the early childhood centre, the division of labour in the centre, the nature of the leadership in the centre, the discussion and the policy making practices in the centre, and the relationship with the external environment (Karila 1997).

Apart from the variation in the organisational cultures, there is also variation in the followers' attribution and expectations of leadership. The followers are assumed to vary, for example, in their conceptions of what the main tasks of the leader are and the best ways to complete them, and of what the role of each staff member is in developing the practices in the early childhood centre. The modes of action in working situations are also predicted to be varied. The nature of the staffs expertise and the nature of their expectations form one part of the situation with which the leader is engaged.

Leadership is defined not only by context and by other persons involved in the situation. The leaders themselves are one part of the situation (micro level context). Furthermore, they are subjects in defining leadership in general and especially in their own centre. Leaders' definitions are assumed to reflect their knowledge and their earlier significant experiences related to leadership.

One interesting question in leadership studies has been whether leadership is seen located in directors or in communities as shared leadership. In expertise literature, there has also been discussion on whether expertise is a characteristic of the person or of the community (Engeström 1989). I think that this issue is a significant empirical question. Even if leadership is seen as a socially constructed phenomenon, in most cases one particular person fills the leader's position. Furthermore, the contextual and situational aspects of leadership are mediated by real persons working in the centres. One important finding of the studies based on the theories of distributed cognition has been that expertise is not a universal phenomenon but varies from culture to culture and from person to person (Engeström 1989). Therefore, the individual versus shared dimension of leadership may also vary in different leadership contexts and situations. It seems to me that this issue must be seriously taken into account when investigating leadership.

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6. Conclusions

The contextual and situational approaches will help the project to answer the following research questions:

- How is leadership defined in different situations and at different contextual levels?

Different definitions of leadership are predicted to create different kinds of expectations of the leaders' ability to carry out their working situations. The first research question can be elaborated as follows

- What kinds of skills and knowledge are required in different leadership contexts and situations?

The lack of empirical, contextually oriented leadership research is obvious. Gronn & Ribbins (1996, 454) argue that there significance of context continues to be badly untheorised in leadership. If leadership is reconceptualised as the sum of situational, cultural, and historical circumstances that constrain leadership and give it its meaning, context is a vehicle through which the agency of particular leaders may be empirically understood.

In the definitions emphasising the contextual and situational nature of leadership, it is seen not as universal but as defined by the cultural context and the persons involved in the culture. Comparison between the different definitions concerning leadership may reveal some of the problems leaders have in carrying out their tasks. The consciousness of different kinds of definitions and expectations of leadership may help leaders improve their expertise.

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Acta Univ. Oul. E 35, p 71-78

Action research in early childhood settings throughout the world

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Abstract

Improving the quality of service provision for young children and their families has become an impetus for those working in early childhood settings to reflect upon, understand and evaluate their own practice. Action Research is one methodological approach to professional development which is argued to have rich potential for early childhood professionals who pursue quality improvement as well as offering opportunities for extending and transforming theoretical understanding of the care and education, teaching and learning of young children. This chapter defines Action Research within early childhood contexts, outlines the features, benefits, process and practicalities of Action Research and discusses some implications of an Action Research approach to international studies of aspects of early childhood care and education.

Keywords: research methodology, action research, early childhood

1. Introduction

Despite the increasing professionalisation of the early childhood field, it has been difficult until recently to convince many early childhood professionals about the necessity of change in their work with children and families. This has been the case especially when suggested changes have been proposed by people outside the early childhood field, such as researchers, policy makers and government administrators. Many early childhood practitioners currently perceive themselves professionals in their own right, and as such, are autonomous and independent of input from other professional groups. They also

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appear to regard themselves as members of an international community which has specific interests in and expertise with young children and their families. However, early childhood professionals have continued to be suspicious about advice, suggestions and directives from those without training and experience in early childhood care and education. This attitude appears to have arisen out of a supposed lack of familiarity by outside professionals with the philosophies and fundamental principles on which early childhood practice is based. However, the early childhood field throughout the world is one that is characterised by change.

Quality care and education of young children and involvement with their families demand that early childhood practitioners be responsive to constantly changing needs, expectations and demands (Rodd 1994). It is this demand to be receptive and responsive to change which necessitates ongoing evaluation and modification of professional practice. One approach to improving practitioner practice is through engaging in action research.

2. What is action research?

Many definitions can be found which attempt to explain the concept of Action Research for educators. However, as a scientific methodology, many educators find it difficult to understand the nature of Action Research because its application in educational settings tends to be unique and specific to circumstances including time, place and setting. Cohen and Manion (1994) asserted that inherent tension exists within the term itself because "action" and "research" are separate activities for many professionals. The reality is that the term "action research" has been used as an umbrella or generic term for a loose set of activities related to eclectic, self-reflective educational practice (McNiff 1988). Essentially, Action Research refers to research initiated and undertaken by practitioners into their own practice (Webb 1996). An underlying premise of this approach is that meaningful understanding about social activities require considerable appreciation of the perspectives, culture and world views of the people involved. It is most appropriately undertaken "whenever specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation" (Cohen & Manion 1994,194). In undertaking Action Research, early childhood practitioners attempt to deepen their understanding of children's development and learning while at the same time demonstrating their belief in their own ability to understand, evaluate and consequently improve the quality of their own practice. When undertaken appropriately, Action Research can provide an opportunity for early childhood practitioners to become actively and uniquely involved in their own practice, to professionalise and to articulate reasoned justification for their work with young children and families.

The following definitions can be helpful for early childhood practitioners to understand what Action Research means in terms of professional activities related to intervention, improvement and change in practice. Action Research is:

- an approach to professional development and improved learning in young children in which early childhood practitioners systematically reflect on their work and make changes in their practice (Borgia & Schuler 1996)

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- "inquiry" in which early childhood practitioners try to understand the particular individuals, actions, policies and events that make up their work environment in order to make professional decisions (Patterson & Shannon 1993)
- looking at one's own practice or situation, then reflecting and seeking support and feedback from colleagues (Borgia & Schuler 1996)
- a systematic, reflective, collaborative process that examines a situation for the purpose of planning, implementing and evaluating change (Garner 1996).

The key idea is that the researcher, that is the early childhood practitioner, is the expert (Walker 1985). As such, he or she possesses intimate knowledge about, understanding of and insight into the special contexts of early childhood care and education and the particular practical problems and challenges experienced in such contexts.

3. Some features of action research

Action Research differs from much traditional academic-based research in a number of ways. Conventional research methodologies tend to look at problems or issues at a particular point of time. They take a snapshot of a static moment in time. However, problems and issues are constantly changing in response to changing attitudes, situations and circumstances (Cohen & Manion 1994). With Action Research, the researcher, that is the practitioner, plays an active role in becoming a change agent by informing, encouraging, supporting, observing and interpreting what is going on. In Action Research, the researcher, that is the early childhood practitioner becomes part of the decision making process in the research endeavour. Consequently, the findings are in a form of shared stories or experience which contribute to knowledge, understanding and improvement in different ways to that of conventional academic research.

The following features differentiate Action Research from other methodological approaches (Uzzell 1995).

- Action Research is practical in that it should have practical consequences in addition to theoretical and discipline implications for participants.
- Action Research is participatory, collaborative and aims to equalise power relationships between those conducting research and those being researched.
- Action Research is emancipatory in that it places the subjects in positions of influence with regard to the research and their work contexts.
- Action Research is interpretative because the participants' perspectives are valued and considered to have validity.
- Action Research is critical because the participants engage in critical analysis of their own situation, develop possible plans of action and decide about the relevance and means of potential changes.

Other important features of Action Research have been identified by Hopkins (1993) and Cohen and Manion (1994) as follows.

- The essence of Action Research is that practitioners take a leadership role by systematically observing, planning, conducting and evaluating research into their own practice.
- The social basis of Action Research is involvement; the educational basis is improvement.
- Action Research is *research with* rather than *research on.*
- Action Research is *problem posing* rather than *problem solving.*

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- Action Research tends to be qualitative with emphasis on discovery and interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing, correlational studies, statistical analysis.
- Action Research tends to be a subjective study of one situation, and while the results may not be generalisable, it is widely acknowledged that professional development can occur as a result of access to the voices and experiences from others' lives, reflections, stories and attempts to respond to perceived need for change.

Action Research is one specific methodological approach and as such is better suited to investigating some issues and concerns rather than others. For example, where quantitative analyses of data are required, other methodologies which allow for statistical analysis are likely to be more appropriate. However, where interpersonal interaction, relationships and social processes are involved, such as in early childhood settings, Action Research can be more appropriate and useful (McNiff 1988).

4. Some benefits of action research

Because it is a time consuming endeavour, it is important that early childhood practitioners understand the benefits of engaging in Action Research. The desire to improve the quality of young children's care and educational experiences has been the focus of much research over recent years (MacNaughton 1996). While conventional methodologies tend to predominate, more recently the focus has shifted to include if not favour Action Research as a preferred methodology. This shift may be a result of particular benefits which arise from the Action Research model. For early childhood, Action Research can increase understanding of many theoretical and practical issues in the provision of culturally and socially responsive care and education (MacNaughton 1996, Stonehouse 1991). Other more specific benefits have been identified by Vulliamy and Webb (1991) and are listed as follows.

- Early childhood practitioners can investigate their own practice in a new way, taking a closer look at what the children actually do and what they themselves do.
- Solutions to young children's learning and effective teaching can be arrived at cooperatively.
- Early childhood practitioners seem to be more committed to implementation of solutions that they have been involved in designing.
- Action Research is an ongoing process, rather than a programme, which supports continuing professional development for early childhood practitioners.

Action Research takes a different perspective on the relationship between theory and practice. Rather than looking at theory as a body of ideas to be applied, Action Research is concerned with a body of understandings whose concern is to enlighten practitioners about their practice, to develop a breadth of awareness about practice and to use such insight in the critique of practice (Kelly & Rose 1996).

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5. The cyclical process of action research

Action Research offers an important methodology for early childhood professionals to use as a means of improving the quality of care and education for young children. Kelly and Rose (1996) argue that many early childhood settings are particularly appropriate for the adoption of the Action Research paradigm. The simplicity of the Action Research model means that it is relatively easy to apply in most settings with a basic background and training in research methodology. Action Research is usually described as a cyclical, five step process (Atkinson 1994, Walker 1985) similar to the one described below.

Step 1. Reconnaissance and observation to identify or diagnose a problem or concern using self reflection, collaborator reflection and dialogue.

Step 2. Planning and the development of a possible solution and a plan of action.

Step 3. Implementation and monitoring of the solution by taking observations and keep detailed documentary records,

Step 4. Evaluating and reflecting upon the effectiveness of the solution through data analysis and decision making.

Step 5. Modification one's ideas and practice in the light of the evaluation.

The steps in the cycle can take different amounts of time. However, the most effective Action Research tends to be associated with considerable time and effort put into the diagnostic, planning and development stage.

The tools used to undertake Action Research will be familiar to most early childhood professionals and include:

- Observation (self, other or participant)
- Self Study
- Dialogue
- In-depth interview
- Case study
- Narratives
- Documentation (observations, field notes, interactive journals, transcriptions, portfolios, audio visual material)
- Quantitative information (surveys, checklists, test scores)

Although there are many who criticise practitioner research on the basis of lack of expertise to undertake rigorous research (Webb 1996), it is apparent that many of the skills employed in Action Research are used in day to day work with children, staff and parents. However, while early childhood practitioners are still learning the intricacies about undertaking rigorous research within their work settings, collaborative relationships with professionals, such as university academics who possess highly developed research skills can facilitate and support practitioner research. Research partnerships between academics and practitioners can overcome many of the criticisms levelled at Action Research, such as lack of research expertise, over-familiarity with the work context, inappropriate project management, lack of significant findings, poor data analysis, lack of publication and dissemination of results and lack of generalisability to wider contexts. Such collaboration also can provide opportunities to translate gains made with regard to practice into educational theory which is accessible and meaningful to everyday practitioners.

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6. Components of action research

Because becoming engaged in Action Research can be perceived as yet another role and responsibility to take on, and yet another demand on the already heavy work load of early childhood practitioners, it is important that some non-research related considerations be highlighted. It has already been established that many early childhood practitioners begin and abandon Action Research projects for a range of reasons (Webb 1996). It appears that recognition by would-be researchers of the importance of other factors in the success of Action Research projects is an essential aspect. Borgia and Schuler (1996) outline what they call "The 5 Cs of Action Research" which refer to some other important components related to successful Action Research. They argue that involvement in Action Research includes the following components.

1. Commitment (giving and taking time, developing trust with participants)
2. Collaboration (sharing, giving, taking, listening, reflection, respect)
3. Concern (developing a support group of critical friends, risk taking)
4. Consideration (reflection about and critical assessment of one's professional actions)
5. Change (working towards growth, development and improvement in a nurturing, supportive environment)

Without support, encouragement and commitment from colleagues and research project participants, undertaking Action Research can be a threatening and demoralising experience. It is the interpersonal aspect of Action Research which makes it particularly relevant for early childhood practitioners, given the philosophical focus on the importance of positive and constructive interpersonal communication and relationships for all of the children and adults who are concerned with care and education services.

7. Action research as a methodology for international research

Action research has been characterised as being a subjective study of one situation (Borgia & Schuler 1996) with questions about the generalisability of research findings to wider contexts raised as a major limitation of this methodology (Webb 1996). Indeed, some critics argue that qualitative research methods, such as Action Research are impressionistic and non-verifiable (Allen 1991). However, the value of shared experience has been recognised by many early childhood practitioners within their own country, and interest in finding out about the experience of early childhood practitioners from different countries appears to be growing steadily. Nevertheless, while it may be interesting to find out about the practice of early childhood practitioners from other cultures and countries, it is important to recognise that different meanings may be attached to what appear to be similar practices. Comparing and understanding data from Action Research projects from a range of countries is not simply identifying similarities and differences in the data. Rather, the subtleties, levels and complexities of meaning will need to be recognised to help guard against superficial understanding.

Sampling is an important consideration. The data generated by Action Research projects from different countries may come from fundamentally different samples. Apart from variability between countries, there is likely to be variability within countries which

can affect the validity of the data. The range of provision in countries like Australia, Britain and the United States may generate biases in the data which may not be found in data collected in countries such as Finland or Russia where provision may be more standardised. It is important to ascertain how representative the data are of early childhood practice within each country so that potential variations are not masked. Moreover, different values, expectations, government regulations, funding policies and political environments are likely to influence what is provided for young children and consequently be reflected in the data collected. It is important that differences not be regarded as deficiencies in practice but merely alternative ways of meeting the needs of young children and their families in particular societies and cultures. The value of an international perspective on aspects of early childhood care and education is that it can provide insight into current practice throughout the world, an opportunity to judge the effectiveness and relevance of different practice in terms of conventions in our own country, and encourages reflection about how to improve practice within individual work contexts. In addition, having access to information about early childhood service provision in other countries gives an idea of what might be achievable in the future, that is, such information can be a window to the future.

The provision of early childhood care and education is a complex issue. It is important to understand what the differences and similarities are and how to improve the quality of care and education for young children throughout the world. However, it would be naive to attempt to attribute differences to single factors. The conception and implementation of care and education for young children throughout the world are embedded in culture and considerable qualitative differences are likely to be evident. Such differences reflect differing cultural conceptions of knowledge and appropriate practice which may not be relevant for other cultures.

Despite some potential limitations with the use of Action Research approaches in international studies, such a methodology can contribute to social scientific knowledge if the researchers from participating countries collect and analyse their data in systematic ways. Communication about the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation is essential in order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena and issues under investigation. Consequently, the collaborating researchers can ensure and be confident that they are examining the same range of phenomena and issues, generating common protocols for data analysis and guidelines for interpretation which can inform one another, provide for generalisability of findings and lead to refinement of the research process.

8. Conclusion

Action Research appears to offer a number of advantages for improving the quality of early childhood care and education as well as for increasing the professionalisation of early childhood practitioners. While enhancing practice may be the main aim for many early childhood professionals to undertake Action Research, the findings resulting from the use of this methodology can also contribute to advances in theoretical understanding about the care and education, teaching and learning of young children which is grounded

in practice. However, all research is influenced by the ideology of both the individual researcher as well as the culture and society in which he or she lives. While careful analysis and interpretation of international or intercultural data from an Action Research methodology are cautioned, Action Research can offer a means for change and improved quality that can be grounded in a comparative cultural as well as a critical theoretical perspective. International studies by experts within their own field can promote understanding about trends in change, the effects of various practices and other factors operating within the system and inform national and local policies in countries throughout the world.

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Two conceptions of action research: A continuation of traditional social research and a new, critical social science

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Abstract

This article presents two approaches to action research in education. It is characteristic of the Anglo-American approach to view action research as small-scale research with an emphasis on improving practice. From this point of view, action research is a continuation of traditional social research in the field of education and conventional research techniques can be employed. This approach to action research has put forward notions of the critical, reflective, and spiral-like nature of action research, although constructing a systematic, philosophical-epistemological framework has not been taken very far. The continental approach to action research began in the 1970's and had a somewhat ambitious aim to develop it as a new and critical social science. This new social science was not intended merely for practitioners to improve their practice, but for all social scientists to employ. The German school of action research sought to justify this new social science through the notions of Marxist philosophy and viewed action research as radically equal and discursive research bridging the gap between social reality and science. Philosophical-epistemological principles and conclusions were also drawn on the level of research techniques and quality criteria. This approach to action research as a critical social science was based on non-reificative and non-alienating research techniques as well as on evaluation carried out using quality criteria fundamentally different from the quality criteria of traditional social research.

This article concludes by making some preliminary remarks on the suitablility of the two approaches to action research for current educational research. The restriction of the Anglo-American approach to action research is that it makes research appear semi-scientific and it can only be justified by improvement of practice. Further on, in the Anglo-American approach to action research, the relationship between the philosophical-epistemological level and the level of research techniques appears unclear. The strength of the German approach to action

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research is the consistent and systematic nature of its philosophical and epistemological basis. Despite this, it never fulfilled its aim of democratisation and emancipation. In addition, the German approach to action research never succeeded to outline what discourse and dialogue would mean when action research is carried out in a context involving children in kindergartens or day-care centres.

Keywords: action research, methodology, critical science

1. Introduction

Educational researchers seem to agree on the essential features of action research at a very general level. Action research is usually defined as a form of collective and co-operative, self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social or educational situations in order to improve the productivity, rationality, and justice of their own social or educational practices. Most definitions also emphasise that action research aims to integrate the research act into the social or educational setting so that research can play a direct and immediate role in the improvement of practice. Further, educational researchers emphasise that action research aims to overcome the distance between researchers and practitioners, or theory and practice, by assisting practitioners to become researchers and sometimes even vice versa. (e.g. Kemmis 1994, 42, Kemmis & McTaggart 1988, Moser 1975, Elliot 1998, 10, Syrjälä 1998) As the above definitions indicate, at a general level it is rather easy to define action research. However, it is much more complicated to attempt to define what it is at the level of methods and research techniques. Also, it is difficult to determine what type of research projects can actually be considered to be action research. Syrjälä (1998, 11) has managed to point out this problem well, as follows:

> "these projects (of action research; J. P. & T. H.) are very different as to their origins and ways of approach. This is understandable, for action research is rather a commitment than techniques, a commitment to exploration, research into meanings."

Huschke-Rein (1987, 182) has stated in a similar way, that at present action research in education is not as much a single, clearly defined research technique, as a philosophical framework. On the level of field work, action research projects appear to be conglomerates of various research techniques or procedures, and only through these specific research techniques can action research gain its final form.

The current discussion on action research seems to imply that the notion of action research embodies two levels: (a) a general, philosophical level on which it has been attempted to outline the general principles and to describe the goals as well as the views of truth and rationality suitable for action research, and (b) a more specific level of research techniques, on which for instance the techniques of data collection and analysis, as well as other issues related to field work, are reflected. These two levels outlined share a close but very complex relationship that often appears to be inconsistent as well. We believe this to be the consequence of the discussion over the methodology of action research's failure to draw a sufficient analytical distinction between the two levels.

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In this article, we attempt to clarify the concept of action research by examining it at the general philosophical level as well as at the level of specific research methods and techniques. We argue that at the general level (from this onwards the philosophical and epistemological level) action research can be understood in two basic ways: (a) It can be perceived as a continuation of the traditional social sciences motivated by the improvement of practice as often seen in the Anglo-American tradition. Assuming this, it does not differ essentially or radically from traditional social research (except perhaps in the sense that improving practice in some way or another is emphasised above all, and in order to achieve this end, meeting the quality criteria of the traditional scientific research has to be compromised). (b) Another possibility is to see action research as a completely new kind of critical social research, as the next paradigm in the social sciences. This radical view, developed first in the German-speaking countries in the 1970's, carries with it considerable consequences, concerning for instance, the quality criteria of research (objectivity, reliability, validity). In this article, we will outline these two possible philosophical positions, and conclude by examining their consequences on carrying out and evaluating action research projects.

2. Action research as a practically motivated continuation of traditional social research

2.1. A brief historical overview

Several outlines of the history of action research seem to share the view that the application of experimental social science to study various educational problems was initiated in the United States by social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Petzold (1980) and Gunz (1986), however, have argued that instead of Lewin, it was J. L. Moreno, a physician, social philosopher, poet, and the inventor of sociometry, who first used the term "action research". With an aim to improve social situations by social scientific research, Moreno insisted on the use of field-based approach, participant observation, and participation of lay people in the research process. Gunz (1986, 29) states that Moreno, writing in 1913, expressed the view that group participants should be used as "co-researchers" in development initiatives.

Corey (1953) adapted Lewin's conception of action research to improve school practice. Together with his colleagues at Teachers College at Columbia University, Corey embarked upon on-going curriculum projects in collaboration with the schools' personnel. Corey pointed out within the context of these research projects in the 50's, that definite change in educational practice can only be achieved by involving school teachers in curriculum improvement and innovation. (see e.g. Hollingsworth 1994, 6096.)

In the late 1950's, action research in education began to decline after a decade of growth. Sanford (1970) saw this as the consequence of a growing separation between research and educational practice. Especially in the United States, large-scale curriculum development and evaluation became exceedingly important in comparison to the essentially small-scale, locally organised approach of action research. According to Kemmis (1988, 44), the technical R and D (research-development) model established itself as the

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favoured model for change and improvement of educational practice in the mid-1960's. The position of action research became somewhat marginal.

The work of the Ford Teaching Project in the United Kingdom in 1973-1976 was possibly the most important cause for the recovery of contemporary interest in educational action research in the English-speaking world. John Elliot and Clem Adelman supervised the project, which had been based to some extent on the notion of a teacher as a researcher and an extended professional, as developed by Lawrence Stenhouse (see e.g. 1975). Stenhouse believed that a teacher cannot be expected to simply follow the rules of the power hierarchy of researchers and politicians. Instead, one should actively participate in the curriculum development process and researchers should aid and support the professional growth of the teacher, rather than to attempt to control it.

Altrichter & Gstettner (1993, 351-352) saw it as a typical characteristic of the developers of English action research to begin their projects in a rather pragmatic vein based on their background and experience in curriculum research. They appeared more interested in clarifying the values and aims of education, as well as examining its processes, dynamics, and evolution, than in outlining philosophical foundations of action research. Another typical characteristic of English action research has been the emphasis on the participants. For example, Stenhouse (1985, 57) stated that professionals in education cannot, and should not, submit their responsibility for the education process to any external agency, no more to academic research than to political decision makers. Action research should be carried out by a practitioner, rather than an outsider. It would be possible for the practitioner and the academic researcher to collaborate, however. Elliott (1985) insisted researchers carry out "second order action research" with the purpose of coming up with a framework to support a teacher's reflection and action.

Among Finnish educational researchers, an interest in action research arose in the 1980's. One of the main inputs in the Finnish action research has been by Syrjälä (1994, 1998), whose definition of action research is largely based on the Anglo-American tradition. She bases her definition on Zeichner's (1993) view, as follows:

> "...The term action research has been used somewhat vaguely to describe the research of practitioners on their own practices. It is not relevant to initiate a debate on how to define what correct action research is, which stages the research process should go through, what the input of the external agencies should be, or what form the collaboration of the practitioners should take. It is more relevant to appreciate and support the co-operation of the practitioners and researchers." (Syrjälä 1994, 33.)

Like Elliot and Stenhouse, Syrjälä (1994, 35) emphasises the starting point of action research should be normative and practical in nature. The purpose is to encourage teachers and educators to analyse their work with an aim to improve the practice and to increase their understanding of it. From the point of view of educational research, the main aim of action research is to promote the professional growth of teachers. (Syrjälä 1994, 34-35, Syrjälä 1998, 9-10.)

To summarise, the Anglo-American and Finnish action research in education have been rather practical in their approach. Usually the starting point has been a specific problem in a specific setting, and there has been no great concern for meeting the quality criteria of conventional social research. There is no clear distinction between theory and practice. The most important feature in the Anglo-American and Finnish action research in education from the methodological point of view has been to see action research as

a continuation of traditional social research. It has been approached as a certain kind of research method particularly suitable for teachers and practitioners that can sometimes bring results of theoretical importance, with the main emphasis always remaining on improving the practice. The following view by Cohen & Manion illustrates well this approach to action research:

> "Action researchinterprets the scientific method much more loosely (than applied research; J. P. & T. H.), chiefly because its focus is a specific problem in a specific setting. The emphasis is not so much on obtaining generalisible scientific knowledge as on precise knowledge for a particular situation and purpose. (Cohen & Manion 1997, 187.)"

There have been some attempts to justify action research epistemologically and philosophically in Finnish and Anglo-American literature on action research. Some elaborations seem to have succeeded in this to a considerable extend. An example of this is the work of Kemmis (e.g. Kemmis 1988, 1994, Carr & Kemmis 1986), in which he has attempted to construct a solid foundation for action research using the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas (see e.g. Habermas 1972, 1973). Kemmis has been an important source of reference in a number of texts on action research, even though the interpretation and application of his ideas have often remained at a surficial level.

2.2. The methodology of action research

Several Anglo-American and Finnish researchers in education (e.g. Carr & Kemmis 1986, 186-187, Räsänen 1993, 45-47) have emphasised that at the level of a specific project, action research is (or at least it should be) a self-reflective spiral in which it is shifted between the stages of planning, action, and reflection. Perhaps the most frequently cited description of the self-reflective spiral of action research is given by Carr & Kemmis

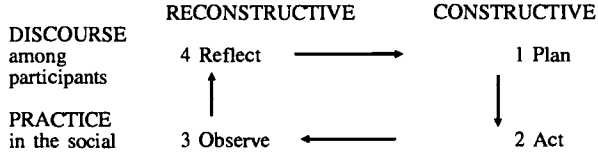

Fig. 1. The self-reflecting spiral of action research (Carr & Kemmis 1986, 186).

(1986, 186). They use the notions of reconstruction and construction to describe the spiral-like, or cyclical structure, of action research (Fig. 1).

The spiral of self-reflection links reconstruction of the past with construction of the concrete and the immediate, and is also essentially participatory in the sense that it involves participants in reflection. It also locates the process of action research in the social context, as well as in the process of history. (Carr & Kemmis 1986, 186-187.)

It is apparent that the spiral-like, or cyclical structure, of action research (Figure 1), or the notion of collective reflection, do not in themselves provide an adequate methodological arsenal for action research. Syrjälä (1994, 42-43) suggests that in data collection and analysis, methods and techniques relevant to the situation in question should be employed, making the most out of the methods employed in the particular, limited set of circumstances of the workplace. She points out that in principle, the methods used in action research are the same as in traditional qualitative social research (the interview, observation, making field notes, recording etc.). In a similar fashion, Cohen & Manion (1997, 192) hold that the step-by-step process of action research ought to be constantly monitored by several different data collection techniques (for example questionnaires, diaries, interviews, and case studies). Information should be collected, shared, discussed, and recorded, as well as evaluated and acted upon, at every stage of the research process. Bassey (1986, 19-20) also appears to share Cohen & Manion's view of utilising the techniques of traditional social research in action research. According to Bassey, data can be collected from pupils, parents, and teachers through the use of observations, interviews, and even tests.

The developers of Anglo-American action research do not appear to have clearly elucidated the relationship between the philosophical foundation and the specific research techniques of action research. Instead, they have simply referred to the notions of collective reflection and the self-reflective spiral as the foundation of action research in an abstract manner, while at the same time suggesting that it is possible to employ the very same research techniques used in any other social research. This would suggest action research is perceived as a continuation of the traditional social research, at least at the level of research methods and techniques (Fig. 2).

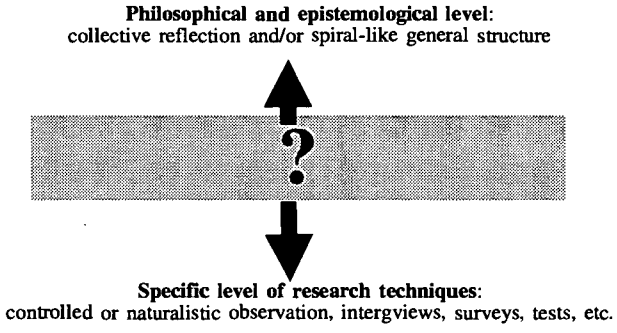

Fig. 2. Action research as a continuation of traditional social research.

Projects to improve classroom practice may be seen as an application of action research, as featured in Figure 2. It may prove to be an appropriate structure with which a teacher can base the research of a specific problem. The difficulty in featuring action research as above is that it does not show what would make action research a scientific endeavour. As a consequence, if featured as above, action research can be seen as theoretically and

methodologically unfeasible, and as research that can only be justified by its applicability for improving practice. This approach also easily leads into thinking that action research should be evaluated according to the quality criteria (objectivity, reliability, validity) of traditional social research. Using these criteria is problematic in the sense that it makes action research appear as semi-scientific research that does not meet the accountability criteria of scientific research to any considerable extent.

3. Action research as a new, critical social science

Action research was perceived as the new paradigm in the social sciences in German-speaking countries in the 1970's. The developers of German action research were heavily influenced by Marxist sociology and especially the continental, Western Marxist school called the critical theory of Frankfurt School.

In the 1980's, attempts to outline a new, critical philosophical and epistemological basis for action research also emerged in the English speaking countries. The so called critical theory of Frankfurt School, and especially Habermas's (1972, 1973) contemporary version, were again an important source for development (see Carr & Kemmis 1986, Kemmis 1988). But, as the development of action research as critical social research was more widely used and taken further by the German researchers, we are going to examine the German tradition here more closely.

3.1. A brief historical overview

After a thorough examination of the history of action research in the German speaking countries, Altrichter & Gstettner (1993, 332) stated that the concept of 'action research' had been discussed in German social science and science of education since the mid-1960's. Some kind of boom could be noticed in action research at the end of the 1960's, coinciding with the restoration phase of the German post-war society, when the so-called "economic miracle" (Wirtschaftswunder) faced sudden and strong opposition from the younger generation. In German universities, research in education had just begun to be challenged by "more modern" empirical approaches after the long tradition of the hermeneutic approach (Siljander 1988, 127-128). One of the arguments used to challenge the hermeneutic approach to research in education was the claim that it proved to be contemplative and, did not establish any improvement in education (Klafki 1976, 42, Mollenhauer 1970). This lead into some younger generation researchers perceiving action research as a method to overcome possible deficiencies in the hermeneutic approach to research in education.

The most significant theoretical aspects of action research were developed in the German-speaking countries between 1970 and 1980. Unlike in the Anglo-American tradition, the starting point of action research was not the practical problems of educators or curriculum development, but instead action research development was embarked upon systematically, perceiving it as the next paradigm or critical theory of the social sciences (Moser 1975). This approach to action research took it some distance from the earlier

traditions of its history, especially the social-psychological approach developed by Lewin on the basis of his field theory. Instead of the social-psychological approach, Marxist philosophy was employed as the theoretical and philosophical framework for action research. In his famous article, sometimes perceived as the seminal paper for the German action research movement, Fuchs (1970/1971, 2) outlines this formation of the philosophical framework of action research as follows:

> "Empirical social science is an occult science.(Its) methodological doctrine is only productive as long as it is unknown to the great majority of the population. If all potential test persons were well informed about its techniques, they would be no longer applicable. Then, social research would be dependent on the test persons' voluntary and rational co-operation in the research process. Thus, differences of knowledge and competence, which are products of the social system, are significant in the application of this methodological doctrine." (Fuchs 1970/1971, 2, translated by Altrichter & Gstettner 1993.)

We see Fuchs talking here about an issue in the continental tradition of thought that has been considered to be the cause of separation of natural scientific research from social scientific research. It is a question of the nature of the research object and its characteristics, resulting the justification of action research to be anthropological in the end. This justification can be briefly outlined as follows: the object of social research, the human being, possesses a characteristic to become aware of the "regularities" which determine his or her actions. Considering this, social sciences are in the end a way of increasing the awareness of the human being of him or herself. In other words, action research is based on the notions of (a) the human being possessing an ability to become aware of the regularities and mechanisms that can be used to explain his or her actions, and (b) the human being is able to decide (to some extent) whether or not to choose to function within these mechanisms and regularities. Thus, action research should be seen as a self-reflective process, in which ideally, the human being, as an individual as well as a member of a society, becomes increasingly aware of the reasons for his or her actions. Against the background outlined, it is easy to see that the developers of action research in the German-speaking countries in the 1970's did not perceive action research only as a continuation of the traditional, empirical social research, or as a way to improve teachers' professional growth. Moser (1975, 9) describes action research as follows:

> "The main point is that action research could be understood as a shift of paradigm in the social sciences. It begins with the theory of truth that in a traditional social research is conceived as monological. In the framework of action research paradigm the theory of truth, however, is transformed from a monological into a dialogical form."

Fuchs, as well as succeeding researchers representing the new, critical approach to action research, started with a notion that mere "critical application" of the results of traditional, empirical social research is not enough. Not only the interpretation and application of the final results, but also the research process itself, should be founded on ideology critique as well as on social critique. It was also attempted to justify this requirement by using systematic philosophical and epistemological argumentation. For instance, Moser (1975, 79-80) and Heinze *et al.* (1975, 27) began with the notion that in social sciences, the researcher always has two positions, whether desired or not: when observing the object domain, he or she is also always a part of it. Researchers who based their work on dialectical materialism (see e.g. Holzkamp 1972, Moser 1975) combined this idea with the Marxist notion of alienation. Moser (1975), for example, saw traditional

social research as alienating, for it was based on separating the researchers clearly from those researched, as well as on drawing an artificial distinction between social practice and social theory. Moser (ibid.) also claimed that traditional social research stemmed from a monological, authoritative view of human practice. In that sense, traditional social research does not increase social equality, nor create better opportunities for the critical examination of educational problems in discourse. Instead, it can be seen to reproduce and strengthen the existing power hierarchies. This leads into a circle of alienation in which false consciousness and false practice feed on each other. (Holzkamp 1972, Rammsted 1979, 41, Kramer *et al.* 1979, 24-26.)

Because of the problems outlined above, the developers of the German school of action research ultimately wished to abolish the traditional social research, or at least to overcome its hegemony. The aim was to develop a new paradigm of the social sciences that was not intended to be merely a tool of the educators or the practitioners, but instead something to be followed by everyone engaged in the social sciences. Moser (1972, 1975) outlined the philosophical and epistemological foundation of the new paradigm as follows:

(1) Detachment of science from everyday practice is artificial and elitist. Every researcher must become a practitioner, and every practitioner must become a researcher. (Moser 1972, 656.)

(2) The theory of truth in the background of science and research must be radically dialogical or discursive in nature. In the end, scientific propositions, as all other propositions, must gain their validity only in discourse, in which all the participants must take part as equals (Moser, 1975, 85).

(3) Traditional social science must be transformed into a critical social science (Fig. 3).

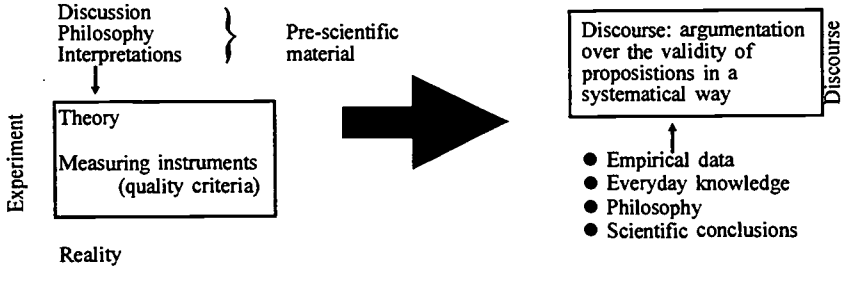

Fig. 3. The transformation of traditional social science into a critical social science (Moser 1975, 10).

According to Moser (1975), in the traditional, social scientific approach (a) pre-scientific knowledge and scientific theories are strictly distinguished, (b) the empirical data obtained from "reality" as a result of scientific experiments is considered to falsificate or to verificate the hypotheses, and (c) the accountability of scientific knowledge is determined according to the traditional quality criteria (objectivity, reliability, validity) of measurements. In new, critical social science, empirical data, everyday knowledge, philosophy and scientific conclusions are equal in importance in relation to social reality.

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They have to be tested and questioned in a discourse in which all the members of the society have to be able to participate as equals.

3.2. The methodology of action research

It is obvious that if the new, critical approach to social sciences developed in the German-speaking countries in the 1970's is adopted, it has implications for the methodology of action research. Moser (1975) and Radtke (1975) hold that action research in practice must not be simply a continuation of the traditional social sciences, but instead it has to be based completely on the new, critical philosophy. According to Altrichter & Gstettner (1993, 331- 332), at the level of carrying out a research, this means that the research process must be radically discursive and emancipatory rather than alienating and reificative.

Moser's view on research techniques was that all techniques and methods carrying with them even the slightest possibility for the misuse of power or control should not be employed. Many of the traditional research methods in sociology and education (structured interviews, observation systems, surveys, tests) cannot thus be employed, for they embody the prevailing power hierarchies disguised as scientific neutrality. If they are used, there is a danger of the leading principles of democratisation and emancipation in action research becoming perverted (Moser, 1975, 127-128). This does not mean, however, that in new, critical action research all the methods of traditional social research should be rejected. According to Moser (1975), phenomenological, symbolic-interactionistic, and hermeneutic traditions of social research offer non-alienating and non-reificative methods that can be employed in action research.

The developers of critical social research sought to systematically elaborate the quality criteria for action research. In Moser's opinion (1975, 117-127), the main quality criteria of traditional social research (objectivity, reliability, validity) would have to be formulated all over again. For instance, objectivity should be replaced by *transparency* (Transparenz), with the meaning of the research process and its elements to be as open for, and as readily understandable by, all the participants as possible. In addition to that, all the participants ought to have an equal opportunity to influence decisions concerning the research process.

Reliability and validity have to be replaced by *compatibility* (Stimmigkeit), a criteria that at its highest level means that the aims and the methods of research have to be in a harmonious relationship between each other. Compatibility also requires that the researcher avoid deliberately distorting any observations and interpretations when collecting data. (Moser 1975, 123.)

However, according to Moser (1975) and Radtke (1975), the ultimate and final quality criteria for an action research project is always the *discourse*: action research as a project as well as its final results have to be tested and questioned in an open discourse. Figure 4 is a summary of how the new, critical action research could be perceived at the philosophical and epistemological level, as well as at the specific level of research methods and techniques.

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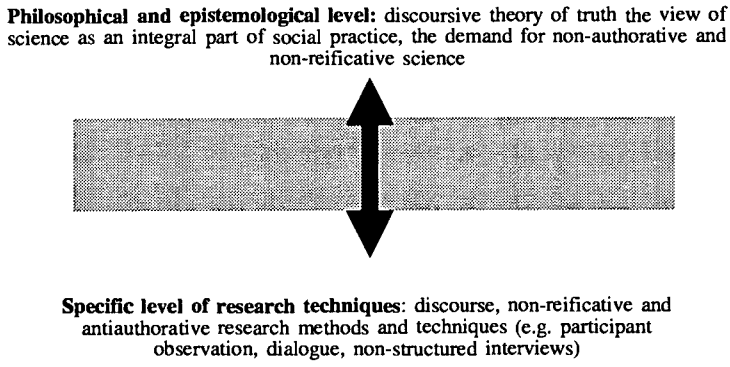

Fig. 4. Action research as a critical social science.

4. Discussion

In this article we have examined two approaches to action research in education. It has been characteristic of the English-speaking countries and the Anglo-American curriculum theory to view action research as small-scale research with its emphasis on improving practice. From this point of view, action research is a continuation of traditional social research in the field of education and teaching. Although Anglo-American action research has put forward notions of the critical, reflective, and spiral-like nature of action research, constructing a systematic, philosophical-epistemological framework has not been taken very far. The Anglo-American and Finnish researchers in education have considered that the methods of traditional social research can also be employed in action research – these would include the so-called qualitative methods, and possibly most other methods, such as tests, observation systems, and statistical data analysis.

The continental action research movement in the1970's had on its behalf, a somewhat ambitious aim to develop a new and critical social science in the form of action research. This new social science was not intended simply for practitioners to improve their practice, but for all social scientists to employ. The German school of action research sought to justify this new social science through the notions of Marxist philosophy and viewed action research as radically equal and discursive research bridging the gap between social reality and science.

From these philosophical-epistemological principles, conclusions were also drawn on the level of research techniques and quality criteria. Action research as a critical social science should use non-reificative and non-alienating research methods and techniques, and its evaluation ought to be based on quality criteria that are fundamentally different from the quality criteria of traditional social research.

It is not possible to systematically compare these two different conceptions of action research or to analyse their strengths and weaknesses in depth in the scope of this article. A few, preliminary remarks on these issues can be made, however. One basic problem with the conception of action research as a continuation of traditional social research may be considered to be that from this angle, action research projects often appear to

be semi-scientific and only justifiable by the aim of improving practice. In projects to improve practice, the quality criteria of traditional social research are often not met and at the same time the question of whether action research is actually scientific research or not remains somewhat open. Another basic problem with the Anglo-American action research conception is the often unclear relationship between the postulates emphasising reflectivity and spiral-like structure as the basis of research, and the research methods and techniques actually employed. In real-life action research projects, these levels sometimes contradict. Projects may be described according to the notions of emancipation, spiral-like structure, critical approach and reflection. At the level of research methods and techniques, however, a rather traditional social research is actually carried out.

The strength of the German action research conception of the 1970's is that it is theoretically consistent and systematic in nature. When assessing its suitability for being the starting point of action research in education today, various aspects ought to be considered, however. First of all, attention should be paid to the factors that caused the decline of the German action research movement in the 1980's (see Altrichter & Gstettner 1993). Attention should also focus on considering why – in contrast to the aspirations of the developers of the critical action research – the German action research movement failed to bring about a radical transformation of society, or significant democratisation in the field of education and teaching. Also, the call for free and open discourse and dialogue by the German developers of action research appears problematic, particularly in the contexts of early childhood education and care. In the contexts in which all participants are adults, the systematic use of discourse based on equality and openness can perhaps be justified in theory and practice. But, it could be asked, what would a discourse or dialogue based on equality mean in research carried out, for example, in kindergartens or day-care centres, where the majority of the participants are young children. It is interesting to note that the German developers of action research, as well as the current, critically oriented Anglo-American approach to action research (Carr & Kemmis 1986, Kemmis 1994), have left this essential question largely unscrutinised.

Finally, we would like to draw attention to two more things. First, in this article, two different ways to perceive action research have been presented in a rather ideal-typical fashion. In real life, action research projects would often include aspects of both the views as well as the aspects of many other approaches to research in education. And, second – especially if one wishes to consider the "real" benefit of action research conceptions to the improvement of practice – it would be wise to bear in mind that education and child-care as a practice are very complicated processes with various sides to them. On most occasions, it is simply not possible to predict what results a choice of a certain conception of action research or a philosophical-epistemological framework would finally bring about.

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Part II: Cultural Perspectives on Leadership

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Acta Univ. Oul. E 35, p 95-108

Leadership in early childhood in Australia: A national review[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to establish the current context of leadership development in early childhood settings in Australia. Taking into account contextual dilemmas including the impact of regulations and government funding cuts on service provision, obstacles to leadership development in this country are examined. A review of contemporary Australian research on leadership in general and within early childhood in particular, is presented. Also included is the story of how Australia became involved in the ILP. In conclusion, questions and challenges on reconceptualising leadership in early childhood are identified.

Keywords: Australia, leadership, early childhood, research

Section 1: The context of leadership in early childhood settings in Australia

1.1. Introduction

Leadership is a topic of popular discussion amongst Australians concerned about political and economic development. Often, the inadequacies of current political leaders or their lack of leadership provide the impetus for these discussions. Under attack are their

1 I wish to thank my co-researchers, Associate Professor Terry Nienhuys for enabling the development of Australia's participation in this project and for funding research assistants Romana Morda and Anthoula Kapsalakis.

leadership styles, skills and ideologies underpinning their beliefs and actions. Inclusion of female politicians or business leaders are rare, and they are brought into the conversations as an after thought and/or to provide comic relief, perceived as caricatures of failed leaders. Trustworthiness, decisiveness and ability to communicate well are often used to assess the quality of leadership (see Sarros & Butchatsky 1996). The success or failure of leaders is commonly measured along competencies derived "within an androcentric framework, that is, with male experience (and expertise) treated as the norm." (Weeks 1994,152) This is the cultural milieu, against which Australian early childhood educators (ECEs) must review their leadership qualities and directions for the future.

Leaders have power and influence over others. Power, Cox (1996,13) argues is "gendered masculine", as the rewards of leadership have been essentially based on beliefs culturally valued and defined by and for men. "Women are rarely valued for speaking out, for their strength of will or their risk taking. Their rewards come from conformity, compliance and comfort." (Cox 1996, 8) Through her personal experiences, Cox, an articulate and experienced feminist critic and political activist, has found that stepping outside these expectations evokes painful personal criticism, being described as unfeminine, immodest and even unprofessional. It is therefore not surprising that within a female oriented profession such as Early Childhood, emergent roles as political activists and business managers would be marginalised and deemed inappropriate for those working with children. The pervasive nature of such attitudes and beliefs within the EC field is a major stumbling block in the development of leadership.

"The primary importance of the 'on-site leader' in creating a positive culture" (Hayden 1996,8) is well documented. Yet, there is much confusion regarding who is ultimately responsible for what goes on in a child care centre or preschool in Australia. There are no national requirements for the purposes of registration and management of centres. Operational procedures and criteria for children's services are defined under state and territory licensing regulations. These regulations vary greatly between the 8 states and territories.

Usually there is a separation between the licensee or the proprietor of the service and the person-in-charge who supervisors the day-to-day administration. In non-profit community owned centres, the licensee status is usually held by the service sponsor, who may be the local government council, church organisation or a parent management committee consisting of a group of volunteers drawn from families who use the service. In commercial private centres, the licensee could be the individual who owns the centre or a body corporate, consisting of a private company or business chain. In either case, the licensee can appoint another person to be the PIC or the centre co-ordinator/director to manage the centre on a day-to-day basis.

It is possible for one person to hold both positions as licensee/centre owner and director/centre manager. To register as a business, the licensee must meet all conditions for approval of a licence including provisions for staffing, buildings and grounds and health and safety. Early childhood qualifications or experience in children's services are usually not mandatory for either position. Apart from setting an age limit (such as, over 18 years in Victoria) details regarding the suitability of the applicants for either position are sketchy. It is indeed a concern that legal accountability for the children's care, education and welfare may be held by someone who is neither appropriately qualified nor experienced in early childhood matters. In non-profit centres there is further confusion

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because of the blurring of boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of the employer and the employee. By being on the centre's Board of Management, the same parent could at once be a client and an employer. It could be argued that such anomalies can exacerbate the ECE's reluctance or ambivalence in adopting a higher profile in leadership and management.

Similarly, one of the main difficulties of doing research in this area is that there is no central agency in Australia which regularly collects information on ECEs working in the field at any time. The main federal government department funding child care, collected data only on those services it funded, and this did not always include all chidlren's services. State funded preschools in paricular, were excluded from this data collection. Since there is no national professional registration body or central employment agency, the primary source for contacting ECEs is to go through their employing agency, such as a child care centre or preschool. Use of membership records of trade unions or professional organisations such as the Australian Early Childhood Association, provide biased and limited samples due to low levels of individual subscription. The absence of reliable and accurate data in official statistics and the fragmented nature of the employment conditions also illustrate the low status of ECEs in this country.

Over ten years ago, Stonehouse (1988) urged the Australian early childhood field to move beyond the traditional image of being "nice ladies who love children". Stonehouse argued that the collective lack of confidence, divisiveness between the various sectors as well as a sense of smugness in being child development experts, all reinforced the poor public profile and low status of EC personnel. In identifying various tasks to achieve future success, Stonehouse included the development of a code of ethics for the profession, a national nomenclature to identify the roles and functions of ECEs and an accreditation system for services and personnel.

Australia now has a code of ethics and a national system of quality improvement and accreditation for long day care centres. Yet, there is still no national agreement about job titles, levels of pay, competencies or conditions of work. Likewise, trade unions which have fought to secure better industrial conditions for ECEs continue to reinforce the false dichotomy between care and education, by retaining separate awards for teachers and child care workers. There are signs of increasing political awareness and sophistication of ECEs though much remains to be done as services and personnel are under much pressure to provide more at a higher quality for less costs. In this climate, those who aspire to be leaders, may find it difficult to obtain the necessary knowledge or skills to assume and/or create new leadership roles for a variety of other reasons peculiar to the EC field.

1.2. Obstacles to leadership development

Leadership, which is inextricably linked to power has an uneasy relationship with women, particularly amongst ECEs (see Brennan 1994; Clyde *et al.* 1994; Kelly 1987). Power is antithetical to women (Cox 1996,17). For ECEs to engage in any discussions about power and politics means departing from their zone of comfort involving children and families. Many are also deterred by limited knowledge, awareness and lack of skills.

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Others may take a moral stance arguing that politics are unnecessary and inappropriate (ie, unprofessional) for those working with children. Yet, one could argue that communication and negotiation skills are fundamental in the management of daily routines and relationships between various individuals involved with a child care centre. Accordingly, the development of sound interpersonal relationships is critical to effective management and is therefore a valid and relevant aspect of leadership study (Rodd 1996).

This characteristic of undervaluing of one's skills and abilities is inherent amongst women in business and management (Karpin 1995). Part of the responsibility for the collective lack of confidence and competence amongst ECEs lies with the preservice training programs which have neglected the study of leadership and power (Rodd 1994). Today, most university based EC courses appear to be addressing this need. However, postgraduate courses on leadership training aimed at those who obtained their initial qualifications five or more years ago and need to upgrade and improve their repertoire of leadership skills, are few and cost prohibitive. Research shows that this lack of specific training and financial considerations emanating from child care workers' poor working conditions were major barriers to leadership development.

Existing research also indicate that many caregivers reported that despite their training, as centre directors there was a high degree of learning on-the-job (Kelly *et al.* 1989, Hayden 1996). Leadership is a learnt trait and mentorship is one way of acquiring a sound grounding on how leadership works in practice. Most child care centres in Australia are however small, autonomous organisations employing less than 50 ECEs, many of whom are part-timers or casual workers. Combined with this, the unusually high staff turnover rates within the Australian child care industry as noted by those such as Baker and Robertson (1992) have also meant relatively short periods of tenure within the sector and the absence of "experienced, role model directors who can provide inspirational leadership" (Hayden 1996,60).

Absence of a well defined career path can also mitigate against further study and advancing beyond the role of the centre director who manages a good business. A decade earlier, Kelly (1987,11) found that

> "there was little financial inducement for experienced teachers even those who have completed either a BEd degree or a postgraduate diploma course to leave their centres and move into either advisory or tertiary teaching positions."

Despite the massive expansion of child care centres during the 1990s, employment opportunities for ECEs continue to be hampered by poor pay relativities within the field between child care and preschool staff, and against those working in allied professions. As Heilier (1996,23) notes, a child care centre director's average weekly income (ie, $A 672.90 pwk) may be less than that of a registered nurse (ie, $A 707.50), a primary school teacher (ie, $A709.10) and a social worker (ie, $A681.10). None of these professionals may have the responsibilities of managing a substantial budget and a group of staff, in the way child care centre directors do. Yet, ECEs continue to suffer from lack of recognition and poor status accorded to their profession, perceived as an extension of unpaid mother care (Brennan 1994).

Culturally, petty jealousy based on the Australian ethos of the tall poppy syndrome also acts as an inhibitor to leadership development. Within the relatively small population of early childhood professionals in Australia, it is easy to identify and cut down an individual with leadership potential advancing too far ahead of the pack. Professorial

appointments at universities and representation on ministerial advisory committees denote the highest levels of public recognition accorded to early childhood educators. Successful appointment may be dependent on strategic planning and networking skills of the candidate to secure peer approval. Today, public ceremonies such as the industry awards for best practice in Victoria, and the initiation of an award in recognition of excellence in doctoral research in ECE in Australia, provide new avenues for public acknowledgment and celebration of achievements by EC personnel. It is argued that award ceremonies, like traditions and symbols, enhance and strengthen group cohesion, a necessary first step in the development of leadership.

1.3. Review of Australian studies on leadership in early childhood

The study of leadership by Australian early childhood educators is relatively new as indicated by the paucity of local research in this area (Rodd 1996). There are no national studies which deal with Leadership in Early Childhood exclusively; instead discussions on leadership issues generally appear in research which focus on broader aspects of staffing and management, including staff perceptions about their roles and responsibilities (for example, Clyde & Rodd 1992; Croll *et al.* 1993; Kelly *et al.* 1989; Hayden 1996). This makes it difficult to use this data to extend our understanding about leadership issues. For instance, although Croll *et al.* (1989,12) stated that "sound and sensitive leadership qualities are critical elements in the development and maintenance of programs", exactly what these translate to in the day-to-day functions of the director's work at the centre, was not specified. It is assumed that some elements of the director's work dealing with staff (eg, supervision), parents (eg development), children (centre planning) and administration (eg financial planning) require leadership qualities of vision, communication and decisiveness.

Current understandings about the characteristics, skills and attributes of Australian early childhood leaders are largely derived from studies undertaken by Rodd and her colleagues in Melbourne (Rodd 1996), and Kelly *et al.* (1989) and more recently, Hayden (1996), all of who are based in Sydney. In all of these studies postal surveys were used to collect primary data. There is a growing trend towards the use of unstructured interviews as a follow-up to gain more in depth qualitative data (Hayden 1996; Rodd 1996). There is also some recognition that the methodology and instruments used by these researchers require further refinement (Rodd 1996).

The series of studies undertaken by Rodd and colleagues are significant because of the comparative dimensions they allow. In one study, they looked at cross-cultural variations by replicating Vander Ven's (1991) survey of perceptions of caregivers in the USA. Their study on Family Day Care caregivers provide another comparative focus, between home based and centre based caregivers' perceptions of roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, these studies provide comparisons based on their location, either in Australia or in the USA, and between service types, either as individual caregivers working from their homes or as those who are employed by a child care centre. Aware of the methodological difficulties encountered in cross-cultural research, these researchers

emphasised the need to be prudent in identifying common trends and patterns. As Clyde (1994, 31) put it,

> "it will be necessary to substitute more 'Australian acceptable' descriptions for leadership roles and styles in order to determine whether the failure to respond to the entrepreneurial descriptions was a function of the lack of attraction of the descriptions themselves or the novice state of the participants."

Kelly *et al.* (1989) asked the respondents to keep a daily running record of activities for a week, and included a list of 18 work categories under the subheadings of staff, parents, children, administration and self. Hayden's study (1996) may be seen as an extension of Kelly *et al.* (1989) and it was based on a more recent cohort of centre directors working in the same state. It required the respondents to delineate their work as either technical, staffing, client oriented or public relations functions; a framework based on Sergiovanni's 'hierarchy of management forces' (see Hayden 1996,83). As with the Melbourne studies, limitations of preservice training in preparing them for the complexities of the director's role and the lack of support in carrying out their duties were recurrent themes voiced by respondents.

Those studies which focused on the work of the centre directors only were based on samples ranging from 91 (Kelly *et al.* 1989) to 191 respondents (Hayden 1996). The authors themselves are cautious about the extent to which their findings can be generalised because of the relatively low response rates (Rodd 1996). The localised nature of state based services also means that the impact of societal factors such as rural isolation and cultural diversity on centre co-ordination and leadership functions, can vary across different parts of Australia. None of the existing studies however appear to deal with this aspect.

There are however general trends which Kelly *et al.* (1989) define as "commonalities", which provide some interesting insights about the work of long day care centre directors in Australia. For example, taken together all of these studies illustrate the demands of the multidimentional nature of the child care director's job. Yet, over the years the pattern of employing inexperienced staff at the level of centre director has continued at an alarming rate (Hayden 1996,59) Much of this is due to the high demand for qualified staff to meet government regulations covering the licensing of child care centres during the 1990s.

An overwhelming majority of caregivers who participated in these research studies indicated that working with children was the "best part of their job" (Hayden 1996,70). Some directors, in fact wanted "more time" with the children, even though already their average working week extended beyond 44 hours (Kelly *et al.* 1989,14). Similarly, Clyde (1994, 28) reports that observing, interacting and being with children were ranked high as the activities that caregivers felt "most comfortable performing". These attributes, according to Vander Ven (1991), were characteristic of novice caregivers with limited knowledge and skills.

The implications of this trend in caregiver perceptions and desires are two fold. On the one hand, as Hayden (1996,71) notes ironically, direct contact work with children "may not even appear on the job description for many directors!" On the other hand, collective lack of enthusiasm and orientation towards leadership roles and functions by centre directors in this manner, is a significant concern. Especially at times such as now

when centres are under enormous pressure to remain open due to severe cut backs in government funding.

One cannot however assume that leadership functions relate only to adult related activities such as centre management. It is also possible that direct work with children can enable the good leader to demonstrate a variety of sound leadership attributes and understandings including how to be inventive, adaptive, decisive and responsive particularly during unplanned critical moments. Today, most ECEs would agree that the ability to deal with rapid change is an essential leadership skill (Rodd 1994, 1996). Centre directors in particular, are required to act as the catalyst who can articulate the vision, create the necessary climate, provide resources and encouragement, and thereby enable others to confront the changes.

Despite the growing interest in Australian leadership research in the early childhood field, attempts at theory building has so far been limited in number and scope to the work of Hayden (1996) and Rodd (1996). Whilst Hayden has adapted Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, Rodd's work is situated within organisational theory and behaviour. Hayden does not offer a specific approach to Leadership, and examines relevant issues within the context of centre management. Rodd (1996) on the other hand, presents a typology of an early childhood leader.

Rodd's typology consists of characteristics and skills of traditional ECEs and does not seem to include the entrepreneurial and political skills, which she has argued are necessary for today's leaders. It is unclear whether these are regarded as higher order traits, and as such, there may be different developmental stages in leadership, much like Katz's (1977) theory of professional development. Rodd (1996,125) is however careful in stating that this typology is only the beginning, a starting point and that further work is required "to explore and refine the categories which have been identified". Identifying the critical elements of early childhood leadership which will ultimately make the difference in quality service provision, remains an unresolved issue.

1.4. Other approaches to leadership

Leadership studies have been the focus of those concerned with business management and public administration, and there is a burgeoning file of literature covering leadership theory, research methodology and its practical applications. Debates on definitions of leadership, leadership versus management, and leader's behaviour, characteristics and skills have all been covered by a wide variety of researchers across disciplines including sociology, psychology, politics and education. Methodologically, exclusive use of questionnaires or tests on leadership has been highly contested and the combined use of "qualitative, descriptive methods such as observation, interviews and intensive case studies" is now recommended as the more appropriate alternative (Yukl 1989,278). Theoretically, there is a growing awareness of studying the importance of the socio-political context of leadership activity and the interactive nature of leadership phenomena (Yukl 1989). The large number of books, journal articles and reports on leadership across various disciplines including sociology, psychology, economics and history, precludes detailed analysis and only two publications were selected for further comment. These

are the Karpin Report (Karpin 1995) commissioned by the federal government in 1992 and Sarros and Butchatsky's (1996) book on Leadership, which puts forward a new model of leadership described as "breakthrough leadership".

Sarros and Butchatsky's (1996) study of leadership is based on intensive interviews with 24 of Australia's top chief executive officers(CEOs) in government and private sector organisations. Breakthrough leaders

> "know how to make work meaningful to their staff by building on the cultural capital and intelligence of the workplace. This means that breakthrough leadership achieves results by building confidence, competence, and commitment in workers to achieve extraordinary results." (Sarros & Butchatsky 1996,6)

In analysing their findings, much attention is paid to background variables including the leader's family, education, mentors and role models, and career hurdles and challenges. There is also discussion of micro and macro issues of the organisation, including company structure and culture, strengths and weaknesses and external strategic issues such as globalisation and competition in the business world. An approach based on corporate sector management principles may at first seem alien and inappropriate for the Early Childhood field. However, Sarros and Butchatsy's model is worth considering because of the interactive dimensions it adopts in studying the complexities of contemporary business leadership and it also provides a meaningful framework for developing training programs to promote leadership skills and strategies.

The Karpin report, was prepared by the government's industry task force on Leadership and Management Skills which examined how Australia prepares its managers for work and leadership. It provides a comprehensive picture on past, present and future management practices and what is needed for the future to meet the challenges of the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century. Not surprisingly this report does not include research on early childhood educators, though leadership in small business and embryonic industries just starting up are covered very well. It acknowledges the impact of women in leadership positions by referring to the "female ethos" in business (Karpin, 1995,1302) but little or nothing is stated about child care centres, the majority of which are managed by women. This situation may be changing as there is some evidence that men are moving into centre management, especially in the commercial sector, which is now expanding.

Karpin (1995,16) asserts that there is general consensus within the business community that globalisation, technological innovation and customisation are the three global drivers of change which will "have profound implications for the way Australian enterprises need to be managed" in the next millennium. So far, learning to go beyond their centres and the adoption of technology to enhance service quality and viability, remain as uncharted territories for most ECEs. However, there is an accumulated body of evidence to show that EC leaders, have for the most part, achieved the customisation challenge. Consistently, Early childhood researchers have found that child care directors are dedicated committed professionals who put the needs of the children and families they served first. Indeed the principle of 'customer first ' has been a hallmark of early childhood services. Although, parent or customer involvement in centre management may augur well in achieving high standards of service provision, whether this has a positive or negative impact on leadership development, is unclear.

Section 2: Australia's participation in the leadership project: the story so far

Australia joined the project in 1996 when Professor Eeva Hujala-Huttenen came to the Department of Early Childhood Studies, at the University of Melbourne, as a visiting scholar. During this visit discussions were held regarding the nature of the project and its implementation within the Australian context. It was agreed that the research instruments developed in Finland needed to be modified to meet local protocol requirements, both culturally and regulatory.

Firstly, the terminology used to identify the key participants, child care centre staff had to be amended. The term "teacher" has no clear definition in Australia. It can evoke passionate and often unproductive discussion about the dichotomy between care and education. A teacher is usually someone who has a three year diploma or degree and works at a preschool or primary school. Child care staff on the other hand, have a lower status and remuneration rates and include those with either one or two years training at a Technical and Further Education College (TAFE), a university diploma or degree or no training at all. During the 1980s, with the movement of ECE courses into the universities, teaching and child care divisions became blurred as universities such as the University of Melbourne adopted a single focus for all ECEs irrespective of the setting or context of employment in preschool or child care. However, the division between care and education remain entrenched, tied to staff pay and conditions based on the length of training as per those with 2-3 years training (usually, child care staff) and those with 3-4 years training (usually, teaching staff). In this study, the aim was to include staff with both types of training.

The proposed methodology was presented initially to a meeting of a group of community owned child care centre directors in Melbourne. At their suggestion it was agreed that the term 'team leader' or early childhood educator in charge of the 3-5 year olds, will be used for the purposes of this study. In corresponding with prospective respondents, it was also more meaningful to use the term "centre coordinator" rather than "director" which was more characteristic of the political history and community ethos of the non-profit child care centres, which provided the base sample of ECEs for this project.

It was agreed that the project will focus on staff working with 3 to 5 year olds because not all centres in Australia provided care for infants and toddlers. Those centres which did, usually have small groups, between 5 to 10 children per group, and may include family groups consisting of children of mixed ages under 5 years. There was also a tendency to employ staff with less than three years training with infants and toddlers, as compared to 3 to 5 year olds. If training was an important variable in comparing leadership qualities across the participating nations, then it was less problematic to focus this study on those working with the 3 to 5 year old children in Australia.

On the whole, the substantive content and format of the daily tasks questionnaire as implemented in Finland was largely untouched and remained almost the same in the Australian study. The significant difference being the inclusion of a page on "instructions on how to complete the questionnaire" and the separation and expansion of the section on the background characteristics of the staff and the centre.

In undertaking any research projects, the University of Melbourne requires its staff to seek approval from its central Human Research Ethics Committee. Each project must be first approved by the academic member's own departmental ethics committee, who then pass it onto the Faculty level sub-committee for consideration. Based on their advice, the central university committee on ethics provide final endorsement. This process could take sometime depending on the meeting times of the various committees. This application covers areas such as a detailed description of the project, estimation of potential risks to subjects and procedures to be adopted to ensure confidentiality. Copies of all instruments to be used in the study, including questionnaires and consent forms, must also be submitted with the application. The committee called for some modifications, including the addition of a letter to advice parents that this project will be conducted at their children's child care centre. By this stage in 1996, it was too late to send the survey out as centres were winding down for the Christmas holidays.

Timing was crucial as previous research undertaken in child care settings in the State of Victoria showed low response rates to postal questionnaires (see for example, Petrie 1990). It was also inappropriate to undertake any research at this time as centres were generally involved in Christmas festivities and patterns of work may not necessarily reflect an ordinary day. Accordingly, the survey was undertaken in April 1997.

Section 3: Questions and challenges for the future

In Australia today, there is a dire need for leadership in early childhood. Like many early childhood advocates Whitaker (1996), the National President of the Australian Early Childhood Association, the main professional organisation to which many Australian ECEs belong, believes that grass-roots leadership based on community spirit and co-operation holds the key to future success. Leadership is necessary not only to advocate on behalf of young children and families, but also to take control of the political agenda which impact on the working lives of the early childhood professionals who provide the services (Rodd 1994). Prevailing political ideology of economic rationalism, however, while espousing family values and quality care is undermining the gains made through participatory decision-making at the community level involving parents, children and professionals.

Children's services are at the front line of community service provision. According to the Karpin Report (Karpin 1995,787) "women account for just over 50% of small business employers in community services, and just over 50% in recreational, personal and other services (ESFC 1994a: 3)." There is ample evidence to show that women leaders are however, a small and diminishing minority in contemporary Australia (Cox 1996). There is little doubt also that Early childhood services will continue to attract predominantly women, especially at the level of direct service provision.

The management of these non-profit services, largely built along community participation are under increasing pressure to adopt new models of service delivery based on efficiency and productivity gains. The impact this will have on community based management and leadership in early childhood services remains to be seen. Parent support and peer networks play a key role in enhancing service quality, development and

management of non-profit services. To date these aspects of service provision have not been closely scrutinised in existing studies on leadership and warrants further consideration.

The messages of globalisation and competition have also been nibbling at the edges of effective centre management in children's services for at least a decade now. Centre viability and survival are closely linked with marketing and advertising strategies adopted by services. It is worth noting that directors in Hayden's (1996,69) study indicated that public relations work was one of the least important and least enjoyed functions of centre co-ordination. Advertisements in local newspapers however indicate that teaching of second languages such as Japanese and the provision of special music and swimming classes appear to be popular avenues for attracting new clients.

Gaps in leadership training and lack of management experience are recurrent themes in the research reviewed here. Consistently, many centre directors or co-ordinators have reported that they have stumbled into their roles as leaders. Few were "prepared for the increasing complexity of their role. The result of this lack of preparation and lack of support could be that crisis management prevails" (Hayden 1996,9). Accordingly, what sort of training do future early childhood leaders require? Rodd (1994) and Hayden (1996) offer similar suggestions stressing the importance of continuous learning. Are there lessons to be learnt from other countries where leadership training has been incorporated into on-going professional development in early childhood?

There are strong indications that we need to re conceptualise and restructure undergraduate programs for the next generation of ECEs, a major challenge for all of us. There is now a body of research which documents the necessary qualities and skills required by early childhood leaders. These are also lists of skills which one can acquire through formal training as well as though observation and experience gained under a skilled mentor.

However, as has been discussed earlier, the small size of early childhood settings and patterns of employment in the field, undermine the use of mentors as a viable training option. It also raises the question, is leadership development the responsibility of the employer, employee or that of formal training institutions? If the universities for example, take up the challenge of leadership training, they must be able to fully appreciate the changing roles of ECEs, especially the multiplicity of demands on the front-line managers in child care centres.

Another dilemma is whether or not early childhood leaders should be generalists or specialists? Available research provide clear evidence about the multi functional nature of the child care directors roles and responsibilities. The constant juggling of priorities, can make the development of long term strategic plans difficult and undermine the promotion of leadership qualities. If leadership skills are to be acquired through training, then which aspects of the director's job should be the focus of such training? Should it be those functions which relate to children and families - the area which most centre directors have reported to be their preference and priority? If team dynamics are integral to leadership achievement, can one ignore issues about staff motivation, professional development and industrial relations? What about the growing need to ensure the viability of the centre as a profitable business? Without a centre, there is no employment. Therefore, should entrepreneurial leadership skills take precedence over child development knowledge and understandings? It is worth noting that when inservice training needs of child care staff in Victoria were evaluated (Waniganayake 1992), none of the participating

centres, including 76% of the community based centres, identified management training as a priority.

Perhaps the time has come to separate the components of education and management, and name the latter as Bachelor of Early Childhood Business Management. Perhaps the beginnings are already there because in most Australian universities today, the study of management in early childhood is a compulsory part of undergraduate training. Whether or not relevant departments such as economics, accountancy and/or business management were involved in the design and delivery of these courses is unclear. Critical of the quality of undergraduate management courses, Karpin (1995, 34) asserts "that many disciplines do not yet appreciate the importance of managerial competence in the professional world." This is a good warning to ensure that the realities of the operational context of early childhood settings are taken into account when developing relevant and appropriate training in early childhood leadership.

None of the research undertaken by the Karpin Report, examined a female oriented field such as early childhood. Weeks (1994,152) argues that perhaps this is because women's tradition of leadership is based on family and community work, mostly unpaid or under paid and therefore much of it is invisible and undervalued. Having interviewed a group of co-ordinators of community based women's services, Weeks (1994) compares them to the work of women managers in large government bureaucracies. Her findings provide compelling evidence to illustrate the strong masculine culture of leadership and management prevalent in large government bureaucracies in contrast to the more democratic women centred model operating in the community based sector.

Research such as this raises a number of questions including, is there a women's leadership model? Is this simply a question of ideological difference between feminists and others or is there a real difference between male and female leadership activity? What are the characteristics of today's early childhood leaders? Do they reinforce the dominant patriarchal paradigms of power or are they promoting a new model based on feminist ideals? Is this appropriate for early childhood educators, given that ECE should be a non-sexist occupation?

According to Cox (1996,10) women's involvement in leadership discourse and grassroots activism are prerequisites to improving the quality of leadership in our society. However the new definition of leadership should be devoid of gender bias and should be based on "mutuality, sharing of obligations and responsibilities."(Cox 1996,33)

Early childhood educators represent "the archetypal women's industry. Conditions are poor and the status of the industry is low." (Bennett 1991,20) Debates along gender lines based on discrimination and disadvantage are however, no longer sufficient in seeking to advance the case for better recognition for women's work. Instead, those such as Bennett (1991) and Cox (1996) would argue, that attention must be diverted to the analysis of the specific skills and attributes of early childhood educators and encompass the examination of broader political and economic contexts including issues such as (de)regulation and productivity.

Leadership and power are seductive and if misused can be destructive to the individual and the collective. Cox (1996,22) believes that it is possible to develop a leadership model which "redefines and uses power as a beneficial social change agent, without overlooking the potential of its darker side." This will be a major challenge for ECEs globally, not only those in Australia. To this end, every effort must be made to capitalise

on the opportunities that this international project on leadership brings, so that we can enhance the quality of early childhood leadership in each of our countries.

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An international study of leadership in early childhood: The Australian perspective

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Abstract

This paper presents the findings of Phase I of the ILP as conducted in Melbourne, Australia. Data was collected from 35 community owned childcare centres in the State of Victoria. A group of 47 childcare centre staff participated by completing a daily tasks questionnaire, which asked each respondent to record what s/he did during each half-hour on a typical day at work. The nature and type of work undertaken by three groups of staff consisting of directors, team leaders and their assistants working with children aged 3-5 years age, were analysed in relation to children, parents, staff and others. Findings reflect that there is a strong ethos of "putting children first" and focussing more on day-to-day needs, and less on future goals. This may be a consequence of the organisational culture within community owned childcare centres and/or the wider socio-political context within which services must operate.

Keywords: Australia, leadership, early childhood, ILP

1. Introduction

This paper reports findings from an Australian perspective on the context of leadership development in early childhood. During the course of a working day, child care centre staff in the State of Victoria, recorded their activities each half hour so that Phase I analyses could indicate how they utilised their time on a daily basis. Of particular concern in this study were the actual roles and responsibilities of the day care centre staff in meeting the needs of young children and their families. Staff' perceptions of what they

considered to be the most important tasks of their daily routines and their beliefs about early childhood which guided their day-to-day work, will also be discussed.

In Australia today, the availability, levels of public funding, standards and regulations, and the possible long and short term effects on children's development of day care are hotly debated in the public arena, whether the care is family-based, centre-based, privately or publicly provided. The role of the authorised supervisor in childcare centres is either undefined or quite unenforced (Hayden 1996) under the regulations which govern the operation of children's services in Australia. This reflects a lack of importance placed on these leadership roles leading, in turn, to an undervaluing of the early childhood profession in Australia and its critical contribution to the community. Rodd (1994) has further argued that limited training, opportunities and encouragement for leadership development for early childhood professionals have all contributed, in part, to the lack of development of the profile and influence of the early childhood field in Australia.

2. Methods

2.1. Sample and survey questionnaire

Data were collected through a postal questionnaire circulated to all community owned non-profit childcare centres in the State of Victoria (N = 284). This sample represents approximately one quarter of all community owned centres funded by the Federal government in 1996 and served approximately 10,868 children. The largest number of centres (N = 394) across the nation as a whole were located in New South Wales, which contained over 35% of community owned centres. Although one could identify some special characteristics which were state based (for example, the high proportion of centres which were sponsored by local government in Victoria; and the isolation of centres serving indigenous communities in the Northern Territory), by and large, centres located in Victoria can be regarded as a national sample for the purposes of this study.

It is also noted that the community owned child care centres cover only one sector (i.e., approximately one third) of the highly fragmented early childhood field in Australia, and does not include the commercialised private child care centres, which accounted for 69% of all long day care centres in Australia in 1996/97 (NACBCS 1997,4). In the past, community owned long day care centres which are managed by voluntary parent committees have relied on Federal government funding to remain operational. With the withdrawal of operational funds since 1 July 1997, these centres are under threat of closure as they battle to remain financially viable in providing affordable good quality care in a highly competitive market place (NACBCS 1997).

The main purpose of the study was to survey the nature of daily tasks performed by day care centre staff responsible for the care and education of children 3 to 5 years age. At each child care centre, one member of staff who was either the centre director, the team-leader who was in-charge-of the 3-5 year olds group, and her/his assistant, were asked to complete the daily tasks questionnaire. That is, at each centre, only ONE person had to fill in the questionnaire survey for the work s/he did during ONE working day.

The survey consisted of three sections. In Section 1, each respondent was asked to record the tasks s/he did for every half hour of the day. Section 2, dealt with specific aspects of the respondent's work, and was aimed at clarifying some aspects of decision-making and identifying underlying attitudes and values of each worker. Demographic information about the respondent (such as age, experience and qualifications) and her/his place of work were collected through Section 3.

2.2. Response rate

Only 35 centres (i.e., approximately 12% of the total surveyed) returned the completed questionnaires. Concerned about the poor rate of response, follow up phone calls were made to a random sample of 90 centres, aimed at targeting a group each of 30 directors, team-leaders and assistants respectively. The majority of these centres stated that they could not remember receiving the questionnaire, or it has got 'lost in the paper works' as the main reason for their lack of response to the survey. Others also emphasised time pressures - that they simply did not have enough time in the day to participate in any research projects. Assistants in particular, because there was no (paid) time to complete the survey at work, were not willing to do it in their own time.

In total, Phase 1 yielded a total of 41 childcare personnel, consisting of 8 directors, 22 team-leaders and 11 assistants. Based on the director's willingness to co-operate in further research, three centres agreed to participate in Phase 2 of the study, which consisted of in-depth individual interviews conducted by a member of the research team.. The team-leaders and assistants of these three centres were then asked to complete the Phase 1 survey, and this yielded 6 additional respondents making the final total 47 child care staff. Accordingly, team leaders accounted for more than half the survey sample (n=25 or 53%), followed by 14 assistants (30%) and 8 directors (17%).

2.3. Coding and collation of results

Review of leadership literature has shown that various approaches have been adopted by researchers and no single method of data analysis has been deemed more appropriate against the others. Hayden (1996) was the most recent Australian researcher who has undertaken similar work. Based on Sergiovanni's (1984) 'hierarchy of management forces', in Hayden's study (1996) child care centre directors were required to categorise their daily functions under four headings: technical (e.g. budgeting, record keeping and writing reports), staffing (e.g., recruitment, training and staff appraisals), client oriented (e.g. communication with children and families, and programming) and public relations (e.g. networking, planning an open day etc) functions. It was possible that by presenting the coding categories to the respondents in this way, one could bias their responses. On the other hand, the openness of our study may have been daunting to some respondents, not knowing how to balance the generality or specificity of their daily record of tasks, when recording these on the survey form.

Australia's National Child Care Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) was essentially based on reviewing centre quality on the basis of interactions between children, parents and staff. Given that leadership is intrinsically aligned with quality care, it was argued that it would be appropriate to use a similar framework to categorise the functions of staff as recorded for this survey. Separating the functions relating to children and parents was also perceived to be important because in much of the literature, caregivers tended to emphasise their preference for working with children. In Hayden's study, for example, the client-oriented category included both parents and children and some may be involved in public relations work too.

Accordingly, it was deemed that the person(s) who was the target of interaction - whether it is children, parents, staff or others, was the key variable impacting on leadership skills of the participant. In each case, the main criteria for coding was that direct contact had been achieved between the respondent and the target person(s). This system provided sufficient flexibility and openness, which at times proved to be problematic and difficult for coding and certain "rules" were established to retain consistency between the four coders. These included the following:

- that all play activities will be coded "c" based on the assumption that children had to be involved in these;
- that house-keeping tasks, such as cleaning and wiping tables, were to be coded "o" unless children were mentioned specifically as having played a part in these activities;
- that greeting children and parents on arrival/departure times will be coded 'p' unless children were described as needing special attention at the time of separation;
- that 'relieving' or 'visiting' children's room will be coded 'c' only, and no allocation will be made for hand over procedures discussed between staff at this time.

2.4. Coding reliability checks

Each half hour of respondents' time sheets was coded for type(s) of activity undertaken in that half hour according to whether it was (a) child oriented, (b) parent oriented, (c) staff oriented, (d) other internal - activities within the centre such as cleaning and book-keeping etc; and (e) other external - activities outside the centre such as banking and shopping. If more than one activity was carried out in that half hour, the time within that interval was distributed equally between the activities for coding purposes. In order to achieve and maintain inter-coder reliability for categorisation of activities described in the respondent's time sheets, four coders coded one respondent's time-sheet together and discussed disagreements. On the first occasion, internal and external activities, categories ((d) and (e) above) were collapsed because these activities could not be reliably discriminated by the four coders. Subsequently, coders worked together again on another subject's responses until 70% agreement was reached after disputes were discussed. A third and final joint coding procedure led to 90% agreement and, on the basis of this intercoder agreement, all subsequent respondents' sheets were coded independently by the four coders. This procedure led to a 90% coding reliability for this sample.

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3. Results

3.1. Background characteristics of the respondents

The 8 directors, 25 team-leaders and 14 assistants, who responded to the survey, represented 35 community owned childcare centres located in metropolitan and rural communities in the State of Victoria. The average capacity of these centres was 48 children at any one time, and the smallest centre consisted of 15 children and the biggest could enrol up to 108 children. On average, there were 23 children aged between 3-5 years in each participating centre.

In each centre, on average, there were approximately 13 staff and this provided an overall staff:child ratio of 1:4. On average, only 38% of staff in each centre, had any early childhood qualifications. That is, unqualified staff accounted for almost two thirds of all staff in each centre. There was however, at least one trained person, working with the 3-5 year old group of children in each centre.

Table 1. Comparison of staff qualifications by staff type.[1]

Staff type	NQ %	CC %	PMC %	DIP T %	BED %
Directors	0	38	0	63	0
Teamleaders	0	56	12	8	20
Assistants	29	43	7	7	0

[1]An Individual worker could have more than one type of qualification.

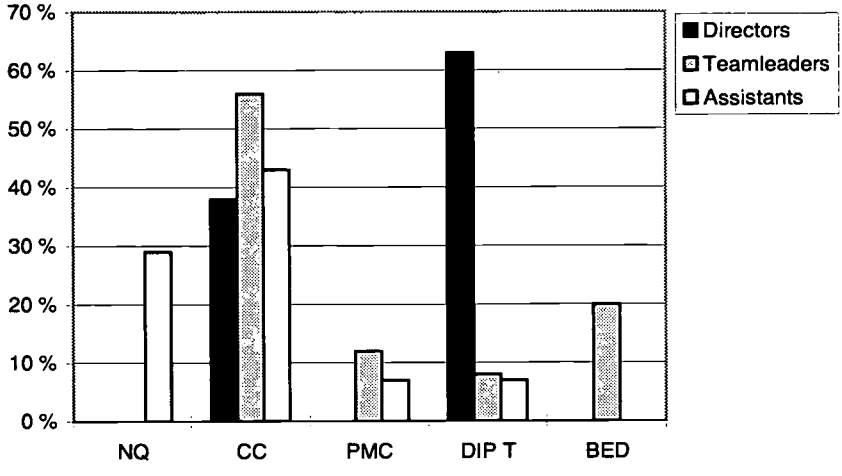

Fig. 1. NQ = no qualifications; CC = child care certificate (1-2 yrs); PMC = Preschool mothercraft nurse (2 yrs); DIP T = Diploma of Teaching (3 yrs); BED = Bachelor of Education (4 yrs).

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Amongst the individual staff participating in this study, all directors and team leaders had some type of early childhood qualification, while 29% (i.e., n=4) of the assistants had not undertaken any preservice training in early childhood. Over half of the respondents (i.e., n = 27 or 58%) had a child care qualification based on 1 or 2 years training at a Technical and Further Education college (TAFE). A smaller proportion (i.e., n = 13 or 28%) had university based qualifications of three or four years duration. About one quarter of all respondents (n = 12 or 26%) were currently engaged in some type of formal training. Of these, the majority were team-leaders (n = 9 or 36%), many of whom were doing the Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies course offered by the University of Melbourne. Team leaders were therefore the most qualified group of participants, with 20% having completed a fourth year of university based training, and an additional 36% undertaking similar training.

The age of the participants fell between the range of 20 to 52 years (x = 31 years). The average age for each group of day care staff was as follows: directors = 33 years, team-leaders = 29 years and assistants = 34 years. Participants' age was reflected in the number of years of experience of working in children's services. Only 11 respondents (or 21% of the total sample) had ten or more years of any type of early childhood work experience. The oldest director, aged 45 years, had been in the field for 27 years and of these, she had spent 24 years at her current centre. In contrast, the majority of staff (i.e., n = 14 or 30%) stated that they had been at the same centre for just one year, and the overall average for all respondents was 5 years.

Table 2. Previous experience in the early childhood field.[1]

Staff type	Day care %	PRESC %	FDC %	OSHC %	Other %
Directors	100	63	13	13	50
Teamleaders	88	20	12	0	28
Assistants	79	7	7	21	14

[1]An Individual worker could have worked in more than one type of field.

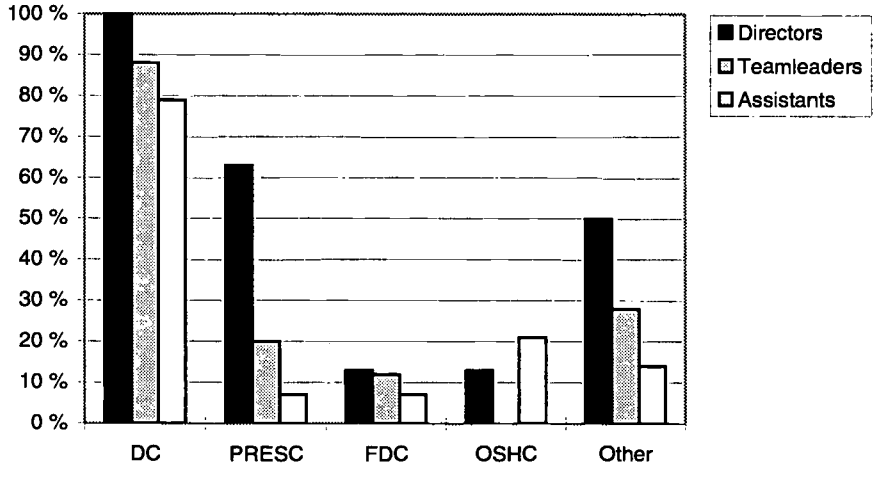

Fig. 2. FDC = Family Day Care; OSHC = Outside School Hours Care; Other = eg include policy advice.

As a group, the directors were the most experienced (i.e., x = 12 years), followed by the assistants (i.e., x = 8 years) and then the team-leaders (i.e., x = 7 years). The majority of respondents, had worked in some form of day care including family day care and school aged care programs (n = 41 or 87%). A smaller proportion (n = 11 or 23%) had preschool or kindergarten experience. Only one director had experience in advisory/resource work at a policy level. One team leader and one director also noted that they had some international work experience in education, in Germany and in Japan respectively.

3.2. Daily tasks undertaken by directors, team-leaders and assistants

The daily tasks recorded on the survey date by each respondent was collated in terms of their level of staffing as per director, team-leader and assistant to ascertain trends and patterns of the nature of their day-to-day functions. These are summarised as follows:

Some trends and patterns regarding the daily tasks of CHILD CARE CENTRE DIRECTORS

- on average, directors worked over nine and a half hours a day (x = 9.6), including about one and a half hours of unpaid time (i.e., time out x = 1.54) consisting mainly of lunch breaks.
- one director recorded a 11 hour day, and this involved attending a centre Management Committee's meeting in the evening, from 8pm to 11pm.
- although there was one who had not recorded any child related activities on the day of the survey, overall, time spent with children accounted for one third of the tasks performed by centre directors.
- the biggest proportion of time (i.e., 36%) on average, was spent away from children, parents and staff, dealing with various other tasks such as recording and recipting payment of fees and doing staff salaries.

Some trends and patterns regarding the daily tasks of TEAM LEADERS

- on the day of the survey, all team-leaders recorded 8 hours or more at work, and more than 50% recorded over nine and half hours at work.
- almost half of the respondents have taken time-out for over one and half hours (x = 1.7), and the length of the working day ranged between 8 to 10 hours.
- apart from one team-leader (T9), all others spent over 40% of their time on child related tasks.
- for the team leaders, tasks related to staff and parents, took up less than 10% of their time; on average 7% and 8% respectively.
- tasks related to "other" aspects (such as program planning, including excursions and arranging play environmet) accounted for nearly one quarter of the team leader's daily functions.

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Some trends and patterns regarding the daily tasks of CHILD CARE CENTRE ASSISTANTS

- of the fourteen assistants, two worked for approximately 5 hours on the day of the survey, indicating that they may be employed on a part-time basis;
- these two assistants, who had the shortest working days recorded, spent over 75% of their time on child related functions;
- on average, the assistants worked for 8 hours a day, and this included an average time out period of about one and a half hours for meals;
- apart from one assistant (A188), for all the other assistants, child related functions took up the biggest proportion of their daily routines accounting for 55% of time overall;
- parent and staff matters took up less than 6% of time and only 3 assistants recorded 10% or more time allocated to either parents or staff.

3.3. Degree of importance allocated to various tasks

Each respondent was asked to rank in order from 1 to 5, the most important tasks that s/he had completed during the survey date. Their responses were coded in terms of whether they were related to children, parents, staff or others. The results are presented in Tables 3a to 3e.

Table 3a. Most important tasks as ranked by directors, team leaders and assistants.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %71.4
Child related	62.5	88	71.4
Parent related	0	4	7.1
Staff related	12.5	4	0
Other	25	4	7.1
No response	0	0	14.3

It is apparent from Table 3a, that from the daily tasks undertaken by directors, team leaders and assistants, child related tasks were given the highest priority by the majority of respondents. However, 25 percent of directors ranked other internal administrative tasks as being the most important duty they performed during the target day.

Table 3b. Second most important tasks as ranked by directors, team leaders and assistants.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %
Child related	25	36	64.3
Parent related	12.5	40	14.3
Staff related	50	12	0
Other	12.5	12	7.1
No response	0	0	14.3

It is evident from Table 3b, that in terms of the second most important tasks as ranked by the different staff groups, the majority of directors said that these tasks were staff related. In comparison, a majority of assistants said that these duties were child related. Team leaders were divided in their responses, in that 36 percent said that these duties were child related where as 40 percent said that these tasks were parent related.

Table 3c. Third most important tasks as ranked by directors, team leaders and assistants.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %
Child related	25	52	42.9
Parent related	37.5	12	7.1
Staff related	0	12	14.3
Other	37.5	24	14.3
No response	0	0	21.4

Table 3c indicates that there is a difference in terms of the third most important tasks as ranked by directors in comparison to team leaders and assistants. An equal percentage of directors ranked parent related and other internal tasks as being the third most important tasks undertaken during the target day. In comparison, the team leaders and assistants again ranked child related tasks as their priority.

Table 3d. Fourth most important tasks as ranked by directors, team leaders and assistants.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %
Child related	25	52	50.0
Parent related	0	8	7.1
Staff related	25	4	0
Other	50	36	14.3
No response	0	0	28.6

Table 3d shows that the majority of directors ranked other internal duties as being the fourth most important tasks undertaken during the target day. In contrast, the focus of team leaders and assistants was on child related tasks.

Table 3e. Fifth most important tasks as ranked by directors, team leaders and assistants.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %
Child related	12.5	8	35.7
Parent related	37.5	12	7.1
Staff related	0	16	0
Other	37.5	44	28.6
No response	12.5	20	28.6

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It is apparent from the responses shown in Table 3e, that an equal proportion of directors ranked parent related and other internal tasks as being the fifth most important tasks undertaken during the target day. The focus of assistants was once again on child related tasks. In contrast, like some of the directors the team leaders also ranked other administrative tasks as the fifth most important tasks undertaken on the target day.

It is evident from Tables 3a to 3e, that directors, team-leaders and assistants differed in their rankings of the perceived importance allocated to the tasks undertaken on the target day. It is clear that the assistants' priority was on child related tasks which included greeting, settling in, supervision and directed teaching of children. For the assistants, other duties including cleaning and settings up activities were a low priority, as were interactions with other staff and parents. In comparison, although the directors ranked child related tasks as being the highest priority, they also emphasised the importance of staff, parent and other internal tasks. The majority of directors regularly undertook relieving duties in the children's play rooms, and this was regarded as one of their key functions. Parent related tasks undertaken by directors, included daily greetings and discussions relating to payment of fees. This aspect of collecting and receipting fees and processing staff salaries were the two main administrative tasks identified as being important other duties undertaken exclusively by directors.

The team leaders' responses suggest that their main priority was child related tasks. They included general supervision of children as well as planning and providing appropriate learning experiences. As stated by some respondents, team-leaders' primary concern was in providing "developmentally appropriate", "stimulating", "safe and nurturing environment" and "having fun and enjoyment with children". Most team leaders also ranked parent related and other internal tasks (such as setting up ativities and ensuring a safe and hygienic play space) as being quite important. The majority of team leaders ranked daily greeting of parents as being the second most important. Many also listed providing support and encouragement to parents as being an important function of their daily duties. A clear difference between the directors in comparison to the team leaders and assistants was the higher, relative importance placed on staff related and other internal tasks. Provision of support for staff during times of stress when a child falls sick, orientation of new staff to the centre and attendance at program planning meetings are examples of staff related tasks identified by directors.

Tasks not completed

A majority of directors (i.e., n = 7; 88%) , team-leaders (n = 15; 60%) and assistants (n = 5; 36%) listed a variety of tasks that they had not been able to complete on the day of the survey. Their responses were categorised in terms of whether they related to children, parents, staff or any other aspects and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Tasks not completed.

	Directors %	Team leaders %	Assistants %
Child related	12.5	28	21.4
Parent related	12.5	0	0
Staff related	12.5	8	0
Other	89.5	40	7.1

Directors had the longest average working day consisting of 9.6 hours. They also recorded the highest percentage (i.e., 88%) in terms of not being able to complete all the tasks they wanted during the target day. Of the tasks not completed, other internal duties such as preparing financial reports, typing the minutes of meetings and updating the waiting lists for new enrolments were some examples recorded by various directors. The team leaders' average working day was 9 hours. They also recorded quite a high percentage in terms of not being able to complete all the tasks they wanted. Other internal tasks including recording observations of children's development, program planning and setting up activities were the most common duties not completed by team leaders. Others recorded that tasks dealing with children more directly including carrying out planned learning experiences were also not completed. The average working day for assistants was 8 hours, although it should be noted that there were two assistants in the sample who worked part time. The assistants recorded the lowest percentage of all three groups in terms of tasks not completed. Of the tasks not completed, they were mainly child related and consisted of primarily having to change the planned program due to weather changes or according to children's interests or needs at the time. As the focus of both the team leaders and the assistants was very much child related, the fact that they did not complete all of the child related tasks they wanted to is perhaps to be expected.

In examining the reasons given for not being able to complete their daily tasks, the majority of respondents indicated that they had simply "run out of time" or there had been "not enough time in the day". Closer examination indicated that most had opted to do the child related tasks as their primary priority, and for some, it meant, taking the lead from the children and doing unplanned spontaneous learning experiences, as it was considered to be more important to follow up on children's needs and interests. Priority given to child related tasks was clearly demonstrated in the following comments:

- *"being by myself in the room - supervision of the children was more important."*
- *"art collage was changed due to the children wanting to do collage instead of printing"*
- *"Children took a long time to go to sleep, by the time the last one went to sleep, it was time to get afternoon tea ready."*
- *"very demanding day in terms of children. We had a lot of older children which alters the group dynamics. I didn't get any time for preparation after 9.30am."*

The flow of the day was also interrupted by factors such as telephone enquiries, visitors to the centre and children or staff falling sick unexpectadly.

Accordingly, it appears that time management was a major concern for all staff. Some of these factors could be planned for (such as being more aware of the characteristics and needs of individual children and their impact on the group) and others are unexpected (such as children's preferences, weather changes and staff falling sick). Lack of access to the computer because another staff member was using it, for instance, reflects resource limitations in child care centres. Though many centres have a computer, its main user would be the centre director, who would use it primarily to update enrolments and process fee payments. Demands from parents and staff were mentioned by only a few of the respondents. Again some of these reasons were regular occurrences such as account enquires and as one director put it "greeting and farewelling families; everyone always wants to chat."

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3.4. Factors guiding professional practice in early childhood

One's work practices may be influenced by a variety of factors, including one's own professional and personal beliefs as well as life experiences. In an effort to ascertain the impact of such factors, respondents were asked to identify their beliefs about early childhood which guided their day-to-day work with children at their current place of employment. Further, from a long term perspective, respondents were asked to identify people and forces which have influenced the development of their beliefs about early childhood from a long term perspective as well as in terms of the tasks that were undertaken on the day of the survey.

Table 5. Daily tasks – focus of underlying beliefs.

Focus of underlying beliefs	For directors %	For team leaders %	For all assistants %	For all respondents %
Children	100.0	96	85.7	93.6
Parents	33.3	8	0	8.5
Staff	11.1	4	0	4.3
Others	11.1	8	0	6.4

Table 5 summarises responses of the centre staff' regarding beliefs underlying their current day-to-day work in early childhood. The results suggest that directors, team leaders and their assistants were influenced in their beliefs about early childhood in very different ways. Assistants reported that their beliefs were most frequently influenced by the children themselves (85.7%) and they reported no other influence from either within or without their centre. An even greater percentage of team leaders reported influence on their beliefs coming directly from the children (96%), although slightly more of these staff also reported influence on their beliefs coming from parents (8%), staff in the centre (4%) and other external sources (8%). Directors reported a broader range of influences on their professional beliefs about decisions that had been made on the survey target date. They reported that parents influenced them more commonly (33%) than their team leader or assistant colleagues, and reporting more frequent influences from other internal sources such as parents on the child care centre's Management Committee (11%).

Overall, trends in findings concerning the influences over the beliefs of the three professional groups were as expected. That is, assistants, who were least qualified and had most "hands-on" work with the children, were most often influenced by them. Their team leaders, on the other hand, who were more qualified and had more overall responsibility in the centre, also mentioned children as important influences, but were equally influenced by other, more centre-wide influences, such as the parents. Directors were influenced by parents most, as might be expected from their professional responsibility for overall running of the centre and ensuring that it meets the needs of the clients, or the parents. It was, however, curious that no team leader or director mentioned current politics and trends in child care, professional associations or current government regulations as influential forces in their work, reflecting a localised, parochial set of influences acting on these professionals in child care centres.

Table 6. Task done today – influential forces.

Influential force	For directors %	For team leaders %	For all assistants %	For all respondents %
Director	33.35	68	28.6	51.1
Team-leader	44.4	8	57.1	27.7
Assistant	44.4	56	7.1	38.3
Other staff	55.6	48	50.0	51.1
Parents of children	44.4	60	35.7	48.0
Management committee	55.6	16	7.1	19.0
Other	55.6	52	28.6	44.7

Specific responses relating to who or what influenced the tasks undertaken on the survey date are summarised in Table 6. This shows that assistants, team leaders and directors were very differently influenced in their work, on the day of the survey. As expected, most assistants were influenced by their team leaders most frequently (57%), while other influences on assistants came from other staff members (50%) or children's parents (36%). The assistants also reported that they were influenced by "Other" (28.6%) and, less frequently, by parents of the Management Committee (7.1%). Only five of the assistants specified the "Other" influences, and, of these, four stated that these were "the children" (in one case this was specifically "the children's developmental level"), while one other stated that the weather had influenced her tasks on that day.

Team leaders showed a very different response pattern according to their role in the Centre. That is, in contrast to their assistants, team leaders most frequently reported that influence on their daily tasks was exerted by their Centre directors (68%), while less frequent influences were reported by team leaders as coming from parents of children (60%), child care centre Assistants (56%), "Other" sources (52%), Other staff members (48%), and parents of the Management Committee (16%). Of the 16 team leaders who indicated that "Other" sources influenced their daily tasks, seven of these specified "the children" as most often influencing their tasks, while others mentioned their own initiative, visitors to the centre, administrative tasks, the weather, a visiting student, planning meetings, and a visit from the pre-school adviser, all as having influenced their tasks.

Centre directors showed their own idiosyncratic pattern of influences reflecting largely, as expected, their broader view and the influence on their tasks by contexts broader than the immediate day-to-day needs of their centre. Thus, influences determining the daily tasks of the directors came roughly equally from staff in the centre (44 - 56%, including Team Leaders and Assistants) and from the Parents of children in the Centre (56%). Directors were chiefly distinguishable from team leaders and assistants, however, by the influence exerted on their day-to-day activities by parents of the Management Committee (55.6%) and "Other" influences (55.6%), because these influences were listed most frequently by directors and least frequently by their team leaders and assistants. Only two directors specified the "Other" influences on their tasks, including visitors to the centre and her visit to the bank on centre business.

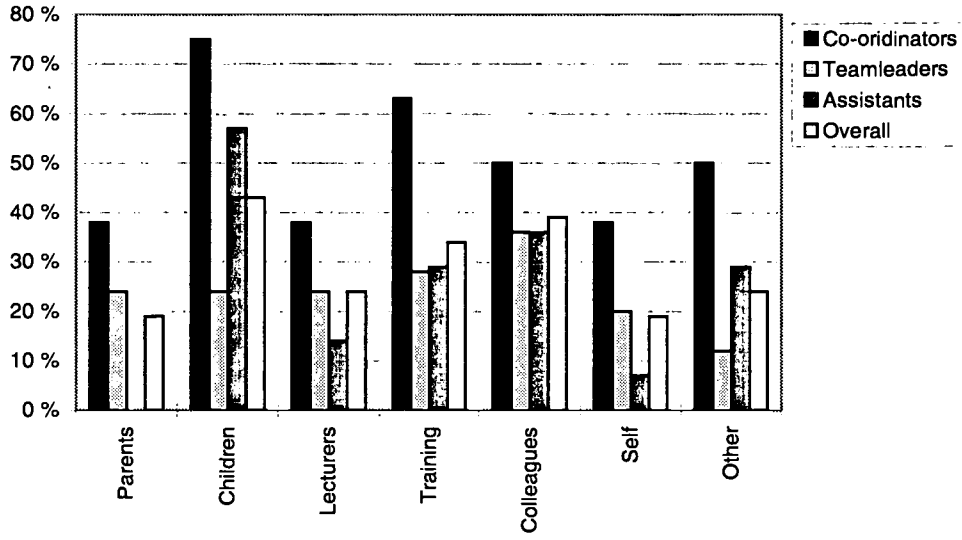

Fig. 3. Influential people/forces guiding professional practice.

Fig. 3, the histogram on "influential people /forces" summarises responses regarding people or forces which have guided the respondents' professional practice in the early childhood field, over time. The results suggest that directors, team leaders and their assistants were influenced by children - either their own or those that they have worked with (57%), followed by their colleagues (36%), their training and their lecturers (29% and 14% respectively), by their own views (7%) and by "Other" influences (29%), though not by parents of children at all. Assistants who specified "Other" influences mentioned the following influences: their own children or their own childhood, theoreticians (Vygotsky and Piaget in one case, and Adler in another) and religious beliefs. In contrast, team leaders reported influence on their beliefs coming most often from their colleagues (36%), next often from their training (28%), followed by parents, children and their lecturers (24% each), followed by "Other" influences (12%) and their own views (20%). The "Other" influences reported by team leaders included professional publications and books (two respondents), inservice professional development activities (two respondents), their own family experiences (two respondents), religious beliefs (one respondent) and their broader education (one respondent). Directors reported a differently distributed range of influences on their beliefs about early childhood, reporting children as the most frequent influence (75%), followed by their professional training (63%), the influence of colleagues (50%), the influence of their own views (38%), their lecturers (38%) and parents of children (38%). Fifty percent of directors reported "Other" influences on their views, and these were specified by some as their own personal beliefs and values (two respondents), experience with multicultural children (one respondent) (one respondent) and her broader education and experience (one respondent).

4. Discussion

4.1. Working environment in Australia

The findings of Phase I highlight the need for early childhood educators to be adaptable and versatile in dealing with the ebb and flow of each day. The recorded average working day was almost 10 hours in duration, and yet, the majority of respondents reported that they had been unable to complete all the tasks they had planned for the day, primarily because they had either "run out of time" or because children's needs (e.g. spontaneous requests for different learning experiences) and demands changed (e.g., children falling sick, taking time to settle down to sleep) and staff had to respond accordingly. Responses suggest that this was a daily occurance, and that staff were resolved to manage their time as best as they could. In prioritising the essential tasks that had to be completed daily, those that were concerned directly with children took high priority and administrative tasks with no child contact were ranked least important. This pattern reflects the traditional beliefs and values of early childhood practitioners for whom children are the primary objective, the centrality of their professional work.

The nature of their daily tasks were such it appears that respondents spent little or no time on reflection and strategic planning. Most trained child care staff in Australia, especially teachers working directly with children, have at least two hours a week without children for programme planning. Five team-leaders and one director noted that that they had done programme planning during the course of the target day. These tasks were however not considered to be highly important by any of these respondents and were ranked as either the 4th or 5th most important daily task.

Two of these team-leaders also noted that they had not been able to access program planning time fully on the target day due to staffing difficulties. This is a reflection of the current crisis in child care in Australia, as many centres are being forced to adopt cost cutting measures such as varying staffing and program planning procedures (NACBCS 1997). It is difficult to assess whether this is therefore an individual staff issue or an organisational, structural matter impacting across all centres in Australia. It is also possible that the method of data collection in Phase I, may have precluded the respondents from recording tasks related to long term future directions, as they were only asked to record tasks they had done on a specific day. The extent to which we interpret tasks which were recorded (such as program planning as well as role modelling, encouraging and supporting children, parents and staff) as being future oriented is a moot point. If one was to adopt Rodd's view that leaders are those that are future directed, this issue also highlights difficulties in conceptualising and defining roles and responsibilities of early childhood leaders.

Slater (1995) argues that leadership is best understood from an organisational and societal context. Information about the current socio-political context within which child care centres operate in Australia is readily available. However, other than minimal demographic information such as centre size and staff: child ratios, qualitative data pertaining to organisational culture within their own centres were not requested.

The finding that assistants are most often influenced in their task choice by the team leaders who, in turn, are most often influenced by directors is in line with expectation,

given the hierarchy through which the centres are managed. All three groups are influenced by parents of children generally, and the frequency of this, is likely to reflect their roles in the centre. With respect to the parents, team leaders were more likely to welcome parents or farewell them, with reports concerning the welfare of their child, than, perhaps, the assistants. Similarly, the director, or manager of the service, would be expected to have frequent contact with clients in good professional child care practice. High proportions of all three groups of staff reported that their tasks were influenced by "other" or outside influences and those respondents who specified these revealed an important difference between the respondent groups: that is, as expected, the assistants and team leaders whose responsibilities were to the day-to-day needs of the children and the centre, were, indeed, more influenced by the children in their care. The Centre directors, on the other hand, were more often influenced by the parent Management Committee, administrative demands, and visits by professionals and parents from outside the child care centre.

Although these data gave some insight into the frequency (but not strength) of influences affecting the activities of professionals within the child care centres, they gave little or no insight into the dynamics of the professional team, including how these influences change in strength or frequency with time, professional experience, differing child, parent or centre needs, or with changing pressures of influence from outside the child care centre. Thus, further study should include not only a count of the frequency of influence types, but also a study of the dynamics of direction, strength and primacy of the influences, including how decisions are made, when, by whom and under what authority. This became more apparent when we considered the beliefs that respondents had about who influenced them most in developing their ideas about early childhood.

Only limited input was sought from respondents to the survey in identifying their underlying beliefs, values and expectations. Herein lies one of the fundamental weakness of Phase I methodology. The survey data do not indicate the motivation or intent of the daily tasks; it is merely a record of the functions undertaken by an individual staff member. This situation is compounded due to the fact that staff dynamics or the nature of organisational culture within centres cannot be assessed accurately as data were collected from only one person in each centre, other than in the three centres which participated in Phase II of the study.

Taken on face value, the daily tasks as recorded by the respondents to the survey may appear mundane and not necessarily characteristic of leaders. However, these tasks as described by the staff, did take place within the naturalistic operational contexts of the child care centres in Australia. Accordingly, they may be described as "signs of the social reality" (Nivala 1998,3) and may be regarded as aspects of the "everyday discourses in leadership." Therefore, such tasks cannot be regarded as irrelevant to leadership.

4.2. Leadership and working with children

In all aspects under investigation, it was obvious, that there was a strong ethos of 'putting the children first'. In expressing their beliefs about early childhood, it was clear that the majority of respondents had adopted a child centred focus. This flowed onto the way

these respondents managed their day-to-day tasks. The question is whether this focus on children, is in conflict with leadership tasks or visions? Kagan and Bowman (1997,6) argue that to assume that leadership roles and responsibilities are restricted to centre managers and administrative duties, is to reinforce "a false hierarchy of leadership ....., one wherein leaders are only those who set their sights outside classrooms or family child care homes." Since this study is not about testing the operationalisation of a given definition of a leader, no questions were asked focussing on leadership per se. The question remains whether leadership is about roles and responsibilities tied to a particular job or position or skills or the qualities and characteristics of leaders, including their personal attributes.

Modelling good practice in working with children can be regarded as something that an early childhood leader should/would do. But, the most senior staff members, the centre directors, as a group, spent less than one third of their time with child related tasks, while team leaders and assistants spent more than half of their day in direct contact work with children. Does that mean that only some staff can be leaders in early childhood settings? Can there be more than one leader in any child care centre? As Spindler and Spindler (1993) found interpretations of the same event or interaction as reported in a daily time-sheet, can vary according to the positional situation of the respondent. The hierarchical nature of staffing child care centres, where the assistants were placed at the lower end of the system can mean that it would be easy to dismiss the notion that assistants were leaders given their dependent or subordinate employment status.

It is also unclear whether, if leadership is about management and administration, then tasks categorised under "other" were the only ones which we should consider to be relevant to leadership and should be the main area of analysis. The interchangeability of management and administrative tasks are blurred further because of the nature of management in community based child care centres in Australia. That is, it is often unclear, whether the responsibility lies with the director, as the staff person employed to run the centre, or the parent Management Committee, who is the employer, and consists of a group of volunteers drawn from the parents who use the centre. The complexities of this relationship between the client who is also the employer, and the professional who is an employee, is not easily observable and the detail is lost, in completing a postal survey such as ours.

4.3. Defining leadership in early childhood

As directors, team-leaders and assistants, the early childhood professionals who participated in this survey carried out a multitude of tasks which related to children, parents, staff and others connected with their centres. The survey records do not allow us to verify the extent to which these tasks demonstrate personal attributes and skills of respondents or the mandatory responsibilities of their employment position at a child care centre director, as a team-leader or assistant. Accordingly, it is unclear whether our emphasis should be as Mitchell (1990,1) states "what leaders do than with what leadership is" as a phenomenon.

Most recent strongly supported leadership theories look at the match between leadership style and their ability to adapt their behaviours to demands in the environment, particularly employee needs. The contingency approach to leadership recognises that leadership effectiveness is dependent on a leader's ability to enhance the performance and satisfaction of their employees (Greenberg & Baron 1997). The difficulty faced by child care centre staff is that they have competing environmental demands, often requiring immediate action to safeguard the needs and interests of the children placed in their care. From the results of the present study, it was apparent that the first priority of child care staff in Australia was fulfilling children's needs. They were also required to fulfil the needs of parents and staff and undertake a wide variety of administrative duties, often including the management of a multi-million dollar budget. Faced with these multiple demands, the question arises, if the main priority of the directors is child centred, how do they express their leadership? How effective is their leadership in terms of their ability to manage a team of early childhood staff and to provide a high quality service to children and families who use the centre?

Kagan (1994) has discussed succintly, the difficulties of applying conventional leadership norms to early education and care. It is difficult to say whether the tasks as identified in the diary records provided by the respondents of this study, reflect leadership qualities or skills accurately. A check could be made by adopting a particular framework or typology on leadership devised by various researchers. However, this method is deemed to be inappropriate because it is seen as imposing from the top, an artificial framework, just to get over the difficulties of analysis.

The survey data suggest that there may be more than one leader or that there were a number of facets of leadership operating within child care centres in Australia. This is in keeping with Kagan and Bowman's (1997,6-7) contention that a more broadly based definition of leadership in early childhood is required, and they suggest at least five faces or functions of leadership consisting of pedagogical, administrative, advocacy, community and conceptual advancement. Accordingly, we could describe centre directors as administrative leaders, and that the team-leaders as pedagogical leaders. On the other hand, although the positional requirements of the traditional assistant was as a subordinate, there were some cases where the assistant played a "leadership" role in showing initiative and responsibility for ensuring the provision of a stimulating and safe play environment. The fact that there were three assistants undertaking degree level training augurs well in indicating high levels of aspiration in professional development within this group of assistants participating in this study. This may also be indicative of personal frustration in not being able to take on leadership responsibilities without formal qualification and higher employment status. This reinforces the need to look beyond employment status in our search for indicators or descriptors of leadership in early childhood.

5. Conclusion

It must be remembered that this data has been generated through a single data collection instrument - a postal questionnaire. No direct contact has been made between the researchers and the respondents to ascertain clarification or discuss any aspects of

leadership in early childhood. As those such as Spindler and Spindler (1993), Pence and MacCallum (1995) and Welch (1993) have stated, direct observation and corroboration of findings with the respondents would help to obtain a better understanding of leadership phenomena and processes.

If our purpose is to find "meanings of leadership" (Mitchell 1990,6), then it is critical that we engage the participants in further dialogue about their perceptions and understanding of their leadership roles and responsibilities. If our ultimate goal is to enhance the leadership potential of early childhood educators, then our analysis must be strongly grounded on realistic or actual situations and contexts. As Nivala (1997,6) concludes "it is also important to understand that a leader makes decisions with realistic matters and acts in a social reality. So, the theory of educational leadership must answer to the problems which happen in a practical action."

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Leadership in early childhood in England – A national review[1]

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Abstract

This study investigated aspects of leadership in early childhood professionals in England. A sample of 41 early childhood professionals, including qualified child care staff, early childhood teachers and centre managers completed a survey of daily tasks which examined the type of activity undertaken and with whom during one typical day. These data were supplemented by observational data collected from seven different early childhood services which are representative the type of service provision available in England. The quantitative and qualitative data analyses provide a picture of the similarities and differences in the work undertaken by early childhood professionals and illustrate the context in which leadership can be assumed. An analysis of the typical work undertaken by this sample of early childhood professionals reveals that some key leadership functions do not appear to be assumed by centre staff, suggesting that leadership is not as effective as it might be. More sophisticated tools are necessary to investigate this complex and essential responsibility.

Keywords: early childhood, leadership, professionalism

1. Introduction

While considerable attention has been focused recently on the need for effective leadership in the primary and secondary sectors in England, there has barely been a mention of the

1 This project was funded by grants from the Rolle School Research Committee. Research assistance was provided by Bernie Davis, an early childhood teacher and student on the Integrated Masters Programme.

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importance of such skills for those who manage early childhood schools and centres. Yet, many of those who hold or aspire to managerial positions in early childhood service provision recognise that effective leadership is the key to quality services as well as to the increasing professionalisation of the field in general (Rodd 1996).

There are a number of factors which make leadership of services for young children and their families unique (Rodd 1994), regardless of the cultural context. Such factors mean that leadership in early childhood is worthy of close investigation. First, early childhood is a field which is predominantly female. Those in management positions are usually female and in charge of groups of people who are mostly women. The leader is part of a heterogeneous group whose background represents the spectrum of age, experience, social class, qualifications and culture. The personal characteristics, skills, styles, roles and responsibilities associated with effective leadership are likely to be quite different for each situation.

Second, women in early childhood seem reluctant to identify themselves with the traditional concept of "leader" (Hall 1996). Recent research suggests that women prefer to take a more empowering and cooperative approach to leadership than many men (Mitchell & Gruhn 1996). Further research is needed with samples of English early childhood professionals to delineate their understanding of leadership and how it impacts upon their work with children, families and staff. The paucity of research into leadership in early childhood professionals in England has had an impact on the availability of training for undertaking and fulfilling leadership roles and responsibilities in the early childhood field. At present, training to assist those who hold or aspire to leadership positions to understand what leadership means for women in early years services and how to effectively fulfill the range of leadership roles in the such contexts is not widely available in England.

Defining leadership in early childhood

Broadly, leadership is a future-oriented activity, involving vision, empathy, the ability to influence others, a cooperative orientation and a desire to empower and enable others (Rodd 1994). It includes using professional values and philosophy as a basis for reflecting about, deliberating upon and planning for the organisational and pedagogical aspects of the service.

In more practical terms, leadership in early childhood involves the ability to:

- develop and communicate a vision to staff and parents which will inspire their confidence in the leader and their commitment to making the vision a reality
- create and maintain a harmonious and cooperative interpersonal environment and team culture
- influence the behaviour of staff and parents towards the goals and to contribute creatively to the service
- administer and manage the service efficiently (that is, being cost effective and utilising the human resource potential)
- supervise staff and guide parents in ways which will enhance their personal growth and development

- plan for, implement and monitor change in order to improve individual, organisational and professional effectiveness.

Some early childhood professionals use the terms "leadership" and "management" interchangeably, as if they were synonymous. While both leadership and management are essential for quality early childhood service provision, these terms are not synonymous but entail different perspectives and different skills. Management is related more to the organisational knowledge and skills required for the efficient day to day operation of a service (Rodd 1994). Management refers to the ability to focus on the specific details of getting through the day and requires a set of administrative skills, such as budgeting, meeting deadlines, prioritising, telephone skills and conducting meetings, to keep the service operating efficiently. Management skills are necessary but not sufficient for effective leadership in early childhood services.

Leaders in early childhood services in England generally are not recognised by the community or other educational colleagues for the high level of responsibility that they carry. Pay and status are not commensurate with responsibility. Most people have learned to fulfill their roles while on the job but acknowledge that this is an ineffective way of developing professional leaders. Training for positions of leadership in early childhood is a rare commodity in England. Like their colleagues in primary and secondary education, those in positions of leadership in early childhood report the need for assistance with communication skills, stress management, problem solving, observation, monitoring and evaluation. There is a particular demand for the development of interpersonal skills to support team work in centres and to manage demanding and difficult situations more effectively.

An explanation for this paucity of research interest lies to a certain extent in the chronic demand for change within care and educational service provision for young children and their families in England. Early childhood professionals constantly are required to respond to changes imposed by the statutory regulatory bodies, such as the implementation of the nursery voucher scheme, achieving desirable outcomes and implementing the national curriculum with children under eight years, inspection, and baseline assessment to name but a few. The majority of English early childhood professionals, including the small number of researchers, put a lot of effort into responding to such demands in an attempt to ensure that any changes are consistent with the prevailing early childhood philosophy and orientation. As a consequence, the focus of much research tends to be in response to specific pressing issues and proposed changes, with more general issues such as leadership taking a lower priority than would normally be the case. Research into leadership appears to be undertaken where the issue is of personal interest to a particular researcher. As a result, little research information is available about the context and nature of leadership in early childhood in England.

The study of leadership in early childhood emerged in the United States of America during the 1980s and early 1990s with the publication of research and position papers (Jones 1980; Jorde Bloom 1992; Jorde Bloom & Scheerer 1991, 1992; Kagan 1994; Kinney 1992). Investigation into leadership as a professional issue was taken up during that time in Australia by Rodd (1994, 1996) who conducted a range of studies which focused on early childhood professionals' perceptions of and understanding about their leadership roles and responsibilities. Following her move to England, Rodd's study of leadership in early childhood has continued with English early childhood professionals

(Rodd 1997). A search of the English literature related to leadership in early childhood revealed that this issue has not yet become a focus for English early childhood researchers.

The provision of effective leadership in the range of early years settings in England has been recognised recently as one of the priorities of the field by early childhood practitioners (Ball 1995). The numerous short course, in-service training opportunities focused on management in early childhood, as opposed to leadership, which are offered throughout the country provide evidence of this need. However, research interest in the issue of leadership has not matched the interest of early years practitioners with few research studies being conducted.

The purpose of this present study was to identify the types, range and complexity of the daily tasks that early childhood professionals in England undertake in a typical day as a basis for understanding the context in which leadership roles and responsibilities occurred. These data would enable the work undertaken by the different staff in early childhood settings, such as centre managers, early childhood teachers and child care staff, to be compared in order to ascertain where similarities, differences and gaps in duties and responsibilities were to be found. Gaining a detailed and in-depth understanding of the work undertaken by those staff responsible for the care and education of children under eight years is essential in order to understand the complexity of the profession, to develop high quality service provision and to enable those responsible for training future early childhood practitioners to develop relevant courses. Participation in the study was regarded as offering early childhood practitioners an opportunity for professional reflection on practice from which areas of staff development, future professional goals and a basis for negotiation regarding future duties could be identified.

2. Methodology

2.1. Procedure

The study was conducted in two parts. The first part consisted of a survey of daily tasks in which participants were asked to provide in their own words details of the tasks that they engaged in at half hour intervals during a typical working day. Given that the format of the survey originated from Finland, it was necessary to make some modifications to meet local cultural and contextual conditions. The respondents were provided with a proforma diary which they were required to complete in half hour periods for one typical day from their arrival at the centre until their work for that day was completed. These data also asked for details of the number of children and number and type of adults that were involved in their work in each half hour period. Eight additional open ended questions related to various aspects of their work on a typical day as well as items related to biographical details were included in the proforma. The daily task diaries were mailed to 100 respondents in the south west of England and the Midlands who agreed to participate in the study following a letter describing the study and a personal telephone call to discuss details of the study and to answer any queries. The respondents were asked to return the diaries in a reply paid envelope within four weeks. After eight weeks, a reminder letter was mailed to encourage the completion and return of the diaries.

The second part of the study involved taking observations of early childhood professionals during a typical working day at seven different early childhood settings which were representative of the range of provision available in England. Non participant observations of centre managers, early years teachers and child care staff going about their work in their centres were recorded in writing and participants were invited to discuss the observational records at the conclusion of the session. The staff from all of these centres had participated in the first part of the study. These qualitative data were collected in order to corroborate the information from the survey of daily tasks and to provide access to fine contextual details which might influence the day to day work of early childhood professionals.

2.2. Sample

A total of 41 out of the 100 respondents who had agreed to participate in the study completed and returned the survey of daily tasks. This was a disappointing return rate because of the considerable effort which was made to ensure that those who agreed to participate in the study did in fact have the time and were motivated to complete the research project. The low response rate may have been affected by the fact that requests to participate in research studies are becoming more frequent for early childhood professionals who also have an increasing responsibility for completing a considerable amount of paperwork related to their work with children. For those respondents from the south west of England, this was the third major research project in the past two years that had asked local early childhood professionals to give of their time and energy.

Of the sample of 41 respondents, 15 (36.6 %) were centre managers or coordinators, 11 (26.8 %) were qualified early childhood teachers and 15 (36.6 %) were qualified child care staff (known in England as nursery nurses). One male respondent was included in the sample which is representative of the female: male ratio in the early childhood field in England.

The age range of the sample was between 18 and 52 years with 53.7 % of the respondents being aged 40 plus years. The child care staff (46.6 % aged between 20-29 years) were generally younger than the teachers and centre managers the majority of whom were aged between 40 and 49 years (63 % of teachers and 45.5 % of centre managers).

Experience in the early childhood field ranged from 6 months to 35 years, with 60 % of child care staff having between 0,5 and 10 years experience, 45.5 % of teachers having between 10 and 20 years experience and 36.4 % of them having more than 20 years experience. Of the centre managers, 20 % had under 10 years experience, 33.3 % had between 10 and 20 years experience and 46.7 % had more than 20 years experience. The sample overall, particularly the teachers and coordinators were particularly experienced professionals in early childhood settings which may explain be related to their willingness to participate in the research project.

The respondents worked in both small and large services with numbers of children ranging from 20 to 400 (where early childhood services were part of a primary school). The size of the staff group ranged from 2 to 66 where large staff numbers reflected early childhood settings which were attached to a primary school. The average size of staff

groupings was 9 qualified early childhood staff with an average of additional centre staff such as cooks and cleaners.

2.3. Coding categories

The data collected in both parts of the study were open ended, qualitative data which permitted the respondents to generate their own ideas and express themselves in their own words. It was considered important not to offer any guidelines which may predispose respondents to think and reply in any particular direction. Two researchers undertook a content analysis of the diaries and observations in order to generate meaningful codes to describe the data and which would allow for comparisons between different staff positions in early childhood settings. Table 1 summarises the codes which included a broad orientation code and a specific code which were then used to analyse each diary entry and observation.

Table 1. Coding categories for diaries and observations.

Broad code	Specific code
Child oriented work	Meeting children's physical and emotional needs. Interacting with child/children. Supervising children's learning activities. Direct teaching. Observing/assessing children.
Parent oriented work	Work/interaction with parents
Staff oriented work	Communicating with staff. Supervising staff. Supervising students.
Organisational work	Preparation for teaching and learning activities. Setting up room/activities. Curriculum development.
Internal activities (within the centre)	Maintenance (eg cleaning, health, safety).
External activities	eg. Shoppping, banking, collecting children from other places)

The broad and specific codes were used to draw a picture of who does what and when in the provision of care and education for young children in England.

3. The Findings

Part 1: Survey of daily tasks

The data from the survey of daily tasks are summarised below. Table 2 describes the type and range of tasks undertaken by the child care staff, early childhood teachers and centre managers or coordinators over a typical day. Although data are available concerning

each half hour period from 6:00 am through to 6:30 pm and beyond, many of the tasks are replicated over a number of half hour periods. A more meaningful picture of the focus of work during a typical day is obtained by collapsing the half hour intervals into five sessions: pre-session (6:00 am - 9:00 am), morning session (9:00 am - 12 noon), lunch break (12 noon - 1:00 pm), afternoon session (1:00 pm - 4:00 pm) and post session (4:00 pm - 6:30 pm). The main work undertaken by child care staff, early childhood teachers and centre managers or coordinators is summarised for each of the five sessions.

From Table 2, the similarities and differences between the three positions within an early childhood setting can be understood. Child care staff are focused upon work with children. They are involved mainly with tasks related to work with children during most of the day, for example setting up of activities, meeting children's physical and emotional needs, interaction with children, supervising children's learning activities, work and interaction with parents, and some administration and centre maintenance. The work appears consistently spread throughout the day with no one period seeming to be more demanding than any other. They tend to work only with other child oriented staff (who include child care staff, teachers and centre managers), parents and students.

The early childhood teachers report undertaking a greater range of tasks and working with a greater range of adults in each session. Consequently, their work appears to be more complex than that of child care staff because they have to attend to a greater number and range of tasks and people. The pre and post sessions mainly appear to be focused upon administration, management, communication with staff and supervision of students with a small amount of time devoted to preparation for teaching and learning activities, setting up of activities as well as supervising children's learning activities. In many settings, the child care staff take the major responsibility under the direction of a teacher for such child focused duties which gives the teacher time to devote to other responsibilities.

The morning and afternoon sessions appear to be child oriented where activities similar to those reported by the child care staff are undertaken. The proportion of time which appears to be devoted to direct teaching is small. These data might reflect the more informal nature of teaching and learning in early childhood contexts despite the targets set within Desirable Outcomes framework and the National Curriculum. It might be presumed that teachers' time would be taken up with supervising learning activities, interacting with and teaching children, working and interacting with parents and supervising other staff and students who are working with the children during the morning and afternoon sessions. However, some time is devoted during these sessions to management, administration and maintenance tasks. Whereas child care staff work mainly with children and parents, teachers work with children and parents as well as a range of other adults. It appears that teachers are unable to devote their complete attention to their work with children but must use time during their contact with children to attend to other tasks and people. It appears that pre and post session time is not sufficient to enable teachers to complete the full range of their responsibilities.

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Table 2. Summary of the work of early childhood professionals on a typical day.

Session	Position		
	Child care staff	Early childhood teacher	Manager
Presession (6am-9am)	*Setting up Maintenance Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Work/interaction with parents	*Setting up *Preparation for teaching/ learning activities *Communicating with staff Supervising children's learning activities Supervising students Management Administration	*Maintenance *Setting up *Management *Administration Preparation for teaching/ learning activities supervising students
Morning session (9am-12 noon)	*Meeting children's physical and emotional needs *Interacting with children *Supervising children's learning activities *Work / interaction with parents Maintenance Administration	*Interacting with children *Supervising children's learning activities Setting up Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Direct teaching Supervising staff/students Management Maintenance Administration	*Administration *Management Interacting with children Supervising children' learning activities Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Work/interaction with parents
Lunch (12 noon-lpm)	Work/interaction with parents Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Maintenance	*Communicating with staff *Management Work/interaction with parents Communicating with staff Supervising students Preparation Maintenance	*Administration *Management Communicating with staff Supervising staff/students Maintenance
Afternoon session (1 pm-4pm)	Setting up *Interacting with children *Supervising children's learning activities *Maintenance Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Supervising students	*Interacting with children *Supervising children's learning activities *Setting up Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Direct teaching Work/interaction with parents Management Administration Maintenance	*Administration *Management *Interacting with children Work/ interaction with parents Supervising children's learning activities
Post session (4pm-6:30pm)	*Maintenance Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Administration	*Administration * Management Interacting with children Meeting children's physical and emotional needs Supervising children's learning activities Communicating with staff	*Administration *Management Meeting children's physical and emotional needs

Note: * denotes a task to which significant time is devoted

The work undertaken by centre managers or coordinators appears to be focused on administration and management for the greater part of the day, with some work taking part external to the centre. Their work is mainly with other adults (who include child care staff, teachers, students, parents, centre workers and other adults) with a small amount of time devoted to work with children. It is likely that their work with children

results from relieving child care staff or teachers although some managers reported also having responsibility for direct contact time with children. The duties undertaken seem to be more integrated than that of teachers having the greater proportion of their time devoted to administration, management, maintenance, communication, supervision of staff and students and work and interaction with parents. The centre managers spent some time on preparation and setting up in the pre session time and in the morning and afternoon sessions they spent some time meeting children's physical and emotional needs, interacting with children and supervising children's learning activities.

From the data presented in Table 2, it is not possible to make any generalisations about who undertakes leadership roles and responsibilities within an early childhood setting. There is potential for child care staff, teachers and centre managers to demonstrate leadership in a range of areas, for example in team work, curriculum or work with parents.

On the completion of the daily diary, respondents were asked to indicate the five most important tasks of the tasks they undertook that day. The responses indicated different perceptions between the child care staff, the teachers and the centre managers. Table 3 summarises these data.

Table 3. Ranking of the five most important tasks.

Rank	Child care staff	Early childhood teachers	Centre managers
1	Interacting with children	Supervising children's learning activities	Supervising staff
2	Supervising children's learning activities	Work/ interaction with parents	Work/interaction with parents
3	Meeting children's physical & emotional needs	Direct teaching	Administration
4	Work / interaction with parents	Supervising staff	Maintenance
5	Supervising students	Management	Supervising children's learning activities

These data indicate that child care staff regard their work with children as of most importance. Teachers also regard their work with children, including, supervising other staff in contact with the children as their priority with importance given to management responsibilities. Centre managers regard activities associated with the smooth day to day running of the centre as their priority, with some importance given to supervising children's learning activities.

When asked to identify any tasks that they would have liked to have done during the day but couldn't, the different perspectives of the respondents were evident. The child care staff would have liked to have spent their time supervising children's activities, interacting with children and in curriculum development. The reasons why the child care staff could not undertake these tasks were time, meeting the needs of children, the emotional state of children and the weather. It is interesting to note that curriculum development is an issue of concern to child care staff but not raised by the teachers or

managers. Perhaps this reflects the intensive involvement of child care staff with developing the potential and meeting the learning needs of young children.

Very few of the teachers responded to this question suggesting that they had undertaken all of the tasks that they wanted to. The few teachers who wanted to undertake additional tasks during the day identified interacting with children and taking observations as tasks they would have liked to have undertaken. The teachers reported that it was not possible to undertake these tasks because of time, the weather and meeting the needs of children. Predictably, the centre managers would have liked to have undertaken more administration and management work, with some wanting to interact with children. Again, time and meeting the needs of children were cited as reasons that precluded such tasks being undertaken.

When asked whether they had discussed any of their tasks with others during the day, only 46,3 % of the respondents indicated that they had. With less than half the sample communicating about their work with other staff members, it appears that working together as a team does not have high priority. Of the child care staff and teachers who responded positively to this question, the people that they mainly discussed their work with were other child care staff and parents. Work was discussed less frequently with the centre coordinator, the early years teacher and students. Centre managers tended to discuss their work with the range of staff at their centre. Few managers appeared to discuss their work with management committees. Given that communication is regarded as a key aspect of effective leadership, these data suggest that greater attention needs to be given to increased communication by all of the staff in early childhood settings.

In identifying the major influences which determined the tasks which were undertaken in a typical day, the respondents provided the following information. The work of child care staff was determined primarily by the children and to a lesser extent by other staff, for example the early childhood teacher. The centre manager also played a part in determining their work.

Other less significant factors which were identified by a small number of child care staff, teachers and centre managers were parents, time, teaching, other staff, centre routine and centre philosophy. Centre philosophy which is argued by numerous writers (Fleet & Clyde 1993; Rodd 1994) to underpin and provide professional guidelines for the work of early childhood professionals appears to play a very insignificant role in influencing work. Without reference to centre philosophy and with minimum communication between staff about their work, it seems that many staff are working in professional isolation without the benefits of team work. In addition, this may reflect an oversight or lack of understanding on the part of centre managers about the value of a clear centre philosophy which is understood by and used as an effective tool by early childhood professionals to guide their decisions about what work and how that work might best be undertaken in the best interests of the children.

In order to draw up a comprehensive picture of the diversity of the work of early childhood professionals, the respondents were asked to identify any other significant tasks that they would undertake on other days as part of their regular work. All of the respondents nominated staff meetings, administrative tasks, working with parents, observation, assessment, recording and report writing and finally training. Child care staff reported that they undertook fund raising tasks. Child care staff and early childhood teachers reported that they also had discussions with the centre manager about children

and students, undertook curriculum preparation and evaluation, made home visits and visited the toy library, local library and swimming pool. Child care staff and centre managers reported that they undertook student assessment.

Early childhood teachers were responsible for providing for special educational needs, acted as staff representatives on management bodies and deputised for the centre manager when necessary. Both early childhood teachers and managers undertook staff and student supervision and liaised with external people and agencies. Centre managers also were involved in supporting staff by working with children when necessary, coordination, planning and evaluation, staff selection and appraisal, counselling and policy writing.

These data reveal the diversity of tasks which need to be effectively undertaken by all staff in early years settings as well as pointing to considerable role diffusion and overlap between staff who nominally have different job specifications. Given that quality early childhood services are in part a result of meeting the needs of the situation regardless of job title and specification, it becomes even more important to be aware of the high degree of responsibility borne by those staff who are lowest in the organisational hierarchy and pay scales.

While the role of a centre philosophy appears to have minimal influence on the day to day work of early childhood professionals, all of the respondents could clearly articulate the philosophy or main principles that guided their work in the care and education of young children. Table 4 summarises in rank order the guiding principles which were articulated by child care staff, early childhood teachers and centre managers.

Table 4. Principles underpinning early cllildhood professionals' philosophy.

	Guiding principle	Nominated by:		
	Rank	Child care staff	Teacher	Manager
1	The provision of a safe, caring stimulating environment	+	+	+
2	Children are respected and valued as individuals	+	+	+
3	Interpersonal relationships with adults are important	+	+	+
4	Children need to learn socially and culturally acceptable behaviour	+	+	+
5	Children learn through play	+	+	+
6	Learning takes place as a result of a balance between teacher directed and child initiated activity		+	+
7	A planned curriculum based on knowledge of child development and subject content		+	+
8	Equal opportunity		+	
9	Involvement of parents		+	+
10	Working as a team of trained professionals integrating care and education		+	+

The philosophy or guiding principles expressed by child care staff are specifically child oriented and seem to be more narrowly focused upon children's learning. Given that child care staff had previously expressed a desire to spend more time on curriculum development, it is interesting to note their lack of reference to this area. Early childhood teachers and centre managers appeared to articulate fairly similar philosophies which focus upon children' experiences and learning needs and the needs of parents. The importance of team work was identified which, given earlier data, seems to be more an abstract concept rather than a reality in practice. Early childhood teachers referred to the issue of equal opportunity which is likely to reflect their concern with child oriented teaching and learning issues. The centre managers' philosophy does not provide evidence of extended understanding of or thinking about their leadership role and responsibilities.

Finally, the respondents were asked to describe the ways in which their work had changed during the time that they had worked in the early childhood field. Table 5 summarises the changes which were identified by child care staff, early years teachers and centre managers.

Table 5. Changes in work over time in early childhood field.

Change	Nominated by:		
	Child care staff	Teacher	Manager
Greater responsibility for:			
– Children's learning	+		
– Administrative duties	+		
– Using computers with children	+		
– Responding to changes in legislation	+	+	+
– Planning, assessment and recording	+	+	+
– Responding to child initiated activity	+	+	
– Observations and recording of children's behaviour		+	
– Developing policies eg equal opportunity		+	
– Awareness about current research on children's learning		+	
– Teamwork		+	
– More contact with parents		+	+
– Accountability			+
– Partnerships/working with other agencies			+

All of the respondents reported an expansion in their responsibilities, with the centre managers articulating that changes in their work resulted additionally in less time to spend with children. The overwhelming majority of child care staff reported having to take greater responsibility for children' learning which suggests that the stereotyped dichotomy between care and education may be breaking down in early childhood settings. Early childhood teachers thought that they were required to engage in work which may not be related directly to their work with children such as reading research literature, developing policies and working as a member as a team. Centre managers perceived

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greater responsibility to be accountable and to become involved and work with external agencies.

The data from the survey of daily tasks has revealed the diversity and complexity of the work of early childhood professionals. While the data have not provided much insight into the nature of leadership and the conditions under which leadership is and can be demonstrated, the data have illustrated the context in which leadership occurs and is possible. The important issues which have emerged from these data are the large number of diverse tasks which contribute to the operation of a quality early childhood service, deficiencies in communication and teamwork, lack of reference to a professional centre philosophy, role diffusion and overlap and an apparent low level of understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities by centre managers.

Part 2: Observations in a range of early childhood centres

In order to corroborate the data collected from the survey of daily tasks and to gain insight into contextual factors which might influence the day to day work of early childhood professionals, it was decided to observe the work of volunteer child care staff, early years teachers and centre managers in their naturalistic settings. In order to collect the non participant observations, the researcher organised to follow one child care staff member, one early childhood teacher and one centre manager individually for one typical day in each of seven settings which are representative of the diverse range of early childhood services operating within England. Therefore, observations were conducted over three days in each setting. On completion of the observations, each subject was interviewed and invited to review the written observations and offer any additional comments.

The range of early childhood services which were sampled in this part of the study included:

1. A private child care centre which runs an out of school hours service and a Saturday programme
2. An early childhood centre attached to a college of further education
3. A government funded child care centre which combines care and education
4. A private nursery school which offers three hour sessions
5. An early childhood education centre attached to a local primary school in a city
6. An early childhood education centre which follows a High scope curriculum
7. An early childhood education centre attached to a primary school in a small village

Using a structured observation format, the researcher collected qualitative non participant observations on a total of 564 incidents in the seven settings. Information recorded included the time at the start and finish of the incident, the context in which the incident occurred, a narrative objective description of what was happening, who was involved and any other information might have been relevant. The length of the incidents on which the narrative observations were collected ranged from one minute to fifteen minutes with 77.8 % of incidents ranging between one minute (20.2 %) and ten minutes (10.5 %) duration. Each observational record was coded using the previous coding format outlined in Table 1 to determine the focus of the early childhood professionals' work.

Analysis of the observational data revealed that child oriented tasks dominated the activity of all of the early childhood professionals. Table 6 summarises the percentages of observations taken for each of the broad categories from Table 1.

Table 6. Early childhood professionals' position and focus of activity.

Focus of activity	Early childhood professionals' positions (percentages in each position)		
Broad category	Child care staff	E C teacher	Centre manager
Child oriented	65.4	57.8	34.7
Parent oriented	8.1	4.9	12.7
Staff oriented	11.4	19.4	22.5
Organisational	6.5	8.7	9.2
Internal activities	8.1	9.2	19.7
External activities	0.5	0.0	1.2

Coding each observation for its specific focus revealed that the child care staff were engaged mostly in meeting the physical and emotional needs of children (22.7 %), supervising children's learning activities (22.2 %), interacting with children (15.7 %), communicating with staff (10.8 %) and work and interaction with parents (8.1 %). The observational data confirm the focus of their work which was reported in the daily diaries.

The early childhood teachers were engaged mostly in supervising children's learning activities (31.6 %), interacting with children (12.15), meeting children's physical and emotional needs (7.3 %) and setting up the room or activities (7.35). Only 4.4 % of the observations were coded as direct teaching. Another 16.0 % of the observations were coded as communicating with staff. On the days in which the observations were collected, none of the teachers were observed undertaking external activities. These data are consistent with the information reported in their daily diaries.

Observations gathered on the centre managers revealed that they undertook tasks in all of the coding categories. However, they appeared to devote a significant amount of their time (totaling 43.9 %) to child oriented activities (34.7 %) and organisational activity (9.2 %) which was considerably more time than was indicated from the data reported in the daily diaries. Most of this child oriented activity was spent on supervising children's learning activities which perhaps is a reflection of centre managers who combine responsibility for working directly with children with their administrative role. The centre managers' self reports in the diaries suggest that most of their day is devoted to administration and management whereas the observations revealed that just over half their day was taken up by administration and management. It may be that their perceptions are based because of the perceived pressure and amount of administrative and management tasks which are now part of centre managers' day to day responsibility. The observations confirm the focus of centre managers on staff oriented activities, administrative and management duties within and external to the centre and work or interaction with parents. These data illustrate the complexity and diversity of the work which centre managers undertake in a typical day.

In relation to the length of observed incidents, the child care staff appear to engage in more sustained interaction within their work than teachers and managers with over a third of the incidents observed being of between five and ten minutes duration. Early years teachers and centre managers engaged in incidents of between five and ten minutes duration for about 25 % of their observations. Only 14.6 % of observations of child care staff were of one minutes duration whereas 20.9 % of observed incidents for early childhood teachers and 25.4 % observed incidents for centre managers were of one minute's duration. Perhaps teachers and managers have more demands on their attention and time. These data have implications for the provision of quality early childhood services.

In understanding the nature of work and the context for leadership in early childhood settings, it is important to appreciate that the type and context of different early childhood settings are important determinants. In England, it is difficult to compare data from the range early childhood settings because their contexts are so different. Contextual factors will influence what activities may or may not be undertaken in specific settings. Such factors can include professional philosophy, curriculum orientations, local regulations, the physical setting and staffing profiles to name a few. The observational data related to each of the early childhood positions were taken from staff in different settings. The analysis of the focus of activity by all staff in each particular setting is interesting and is summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Focus of observations in the different early childhood centres.

	Early childhood centre						
Focus of staff activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	(Percentages in each centre)						
Child oriented	62.2	3.3	50.9	54.7	66.0	78.3	40.5
Parent oriented	11.2	9.2	4.5	12.5	8.0	4.3	16.2
Staff oriented	9.2	34.2	20.0	14.1	18.0	4.3	21.6
Organisational	3.1	8.3	6.4	6.3	2.0	8.7	18.9
Internal activities	12.2	15.0	17.3	12.5	6.0	4.3	2.7
External activities	2.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

These data illustrate the different foci of staff activity which are very much influenced by contextual factors. For example, centre 2 has a very different profile compared to centre 6 in relation to the percentages of child and staff oriented activity. Centre 7 staff were observed to engage in approximately four times more work or interaction with parents compared to centres 3 and 6. The staff at centre 2 were observed engaged in staff oriented activity for approximately a third of the day compared to much lower levels at other centres. Staff at centre 7 were observed to undertake considerably more organisational activity compared to other centres. Internal activities were not observed very often in centres 5, 6 and 7 whereas external activities were observed only in centres 1 and 3. The profile of centre 2 is quite different to those of the other centres. It may be of interest to note that this centre was nominated by the government recently as one of six early childhood centres of excellence throughout the country.

Finally, it is interesting to examine the data in relation to the criteria of leadership described in the introduction to this study. A number of characteristics distinguish leadership in early childhood (Rodd 1994). Table 8 reveals where the typical duties of child care workers, early childhood teachers and managers meet these criteria of leadership and where aspects of leadership are not undertaken.

All of the participants in this study reported that they engaged in work related to improving the interpersonal environment and a cooperative team culture, working with and influencing parents, supervising staff and efficient administration. However, work related to articulating a vision and managing change was not evident in either the survey of daily tasks or the observational data.

Table 8. Leadership criteria and the work of early childhood professionals.

Leadership Criteria	Child care staff	Early childhood teachers	Managers
develop and communicate a vision to staff and parents			
create and maintain a harmonious and cooperative interpersonal environment and team culture	+	+	+
influence the behaviour of staff and parents	+	+	+
administer and manage the service efficiently	+	+	+
supervise staff and guide parents in ways which will enhance their personal growth and development	+	+	+
plan for, implement and monitor change in order to improve individual, organisational and professional effectiveness			

4. Conclusion

The data from this study reveal that the primary orientation of the work undertaken by early childhood professionals in England, particularly for child care workers and early childhood teachers, is directed towards meeting the care and educational needs of young children. Related to this primary orientation is work with parents and staff because this is considered to be integral to the provision of high quality early childhood services. Leadership activity can be and appears to be undertaken by any early childhood professional regardless of their designated position in terms of their work with children, parents and colleagues.

However, it appears that not all of the criteria of leadership are met, specifically in relation to developing and articulating a vision and planning for and managing change. While these responsibilities generally are associated with a managerial role, they can be undertaken by any employee within a centre. The data from this study suggest that no staff member in the centres, particularly the managers, has assumed direct responsibility for these functions. It may be that these functions are undertaken in more subtle ways and that work behaviour associated with such functions may not be easily identified and articulated by early childhood staff themselves or directly observable by researchers.

More sophisticated tools for assessing such complex functions may be required to understand how these functions are performed in early childhood centres.

The data from this study have provided some insight into who does what in some early childhood centres in England and where similarities, differences and omissions or oversights are to be found. The data best describe the context in which the potential for leadership is available, rather than who engages in leadership activity and what such activity consists of. Further study of leadership in early childhood is required in order to unravel and understand this complex and essential area of work in early childhood centres.

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Towards understanding leadership in the context of Finnish early childhood

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Abstract

This article presents a Finnish perspective to examining leadership in early childhood. At the beginning, the paper discusses the Finnish day-care system and research on educational administration in Finland. The orientation of Finnish research group based on contextual and constructivist approaches is described in the beginning of chapter three. After that, the implementation of the job analysis study is discussed in detail. The aim of the study was to survey the tasks of directors, pre-school teachers, and nurses of day-care centres and to analyse how these tasks have changed during the last two decades. A self-study-report method was used when collecting the data. Eighty-three persons from different areas of Finland participated in the study. The results indicated that there are two groups of directors: ones with and without child group work. The emphasis of the directors without a child group was on co-operative tasks. The work of the directors with a child group was divided into two parts: leadership tasks and work in a child group. The pre-school teachers emphasised educational and instructional tasks and the nurses emphasised caring. The study indicated that the work of all participating groups had changed in many ways. Especially, the work of directors had changed remarkably. Challenges of developing early childhood work in the future are also discussed.

Keywords: leadership, early childhood, context, Finland

1 Puroila is the key researcher responsible for co-ordinating the data collection and analysis for this paper.

1. Views into Finnish day care and early education

The Finnish day care system has its roots in the development of Finnish society and must be considered as a part of the Finnish welfare state. In Finland, day care has been seen as part of the social and family policy and, recently, as part of the educational policy. During the past two decades, family policies have undergone major development. The comprehensive system of childcare includes maternity and paternity leave and day care legislation, which allows children to be cared for in their homes and parents to work shorter hours. The system covers the large majority of children and provides for parental choice of childcare settings (Tyyskä 1993).

The basis of the present day care policy lies in the Law on Children's Day Care (Laki 36/1973), which became effective in 1973. This law requires municipalities to produce publicly organised or supervised day care to such extent and in such forms as needed. In the 1980s, a paragraph concerning educational goals was added to the law. This paragraph defines the national educational goals for day care as follows (Laki 304/1983):

* The goal of day care is to support the educational function of the home and to work with the home in furthering the balanced development of the child1s personality.
* Day care should offer the child continuing, safe, and warm human relations, provide activities supporting the child's all-around development, and create a favourable growth environment for the child.
* Day care should, according to the needs of the child and in keeping with the general cultural tradition, further the child's physical, social, and emotional development and support the child's aesthetic, intellectual, ethical, and religious growth. Supporting religious growth should include respect for the convictions of the child's parents or guardians.
* In fostering the child's development, day care should support the child's growth towards being responsible, peace loving, and caring of the environment.

Day care combines *care* for the child while parents are working and *education*. This model has been called the Nordic model (Hännikäinen *et al.* 1997). One significant factor contributing to the Finnish model has been the high-level, full-time employment of young children's mothers. From this point of view, early education in the Nordic countries differs from that in most other Western European countries (see Oberhuemer & Ulich 1997).

At present, day care is undergoing a major transition. Since 1990, there has been a legal right to a place in publicly funded services for all 0- to 3-year-old children. The parents have a right to choose whether they want their children to have a place in a day care centre or in publicly funded family day care. They may also receive a child care allowance if they prefer to care for their child at home. In 1996, the statutory right was extended to include 4- to 7-year-old children. The parents of children in this age group have a right to choose whether they prefer a place in a day care centre or family day care. Some municipalities also have their own form of financial support if the parents prefer a private day care centre.

At the national level, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for child care and education services outside the compulsory school system. For some years now, there has been a process of change away from centralised regulation and responsibility for the funding, management, and monitoring of services, which have been gradually

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assigned to the regional and local authorities. At the present stage of welfare state, the municipalities are responsible for organising day care services. Some researchers have therefore replaced the concept "welfare state" with the concept "welfare municipalities" (Kröger 1997).

Apart from the trend towards decentralisation in administration, it is also possible to anticipate another process. At least two reasons are obvious. Firstly, pre-school education has recently been a focus of interest. Pre-school is often only taken to refer to the year before school age, though early education professionals would like to broaden the concept "pre-school" to apply to all children under the statutory school age of seven years. Secondly, the amendment of the Day Care Law in 1996 was an ideological change in the function of the day care system. Before the new law came into force, municipalities had to produce day care services to the extent they were needed, which especially referred to families who needed care for their children during the parents working or studying hours. According to the new law, each child has a right to day care and early education. Nowadays, a municipality has to provide day care and early education for all children who need and ask for it. Children are provided full-time day care even when their parents are unemployed or stay at home during the day. Recently, it has been discussed whether the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health or the Ministry of Education should be responsible for day care and education services before the compulsory school age. In two of the 450 Finnish municipalities, local educational authorities have already taken responsibility for day care. Several municipalities are discussing this issue.

In Finland, municipalities fund most of the day care centres. The day care centre staff consists of a director, pre-school teachers, nurses, and kitchen, cleaning and auxiliary staff. Previously, there were general recommendations on the roles and responsibilities of each occupational group as defined by the central administration. Due to the decentralisation process, the decisions concerning the division of labour are now made in the day care centres. A day care centre is run by a director, who can be an administrative director concentrating on running the centre without responsibility for a group of children. This model is mostly used in large centres. In small centres, the director works partly as a teacher with a group of children and partly in administrative duties. Most of the directors are qualified pre-school teachers.

The groups can vary notably from one day care centre to another, because the directors are allowed to decide on group structure and personnel allocation in their own centres. The ratio is one adult for each four children who are 1 to 3 years old and one adult for each seven children who are 3 to 6 years old. Every third member of the staff must have at least a college degree. (Asetus 239/1973).

Early childhood education in Finland has been strongly influenced by Friedrich Fröbel. In the Nordic early education tradition, playing and aesthetics are considered the key elements. Apart from focusing on a given content and a special theme, attention is given to interpersonal relations, and the general social situation is ascribed the same importance as academic subjects (Hännikäinen *et al.* 1997).

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2. Research on educational administration in Finland

It is only during the past few years that special interest has arisen in Finland towards the leadership of educational organisations, schools, and day care centres. There has been general organisational research and research on the administrative and pedagogic environments in schools and day care centres. Since day care centres are maintained by the public sector, they also operate under public administration. Administration in the public sector is generally considered bureaucratic and hierarchic (Nikkilä 1994). This can be assumed to influence the actual or presumed manifestation of leadership in the public sector. We should therefore focus first on the research of municipal organisations and their leadership.

2.1. Research on public sector administration

Research and education in local government science in Finland began around the 1910s at approximately the same time as Taylor presented his 'Principles of Scientific Management'. The contemporary Finnish local government science concentrated on the daily routines of municipal work (Hoikka 1997). Local government science ultimately acquired the status of a discipline in Finland in the late 1960s, while in many other countries it is considered a part of administrative science.

Over the past few years, there has been a major paradigmatic change in municipal research. The focus of organisational research has shifted from the analysis of organisational structure towards research on organisational activities and their impacts. Surveys have given way, though slowly, to interpretative research (Anttiroiko & Tiura 1997). It can be said that the positivistic tradition of organisational research in public administration has only been consciously recognised in this decade (Hoikka 1997). The dominant empiristic approach was criticised even earlier, but only by a few individual researchers.

Owing to the predominant positivistic approach, mainly micro-level phenomena have been studied in municipal organisations. Until the 1980s, most of the research was administrative and judicial. It was only then that more attention began to be attached to political and organisational interpretations of municipal organisation.

Actual paradigmatic discussion on municipalities and municipal operations was only begun in the 1990s (Hoikka 1997). Municipal research now rests on four methodological principles (Anttiroiko & Tiura 1997). According to the first of these, municipal operations should be approached in the context of modern society. Secondly, municipal operations should be assessed locally, focusing on the processes and practices in terms of how each municipality operates. The third principle orients municipal research towards addressing the restructuring of the subdomains of society. This principle prerequires awareness of the disintegration of the powerful administrative structures of the public sector. The fourth methodological principle aims at dialectic research, implying a transition from the discrimination of qualitative and quantitative research towards mutual dialogue. This dialectic is manifested as theoretical tensions created by various theoretical confrontations.

These include the ways of approaching organisations as either hierarchies or networks and attention to administrative systems vs. dynamic processes.

The administrative way of thinking in the Finnish public sector has been fundamentally influenced by the principles of management by results. Management by results is not considered an actual system of management. Rather, it is a way of approaching organisation as a system composed of several reciprocal subsystems. Management by results has been assumed to replace the old bureaucratic-hierarchic ways of thinking.

All in all, what was said above indicates that either judicial aspects or administration as such have been the main objects of interest in the municipal organisation. Leadership as part of the administrative practices of an organisation has hardly been problematised at all. A few individual researchers have only considered leadership in public administration. Now, however, agents and actions are increasingly emerging as objects of study. This may be a sign that leadership as a phenomenon will be increasingly considered an aspect of organisational efficiency.

Aaltonen (1997) approached leadership of the social welfare sector from the viewpoint of organisational theory. According to her, social welfare directors appreciate management by results as a good method of leadership. Aaltonen pointed out those features of Weberian bureaucracy characterised leadership in social welfare during the period from the 1960s to the early 1980s. This is shown by the strict application of regulations and legislation. Activities were typically centred on facts and organisation. Only 25 % of the social welfare directors studied by Aaltonen considered interpersonal skills to be their most important leadership skill. According to Aaltonen, the new developmental trend that began in the 1980s is considered by social welfare directors to have introduced into social welfare a model, which emphasises the competence and contribution of individual workers, the goal orientation of work, and the assessment of outcome at the expense of bureaucracy.

Niiranen (1994) demonstrated that social welfare directors appreciated a mode of leadership that contributes to the operating environment, is efficient, and underlines human resources. Despite this, their views clearly reflected features of hierarchic organisational thinking. Social welfare directors are loyal to the decisions by the central government on societal economy, etc. As regards interpersonal relations, they emphasised communality and increased mutual responsibility of personnel rather than personal contacts with their employees. The directors emphasised the importance of information from the employees rather than the clients in assessing the operations. They had more contacts with the upper than the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. When social and health care sectors were combined, there were more contacts with the health care sector than with the social welfare sector. The directors felt they were going through a double crisis in their work. First, they felt contradictory pressures from both the upper and the lower levels of the organisation. Second, they had to be general leaders in their own work, but substance experts while representing their organisation in society. Niiranen divided the directors into five main types: basic leader, marketing leader, leader for results, leader for change, and professional leader.

As the above quotations show, leadership in a municipal organisation is part of the administrative organisation of the whole municipality. It is obviously difficult for a lower level leader to resist the bureaucratic pressure of administration. Leadership in a municipal organisation apparently requires solidarity towards upper level decision-making.

2.2. Leadership research in schools

Finnish research on school organisations has increased notably over the past few years. Despite this, we cannot really speak about a wave of research. In 1997, for example, no doctoral dissertations were published on leadership, while two had been published in 1996. One of these is about leadership in a trade school (Määttä 1996). It is a relatively fragmentary description of leadership, and the theoretical basis is not very well organised. The other author, Isosomppi (1996), has titled her dissertation, "Director or Errand Boy," and approaches leadership in a school from two perspectives. On the one hand, she describes leadership as part of the organisational and historical development of school. On the other hand, she approaches leadership through an interpretative paradigm. Analysing essays produced by non-active role-playing, she describes the leadership and culture of schools and the activities of leaders in relation to the development of schoolwork. The theoretical part addresses paradigmatic questions. Isosomppi points out the special feature of leadership in school already reported in earlier works (Erätuuli & Leino 1992): the leader is an inconspicuous administrator who remains in the background. The teachers mostly carry out pedagogic development.

A few masters' theses were accomplished in 1997. In these, the students have analysed the process of change, the views of teachers concerning quality, and learning as part of the human resources management. Previous undergraduate papers have addressed changes in the operating environment of schools, and the leadership styles of principals.

Recently, so called pedagogic leadership in both early education and schools has emerged as a significant topic. Pedagogic leadership is not very carefully conceptualised in Finland. Usually it refers to the meaning of the educational goals of the school or day care organisations or the educational nature of the staff's work. According to Isosomppi (1996), the orientation of the school directors' work is very administrative. Also, in day care centres, meetings are focused on administrative issues, and not on educational issues (Karila 1997). Pedagogic leadership can also be seen to mean the nature of the leader's work. This means that any leader, including those in business organisations, should treat their subordinates like educators (Their 1994).

Previous studies on leadership in schools have addressed pedagogic leadership (Kurki 1993; Erätuuli & Leino 1992). In their definition of pedagogic leadership, Erätuuli and Leino (1992) refer to the principals' views of leadership. They conclude that pedagogic leadership consists of managing both people and matters. A further aspect of pedagogic leadership is a desire to promote the educational goals of the school.

2.3. Studies of leadership in day care

Leadership is not a phenomenon separate from the field of early education. From this perspective, all research on early childhood, whether focusing on children, families, staff or the societal links of early education, is inherently related to leadership. Research indirectly pertaining to leadership is abundant in Finland. Although this research does not focus on leadership, the challenge to study leadership can be considered to have partly risen from them. For example, the "Girl and Boy" project of Keskinen and Turtinen

(1992) included an intervention program to develop ways of encountering differences in children in the daily routines of day care. One outcome of the project was that the directors of day care centres appeared to be most resistant to change (ibid.). This finding, and various other Finnish development projects, have suggested the need to focus research on leadership in early childhood (e.g. Keskinen & Jalava 1994; Lahikainen & Rusanen 1991; Rusanen 1995; Tegelsten & Keskinen 1994).

There are a few undergraduate papers on this topic. Students have examined the operations of a day care centre as part of the municipal principles of management by results, the efficiency of day care, and the impact of management by results on the work of day care personnel. According to the findings (Salminen 1993), the principles of management by results do not acknowledge the assessment of efficiency of work. The personnel showed resistance towards the new practice of management by results, which was felt to be theoretical and distant from the daily routines of day care, because there were no suitable ways of assessing the quality of work. According to the findings, three major factors underlie conflicts in the working community. The most important factor consisted of personality features of the personnel, which were emphasised by 19 % of the respondents. The factor second in importance was the differences between professional groups, which were reported by another 19%. The third factor was the mode of leadership, which was mentioned by 14 %.

Research on leaders in early childhood has been scant in Finland until recently. There are two recent studies: a nation-wide inquiry presented to directors of day care centres (Nivala 1997a) and a study on the impacts of a lack of leadership in small day care centres on the day care operations in one municipality (Nivala 1997b). Some master's theses have also been written on this topic. Furthermore, some descriptions of the educational communities and cultures of day care centres have been made on the basis of consultative experiences (Kiesiläinen 1994). These publications also comment on leadership in day care centres.

3. The ILP in Finland

3.1. Theoretical orientation of the Finnish research group

The theoretical orientation of our Finnish research group is based on both educational and sociological theories. Contextual approach, which has been developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory by Hujala (Hujala *et al.* 1998; Hujala 1996), gives us a broad frame for examining leadership in day-care centres. In this contextual frame, leadership is seen as socially constructed, situational, and interpretative (Berger & Luckmann 1966). This means that leadership is considered a cultural phenomenon connected with the basic function of the organisation. On the basis of Gidden's (1984) structuration theory, it is possible to understand the connections between leaders' actions and the structural aspects of the organisation and society. From this perspective, leadership as a phenomenon is not localised in the leader, but concerns the followers as well (Gronn & Ribbins 1996; Sergiovanni 1992).

The contextual approach to leadership does not imply denial of the subjectivity of the leader. These two perspectives 'leader as a subject' and 'leadership as a more complex phenomenon' can support each other. They can be seen as two perspectives to one and the same issue. However, an analysis of the subjective definitions of a leader and an analysis of leadership as a contextual phenomenon require different research methodologies.

Conceptualising reality as socially constructed, multi-dimensional, and changing does not fit together with research practices based on positivism. The basis of positivism, which views social reality as regular and proceeding according to the laws of nature, can be criticised as deterministic. Another essential problem of positivism is that it considers subjective experiences, values, and meanings as unscientific. An alternative paradigm for educational research is derived from the humanistic tradition, with an emphasis on holistic and interpretative approaches (Husen 1997). The interpretative or constructivist approach to leadership in a context highlights the subjective experience of situationally embedded, real-world actors (Gronn & Ribbins 1996). Constructionism as the ontological and epistemological basis of research implies that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman 1966). According to Husen (1997), in order to understand human action and complex phenomena, it is necessary to recognise that human beings are agents in social situations. They not only respond and react, but also interpret, create, and act on the basis of their interpretations.

3.2. Premises of job analysis study

At the first stage of the project, we explored micro level context of leadership, especially the working practices in day care centres. In studies on leadership in educational organisations, the basic function of the organisation is one of the key factors that differentiate leadership of this kind from leadership of other organisations. Any attempt to study the leadership of an educational organisation requires an integration of the basic function of the organisation and its leadership. Although research on early childhood education in Finland has clearly increased recently, actual work research has been scant (Kivinen & Rinne 1992). The research on early childhood education has focused either on special aspects of the content of work, the viewpoints of the workers, or the societal links of the work. There has been hardly any conceptual analysis or problematisation.

Over the past few decades, various developmental projects have been carried out in Finnish research on early childhood education. They have predominantly focused on the *content of work.* The goal of several research projects has been to apply recent knowledge in an effort to develop the practices and routines of early education towards acknowledging the needs of individual children and families (e.g. Huttunen & Nivala 1991; Lahikainen & Rusanen 1991; Keskinen & Turtinen 1992; Rusanen 1995). These studies have typically been practice-oriented, aiming at change and endeavoring to develop certain themes regarded as important.

The studies on early education workers have mostly focused on the *personal dimension of work.* The studies on the professional identity and job satisfaction of early childhood educators consist of the workers' views and experiences of early childhood education as

a job and themselves as workers (Keskinen 1990; Tamminen 1995). The connection between professional growth and development of early educators and the actual practices of early childhood education is also obvious (Karila 1997; Syrjälä *et al.* 1996).

The *contextual approach to work* views the worker and his actions as part of the working community and the larger societal and cultural context. The profession approach, which is typical of studies of teachers' work, is one example of this. On the basis of the functional approach of profession research, the nature of work in early education has been compared to criteria derived from the "typical" professions of clergymen, lawyers, and doctors. Themes of professionalisation and conflicts between professional groups, which are typical neo-Weberian profession research, have also appeared in literature on early childhood education (Kinos 1997; Kivinen & Rinne 1992). Until recently, not much research has been done on working communities and leadership in day care centres, but interest in such topics seems to be emerging (Nivala 1997a; 1997b; Tegelsten & Keskinen 1994).

These dimensions of early education cannot be kept separate from each other in practical work or even in theoretical considerations. Some of the studies, however, clearly focus on one of these dimensions. It is essential at the analytical level to decide which dimension of work is to be considered in the research. What dimension of work did the job analysis of day care centre personnel address? The aim was to analyse the tasks of pre-school teachers, nurses, and directors. The study focused on the content dimension of work, i.e. the things actually done by the day care centre personnel during their working hours. Despite this, the personal and contextual dimensions of the work were also considered. Each respondent described the working day in terms of her own notions and interpretations. The items recorded by the respondent were significant for her personally and indicated how she as a worker perceived her work and job. The data also provides a cross-sectional view of Finnish early childhood education as part of the Finnish culture and identity. The analysis of contemporary tasks was placed into a temporal perspective by analysing the changes that have taken place in the tasks and job descriptions over 20 years. This was made possible by an analysis of job descriptions made 20 years ago (Huttunen 1977). The historical perspective helps to place the findings in their context.

The first level of analysis, presented in this article, pertained to the content of work. We are also developing a method for analysing the ways in which a worker perceives his/her own work. The method is based on Goffman's ideas of the interpretative frames that organise human actions (Goffman 1974). Within the present project, the data will also be analysed in an international setting. Although national analyses in themselves reflect the practice of early childhood education in Finnish society and culture, the international material can also be anticipated to help highlight some of the special features of Finnish culture.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

We collected the data in the autumn of 1996 through self-reporting forms mailed to directors, pre-school teachers, and nurses of day care centres. The self-reporting form developed by Huttunen (1977) was used. We asked the respondents to describe in detail their tasks at half hour intervals during one working day. The form also included questions on the tasks considered most important by the respondents and the tasks they had failed

to accomplish. The forms used in this re-survey further included some themes regarded as new challenges for day care, such as questions of educational philosophy and multi-professional co-operation. Altogether, 120 forms were mailed to different parts of Finland. Slightly more than half of the forms was returned fairly quickly. A letter was sent as a reminder to the day care centres that had failed to return the forms. After this procedure, the total response percentage was nearly 70 %, which can be considered good (table 1).

Table 1. Response rates.

Job title	Forms mailed	Forms returned	
	n	fr	%
Directors	40	22	55.0
Pre-school teachers	40	28	70.0
Nurses	40	33	82.5
Total	120	83	69.2

Although the method of collecting data did not aim at statistical generalisability of the findings, the data can be considered to provide a cross-section of the work currently done in Finnish day care centres. An analysis of the background data indicated that data had been provided by workers of different ages from day care centres of different sizes and working with different groups of children. The forms that were returned came from different parts of Finland, and the municipalities varied from small ones with a single day care centre to the largest Finnish cities. All of the respondents were female. Tables 2 and 3 show the kind of day care centres and groups where the respondents worked.

Table 2. Respondents by groups of children.

Job title	Group of children				
	Under 3 yr full-time	Over 3 yr full-time	Mixed full-time	Part-time	Without child group
Directors	1	9	3	3	6
Pre-school teachers	–	17	7	4	–
Nurses	8	15	6	4	–
Total	9	41	16	11	6

Table 3. Sizes of day care centres providing the data.

Job title	Size of day care centre			
	Under 30 children	30-60 children	61-90 children	Over 90 children
Directors	1	9	8	4
Pre-school teachers	6	9	8	5
Nurses	1	17	12	3
Total	8	35	28	12

We analysed the data by professional groups using methods of content analysis (Silverman 1994). The tasks were classified as much as possible by using the principles of the job description study carried out 20 years previously (Huttunen 1977). A coding method was developed whereby the tasks reported by the respondents were related to both the time used on the tasks and the respondents' personal styles of responding. The directions of change in early childhood education were analysed in two ways. First, the job descriptions reported 20 years ago (Huttunen 1977) were compared to the current descriptions. Second, the workers were asked to analyse changes that had taken place while they had been working in day care centres.

Traditionally, survey research has been associated with the positivistic philosophy of science and the quantitative research methodology. Although both qualitative and quantitative methods were used here to analyse the data, the basic goal was neither to find causal relationships nor to aim at statistical generalisability. What we did was to try to build, piece by piece, a picture of early childhood education currently provided in Finnish society.

3.4. Results

3.4.1. Tasks of the directors

Six of the twenty-two directors acted as administrative directors, while sixteen worked as pre-school teachers in a group of children along with their administrative duties. Although both groups had the same title, their tasks and job descriptions were notably different.

The *administrative directors* emerged as a clearly distinct group in view of job description. The natural reason for this was that their work lacked the dimension of work with children. The administrative directors who participated in the study were either directors of large day care centres or had other supervisory duties along with their position as a day care centre director. The range of administrative duties included the management of the day care centre, supervision of family day care or mixed day care group, and general planning, administration, and development of municipal day care.

> *"... at first it seemed like a stimulating challenge to combine two fields of day care under the same leadership, as it facilitated co-operation and was somehow 'controllable'. - Now (after 2 years 10 months of combined leadership) I am about to burn out! The 50 - 55 workers and 21 - 220 children that I am responsible for are TOO MUCH for one day care director."*

In the job descriptions of administrative directors, co-operative tasks were the most important (table 4). In terms of quantity, more than half of the tasks were classifiable as co-operative. Especially, the directors co-operated with personnel and regarded it as the most important dimension of their work, along with customer service.

> *"... The tasks that I have planned to perform during the day were frequently interrupted. I had to give up the goals I had set for myself... The day care personnel keep dropping in daily to ask about things, to discuss, to report, etc. These visits naturally interrupt my work, but I want to 'keep my door open'..."*

There was also co-operation with families inquiring about day care arrangements and payments. The director further had plenty of contacts outside the day care centre. Compared to the directors who worked with a group of children, they had more tasks related to personnel and administrative management, such as substitute arrangements, testimonials and employment contracts, invoices, calculation of day care payments, budgets, acquisitions, and monitoring the percentage of day care centre use.

The *directors who worked with a group of children* found it problematic to combine their managerial tasks and their work with children. They had a bad conscience when they were away from the children, because they felt that their work with the group of children constituted the main dimension of their work (table 4). The major problem of their job description was fragmentation. The directors therefore had to try to prioritise their tasks.

> *"... Oh dear! A hundred thousand things are waiting to be done, such as the property inventory and archiving, which have been waiting for 10 months already, but the daily duties postpone the things that are not a 'matter of life or death' or are not essential for the children"*

> *"...I've had to learn to live with things undone or half done, etc. It isn't easy - but I've tried to prioritise things in the way I consider best for my working community and work. The number one thing is the clients and their needs."*

The other important dimension of the tasks of the directors working with a group of children was co-operation. The directors considered it especially important to arrange meetings and discussions with the personnel. Most of the co-operation with personnel pertained to the organisation of work, such as acquisitions, working schedules, and substitute arrangements, rather than evaluation or development of the content of work. Co-operation with parents involved two dimensions. On the one hand, the directors co-operated with parents in the same way as pre-school teachers working in the day care centre. On the other hand, they had a special role in matters pertaining to day care arrangements and payments both with the parents who already had their children in the day care centre and with those applying for entrance. The job descriptions also clearly showed the numerous co-operative contacts that the directors had outside the day care centres. The third key dimension of the work done by the directors working with a group of children were tasks related to personnel and financial management, which were substantially the same as those of administrative directors.

The professional role of the directors working with a group of children was twofold. The ways of organising work varied notably. There were directors who had clearly defined office hours, while others tended to have their tasks interrupted frequently and moved between the day care facility and their office. Since the directors working with groups of children generally considered their work with the children the most important aspect of their job, it is interesting to ask where they found the time to take care of their administrative and other duties. It seems, on the basis of this material, that directors supervised children's spontaneous play, outdoor activities, and nap times less often than pre-school teachers and nurses, though they participated in circle times, meals, hygiene, and dressing almost as actively as pre-school teachers.

Table 4. Tasks of day care centre directors.

Category of tasks	Directors/Working with children %	Directors/ Administr. %
1. Educational and intructional tasks	21.6	0.0
planning and preparation of activities	(1.6)	
supervision of activities	(12.0)	
supervision of free play	(5.6)	
individual attention to children	(2.4)	
2. Physical development, health and basic care of children	23.7	0.0
3. Co-operation	34.2	52.7
co-operation within working community	(10.2)	(24.4)
co-operation with parents	(7.5)	(12.6)
co-operation outside day care centre	(16.5)	(15.7)
4. Updating the knowledge of early childhood education and day care	0.1	14.1*
5. Administrative and financial duties	12.0	25.1
6. Preparatory tasks	4.9	0.6
7. Recreation and free time	2.7	5.4
8. Supervision of family day care	0.8	2.1
Total	100	100

* one of the six administrative directors had an in-service training course lasting the whole working day.

3.4.2. Tasks of pre-school teachers

The most important aspect of the job description of pre-school teachers consisted of educational and instructional duties (table 5). The planning and supervision of circle times was the most prominent task category. Circle times are defined as activities planned and supervised by adults. This description was given by a teacher of her morning:

> *"...I supervised the morning circle in half of the group of pre-schoolers - singing, clapping to rhythm, calendar. The circle time continues. We leave the sleeping room and the children then take their places at their desks. They were given writing tasks. I had them do three sheets of tasks. Sitting at their own desks and using their own crayons, they worked on directions. I took the children to the dining area for a snack and then we went into the hall to put on our outdoor clothes..."*

Apart from circle times, the educational and instructional tasks included supervision of spontaneous activities by the children and individual attention to them. In the course of the day, the pre-school teachers also had notably many tasks related to the basic care of children, such as supervision of meals, outdoor activities, toileting, hygiene, and naps.

As regards co-operation, teachers co-operated with two major partners in addition to children. They co-operated with parents by having daily discussions with them as they brought and picked up their children, by planning and participating in parents' evenings and, in some day care centres, by having private talks with the parents. Co-operation within the working community consisted of discussions with their colleagues and various meetings. Pre-school teachers also had contacts with outside agencies, such as schools, child welfare clinics, and social welfare authorities. The working hours of teachers also included some organising and cleaning tasks, such as preparing meals, setting and clearing tables, taking the dishes into the kitchen, and tidying up rooms.

Pre-school teachers considered their most important task to be the planning and supervision of circle times. Whenever they failed to do their tasks properly, they were concerned about not having been able to plan and prepare activities, give individual attention to children, and co-operate with parents. The obstacles they mentioned included a lack of time, absences by personnel, a lack of substitutes, group size, and inadequate facilities.

Table 5. Tasks of pre-school teachers.

Category of tasks	%
1. Educational and intructional tasks	37.8
planning and preparation of activities	(7.0)
supervision of activities	(15.4)
supervision of free play	(10.1)
individual attention to children	(5.3)
2. Physical development, health and basic care of children	31.7
3. Co-operation	15.9
co-operation within working community	(7.9)
co-operation outside day care centre	(8.0)
4. Updating the knowledge of early childhood education and day care	0.7
5. Administrative and financial duties	2.9
6. Preparatory tasks	6.4
7. Recreation and free time	4.6
Total	100

3.4.3. Tasks of day care nurses

Nurses reported tasks that were nearly identical with those of pre-school teachers. The weighting of their duties, however, was clearly different from that reported by teachers. Most of the tasks of nurses consisted of basic care (table 6), and they also considered basic care their most important task. Nearly half of the tasks reported by nurses could be categorised as "physical development, health, and basic care of children".

Another important category consisted of educational and instructional tasks, including supervised activities and supervision of spontaneous play.

> *"... I receive the children when the parents bring them in and talk to the parents about the children. I also encourage the children to do things and play. We had a toy day today, and most children played with their own toys, while some drew pictures and some others played with lego bricks and animals..."*

Nurses were also significantly responsible for tidying up and arranging things. They also participated in co-operation both inside the day care centre and with the parents.

Along with basic care, nurses considered it important to have interaction and emotional contact with the children. The tasks they had failed to do mostly consisted of planning and preparatory tasks. The reasons for failing to do these tasks were an excessive workload, a lack of time, absences, and a shortage of personnel.

Table 6. Tasks of nurses.

Category of tasks	%
1. Educational and intructional tasks	28.8
planning and preparation of activities	(4.0)
supervision of activities	(10.1)
supervision of free play	(11.2)
individual attention to children	(3.5)
2. Physical development, health and basic care of children	44.7
3. Co-operation	9.0
co-operation within working community	(5.2)
co-operation outside day care centre	(3.8)
4. Updating the knowledge of early childhood education and day care	0.1
5. Administrative and financial duties	1.6
6. Preparatory tasks	11.74
7. Recreation and free time	4.1
Total	100

3.4.4. Determination of tasks

Several replies show signs of implicit ambiguity in the division of tasks between nurses and pre-school teachers. Some day care centres had no problems in co-operation and division of tasks, while in some other cases there were obvious conflicts and even bitterness between the different professional groups.

> *"... the tasks of pre-school teachers have changed completely! It's hard to work in a field where tasks change every year. The tasks have changed in a bad direction: the principle of everybody doing everything makes teachers auxiliary personnel. Not all nurses are able/willing to plan, control big groups or organise differentiation of groups, which results in 'chaos' (occasionally). It is also wrong that nurses are forced to do work for which they have no education (such as planning, controlling whole groups or different responsibility areas). Pre-school teachers are not particularly motivated when they are not allowed to do the kind of work they have been educated for, but have to do auxiliary tasks (toileting, dressing). They even try to make us wipe the tables and work in the kitchen!!" (pre-school teacher)*
> *"... Before the new personnel structure was instituted, the position of nurses was plain zero. We were only allowed to clear the table and dress the children. The director did not even allow us to read to the children. Things are now better... But even now we are always aware of the professional differences, and nurses are always on the bottom rung of the ladder. I don't always feel like fighting back, though I probably should. I sometimes feel that the phrase "to the benefit of children" is just empty words, and people spend their energy fighting to keep up their professional barriers. And we aren't even able to utilise each other's competencies..." (nurse educator)*

In terms of job descriptions, the interesting question is how the daily tasks of day care centre workers are determined. The above quotation implies the role of the director in determining the job descriptions of the different professional categories. The quotation, however, was exceptional in this data; directors were mostly not considered to be supervisors of work or intermediates between nurses and pre-school teachers. According to the respondents, the personnel working with each group of children were mostly

responsible for the division of tasks and the definition of duties. Only a few teachers and nurses mentioned that the parents may also assign tasks. These persons also pointed out that co-operation with parents could directly affect the performance of other duties as well.

The directors of day care centres who responded to our inquiry felt themselves able to influence the working practices and the determination of tasks within the day care centre. Most directors also expressed their willingness to make collaborative decisions by maintaining discussions with their personnel. Mostly, however, the directors felt themselves able to influence things only within the day care centre. They were therefore unable to change such things as the number of personnel, for example.

The determination of tasks seemed to be based on the organised daily schedule and working shifts of the personnel more than on any stimuli by the children. The tasks were also differently weighted in different groups of children. In groups of children aged fewer than 3, basic care accounted for a significant portion of the tasks, while the part-time groups mostly placed an emphasis on circle times.

3.4.5. Changes in tasks

Changes indicated by the survey of working tasks

Table 7 shows a comparison of the findings of the job description surveys carried out in 1977 and 1997 concerning the quantitative division of tasks between directors, pre-school teachers, and nurses.

Table 7. Changes in tasks of directors, pre-school teachers, and nurses between 1977 and 1997 (see also Huttunen 1977).

Category of tasks	Changes %		
	Directors[1]	Pre-school teachers	Nurses
1. Educational and intructional tasks	–20.0	+1.6	+5.6
planning and preparation of activities	(–8.1)	(–1.4)	(+1.5)
supervision of activities	(–9.2)	(–3.0)	–(1.6)
supervision of free play	(0.0)	(+6.7)	(+7.3)
individual attention to children	(–2.7)	(–0.7)	(–1.6)
2. Physical development, health and basic care of children	–12.3	–6.8	–13.2
3. Co-operation	+26.7	+7.6	+5.7
co-operation within working community	(+5.6)	(+3.1)	(+3.3)
co-operation outside day care centre[2]	(+21.1)	(+4.5)	(+2.4)
4. Updating the knowledge of early childhood education and day care	+3.3	–0.3	+0.1
5. Administrative and financial duties	–0.8	–2.3	–1.9
6. Preparatory tasks[3]	+1.8	–0.4	+3.6
7. Recreation and free time	+1.2	+0.6	+0.1

[1] both administrative directors and directors working with a group of children
[2] includes co-operation with parents
[3] most of the preparatory tasks in 1997 consisted of tidying up and arranging things. 20 yers ago the preparatory activities further included sewing, making and repairing toys, etc.

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An analysis of the focal areas shows that the job description of day care centre directors has changed notably. Compared to the situation prevailing 20 years ago, the weighting of work with groups of children has clearly diminished. The considerable percentage decrease of educational and instructional duties and basic care is not explained by the fact that the job descriptions of the two categories of directors were combined for the table. The analysis also indicates that these duties have clearly decreased even in the job descriptions of the directors who work with a group of children. Thus, though these directors consider this work the most important aspect of their job, they do not feel themselves able to contribute to this work as much as previously. This is particularly apparent in the planning and preparatory tasks. Directors work on co-operative and administrative tasks when pre-school teachers and nurse educators work on planning and preparing activities.

Directors' tasks on co-operation have increased remarkably, especially the importance of co-operation outside the day care centre. This category also covers co-operation with parents, which seems to have gained in importance by all the professional categories included in this survey.

The co-operative tasks of pre-school teachers and nurses have also clearly increased. Supervision of circle time was considered important by both professional groups, as it was 20 years ago, while supervision of spontaneous activities has also clearly increased. Although the tasks concerning basic care have decreased the emphasis on basic care is obvious in the present findings. With the exception of administrative directors, all professional groups considered basic care a notably important part of their job description. Nearly half of the tasks reported by nurses could be placed in the category titled, "Physical development, health, and basic care of the children" (see table 6).

Another definite change that had taken place in the job descriptions of day care centre personnel was that cleaning and tidying up had been included as part of their jobs. In particular, nurses did a lot of cleaning during their working day. This can be taken as an indication of the numerous changes that have taken place in day care, including the changes in personnel structure and the problems in resourcing.

Changes experienced by day care personnel

The analysis of the changes experienced by day care personnel indicated that there have been changes at many different levels: children and families, tasks, working communities, and the general framework of day care. One day care nurse pointed out as follows:

> *"... there have been changes this way and that and back again. You sometimes feel like a piece of wood floating on waves being pushed around by winds blowing from different directions..."*

Generally speaking, co-operation with the parents was felt to be more open and more active than previously. Some respondents pointed out that children tend to be increasingly restless, and the number of children in need of special care and education was reported to have increased. These respondents were worried about the situation of families and children, because children spend increasingly long periods in day care, and the parents even bring their children to day care when they have a day off or are on holiday. The following quote reflects this problem:

"...the groups are bigger, the children stay in day care longer, and the turnover in groups is greater. Children are more restless, especially the ones who have been in day care for 6 years. I wonder if children become institutionalised in day care. Do basic security and individuality suffer if the child does not want to stay at home even when his or her parents have a day off? ..."

The most obvious change in the content of work was that it has become increasingly child-oriented. Many respondents mentioned the practice of 'obligatory naps and meals', which has been mostly given up. The following comment by a day care nurse illustrates the changes that have taken place in the content of work.

"..when I first began to work in a day care centre, there was a regime that still makes me shiver (obligatory meals and naps). Nowadays, every child is considered an individual, and we try to give it all attention. We listen to the needs of everyone. Flexible nap times. I feel things are much better now and I like working better..."

Some respondents, in response to changes in the content of work, also mentioned exceptional solutions and interesting development and experimental projects, such as elimination of the traditional boundaries between groups of children (work in small groups), municipal day circles, child care help for parents ("kid park"), language teaching through the immersion method, project work, pre-school education projects, multi-professional co-operation, computer projects, quality projects, etc.

Changes have also taken place in the activities of working communities. The boundaries of job descriptions have changed. An example is the division of tasks between nurses and pre-school teachers. The concrete change in nurses' work compared to the situation 20 years ago is that they now also work with groups of children over 3 years of age. The major change that resulted, according to nurses, was that their work no longer consisted exclusively of basic care, assistance to teachers, and arranging things, but also included the planning and supervision of activities.

Directors mostly reported changes in the administrative system of day care. The most significant trend was the increasing localisation of day care, the role of the central day care unit, and the fact that day care centre directors may now also be responsible for family day care. As regards administrative changes, they were notably different and highly variable, and different people even reported quite contradictory experiences. In some municipalities, the directors of day care centres are increasingly responsible for planning and supervising day care on a municipal basis, while the directors in some other municipalities felt that their possibility to influence things is more limited now.

" ...my possibilities to influence things are more limited - the departmental manager reassigned some of my duties (applications, enrolment, payments, long-term substitutes). That's probably good. Now I will have more time to develop my own working environment..."

"... at first we had a highly hierarchic day care department in the town. There even was a special committee. Administration for the sake of administration. Now we operate as part of the social welfare unit. The town has been divided into social welfare centres, and our centre has social welfare units ..."

All groups of respondents emphasised the changes that have taken place in the structural variables of day care. The groups are bigger and the number of personnel inadequate in view of the number of children. The situation is especially difficult in case of absences, because substitutes are no longer hired in the same way as previously. This appears to

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cause stress and fatigue for the workers. Many of the respondents expressed their concern for the deteriorating quality of day care as a consequence of limited resources.

> *"... I often feel inadequate. More and more pressures are applied to day care. Percentages and output figures are like ghosts threatening a cheerful and rewarding work contribution. I think day care personnel have always been responsible people, even responsible for the results, although not in a way that could be measured as percentage, but rather as quality and development skills..."*
> *"... the groups are bigger. When permanent workers are on holiday, substitutes are only taken in cases of emergency. All subsidies have been cut, and it is increasingly difficult to get materials. The changes brought about by recession have made the personnel feel fatigue and stress, and we often have to work to our extreme limits ..."*

The changes that have taken place at the different levels of day care intertwine in an interesting way. For example, the increasingly stressful work and the discussions on the quality of day care have also stimulated working communities to develop their routines and to reflect on the content of their work.

> *"The groups are bigger, and there are no short-term substitutes. This is like contract work. Individual children get less attention, and the personnel have less time to talk about things. The positive aspect is that the situation has forced the workers to reconsider their own working practices and whether they are rational or not"*

3.4.6. Main principles guiding the work

The descriptions of main principles by respondents implied perspectives towards the child, the parents, and the working community. All of the professional groups underlined the child as the basic aspect of early childhood education.

> *"The child is the main thing. The only thing that I am concerned about is that I try to do everything in a way that benefits the child and enhances his or her self-esteem. This is the only guideline when we think about the different tasks and the ways of dividing them"*

This response underlines the need to promote the overall welfare of children, to promote their activity and initiative and to acknowledge the individuality of each child. The work aims at a child orientated and experiential approach. Play was considered the central aspect of activity. Many respondents also reflected on the relationship between adults and children and their own role as an educator. The relationship between adults and children was suggested to be based on equality. It was considered the task of adults to create a positive and secure atmosphere in the group of children and the day care centre. The crucial element in this respect was to give time to children and to establish secure limits.

> *"...the most important thing is that there are secure adults who are 'present' for the children instead of only being there..."*

The respondents' operating principles underlined the perspective of the child more than the perspective of the family. Nearly all participants mentioned the welfare of the child as the most essential operating guideline. The support, participation, or influence by parents did not affect the organisation of activities of the day care centre equally. There were respondents who did not even mention the parental perspective when describing their working day or

operating principles, while others described their tasks and operating principles in a way that reflected a fundamental parental influence on their job description.

There were also differences in the weighting of operating principles between the professional groups. The operating principles reported by directors and teachers included more statements on learning, support of learning, and pre-school education than the responses by nurses. But the perspective of learning was not central in their comments, either.

The descriptions of operating principles by pre-school teachers and nurses focused more on the child and the child-adult relationship than the respondents' relationship with their working community. Despite this, the comments by directors and by others included aspects related to the working community. The fluency and flexibility of co-operation and respect for personal differences were considered important for a favourable atmosphere. The atmosphere of the working community was also considered to contribute to the way children felt about being in day care.

> *"I consider it important to create a safe and warm atmosphere. I try to recognise the individual needs of the children and the wishes of the parents. I believe these children will need versatile skills and an active attitude towards life in adulthood. As a member of the working community, I try to operate flexibly, listening to the others, respecting them, developing my own professional, skills and seeking new challenges"*

3.5. Evaluation of findings

The research done on early childhood education in Finland over the past few years has pointed out several challenges for day care. The strictly organised daily schedule of day care centres, which means that all of the children do the same things at the same time and participate in circle times, has been strongly criticised in the 1980s and 1990s. Several research and development projects have been carried out to modify the traditional day care practices in a way to make them more flexible and to better meet the individual needs of children and families (Huttunen & Nivala 1991, Keskinen & Turtinen 1992, Lahikainen & Rusanen 1991, Rusanen 1995).

Similar discussions have also been under way elsewhere. The developmentally appropriate practices outlined in the Unites States have based day care on both age-specific knowledge and individual-specific considerations (Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992). Accordingly, the practices of early childhood education should not be based exclusively on theories of growth and learning, but also on the individual backgrounds, needs, and interests of the children. This implies that co-operation with families should constitute the basic dimension of early childhood education (Hujala *et al.* 1998, Powell 1996, Weissbourd 1992). Another challenge recognised world-wide is the need to enhance the educational awareness of personnel (Hujala 1996, Singer & Miltenburg 1994).

How has early childhood education in Finland been able to meet these challenges? In light of the present findings, the basic care practices, especially the daily nap schedules, have become more flexible over the past 20 years. Co-operation with parents has simultaneously increased, and children have more opportunities for spontaneous activity in day care. Despite these improvements, however, circle times of whole groups of

children constitute the basic element in the culture of the day care centre. Both the survey of tasks and the analysis of the workers' views of their most important duties showed this. The respondents' descriptions of planning practices also showed that planning focuses on designing activities for circle time. Only a few persons mentioned planning of the environment in ways that would encourage children's interests and allow alternative activities or participation by children in planning. The structure of the daily schedule was unexpectedly conventional, even stereotypic. The daily schedule was notably similar in day care centres located in different parts of Finland. The structure of the day care centre and the organisation of the working community, such as work shifts and the daily schedule, largely determined the tasks of the workers.

The finding that the activities of day care centres tend to follow a stereotypic routine was not new (cf. Lahikainen & Rusanen 1991), nor is it a problem unique to early childhood education in Finland. Wien (1996) pointed out that time management by means of strict schedules is one of the basic institutional aspects that are seldom questioned in western cultures. This means that any child who begins to attend a day care centre is socialised to the prevailing schedule, although his or her development would benefit from natural spontaneous activity. According to Wien, early childhood educators should become aware of the consequences of a strictly organised daily schedule from the viewpoint of both children and adults. Whose needs does it serve? Could the activities of the day care centre be organised in a way that would allow spontaneous activity by the children and consolidate the interaction between the children and adults?

In the present work, the daily routines of day care centres, and the obvious weighting of the work with big groups rather than individual children or small groups, were contradictory to the allegedly 'child-centred' principles reported by the respondents. Although the practices of day care centres were somewhat more flexible than previously, and the alternatives available for children had increased, a concrete child-centredness in practical work continues to be problematic. Overall, the term 'child-centredness' can imply a variety of notions concerning growth and education (Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992). As such, it is too vague to serve as a guideline for education. Rather, we should be interested in the position of the child and the role of the adult and their mutual integration. Clarification of this, and the awareness of the foundation of day care and organisation of tasks in a way that would support the growth and learning of children, still appear to be challenges to the workers of Finnish day care centres.

The changes in the tasks and job descriptions of day care centre workers revealed by the present study also constitute a challenge to decision-makers and those who educate early childhood educators. We should especially explore ways of redirecting basic and supplementary education to meet the increased and notably altered needs of day care centre directors. The entire field of early childhood education, including day care workers, educators, and researchers, should accept the challenge of establishing contacts that will allow utilisation of the most recent knowledge in early childhood education.

From the viewpoint of leadership research, this stage was significant in many ways. First, it was based on the theoretical frame of the project, which conceptualises leadership as a cultural, contextual, and interpretative phenomenon. In view of this, it is inadequate to study leadership as mere actions of the leader. Research on the practices of early childhood education can thus be seen as the first step towards understanding the leadership of a day care centre, because the work done in day care centres essentially aims to

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implement the basic function of the organisation. Moreover, job analysis study focuses on the work of directors of day care centres. On the basis of this research, we will be able to understand the multi-dimensional work of Finnish directors.

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Peculiarities of early education leadership in Russia (the Republic of Karelia)

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Abstract

This paper discusses leadership in early childhood education in Russia. It begins with a description of the hierarchical management system under which the leadership in day-care centres is implemented. The authors address the humanisation and democratisation process in Russian society, which has impacted on the leadership in educational institutions. Furthermore, they discuss research and publications on leadership in Russia. The implementation of the ILP in Russia including a description of research methods and preliminary findings based on the job analysis are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, early childhood education, qualitative data, Russia

1. Structure of educational system

Leadership in Early Education is based on a hierarchical management system, consisting of co-ordinative standards of linear management (Fig. 1). The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation is at the head of the Early Childhood Education management system and provides the general policy (aims, educational standards, regulations) in early childhood education. The Republic Department of the Early Childhood Education management is subordinated to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Karelia. In Karelia the Ministry of Education occupies the second linear standard. The Municipal Department of Education (M.D.E) works under its leadership. The main structural elements are day-care centres. Their leaders fulfil the management functions. Therefore, the direct management of Early Childhood Education is realised in concrete conditions of day-care centres. It can be presented as an integral system of management, which has a particular structure.

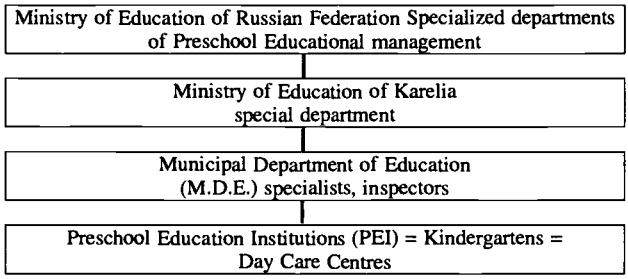

Fig. 1. Hierarchical management system in Russia.

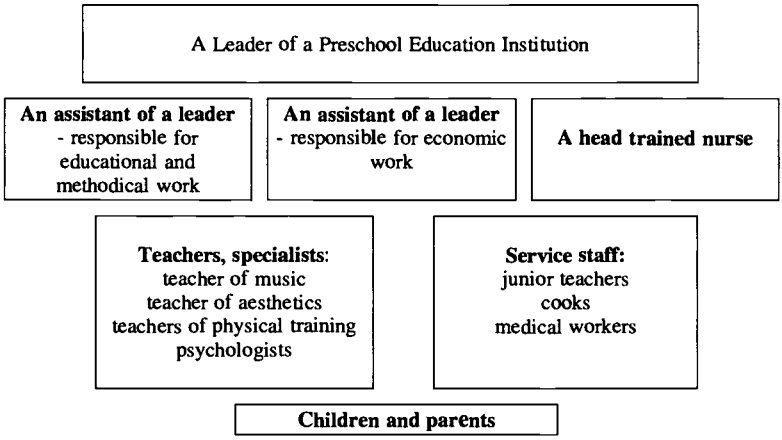

Fig. 2. Management structure in a day-care centre

In this structure, the leader is presented as an absolute subject of management; the leaders' assistants are the direct objects of management. In turn, the assistants are the subjects of management for the employees of the third standard which consists of teachers, specialists and service staff. The absolute objects of management of the organisation structure are children and their parents.

Management in this system is realised by the interaction that can be named as "adults-adults" and "adults-children". The development of a child's personality is the main aim of interactions. The specificity of management and the peculiarities of administrative functions and methods are connected with this aim. The management aim for a day-care centre is to ensure of optimal functioning of structural elements and the achievement of high effectiveness of educational work with children. Pozdnjak (1994), Vorobueva *et al.* (1994), and Belaya (1997) have discussed the work and the functions of leaders and other staff members of PEI in Russia.

1.1. Leader's functions and professional qualities

As has already been mentioned, the highest level of day-care management is ensured by the leader of a kindergarten. The leader's dominating position is based on the principle of one-man management and is consolidated in "The Typical Regulations of Pre-school Education Institutions". The one-man management principle assumes that a person organises and manages the work of an educational institute.

A leader is the main administrator in a day-care centre, and he/she is responsible for educational activity and taking care of children at that particular day-care centre. A leader is responsible for the selection of the staff. He/she leads pedagogical, financial, economic, and other activities at a kindergarten. He/she must submit to higher management bodies of education and must rely on democratic forms of management. As a result, the leader can not ignore the collective participation in management. The leader has the authority to make decisions and he/she is responsible for their realisation. The leader, having real power, influences the collective participation as well as the results of the work.

As an administrator, the leader uses his/her power to ensure functioning of a day-care centre in accordance with the Normative Acts in Education. He/she is responsible for the selection, training, and evaluation quality of the staff activity. As an organiser, the leader makes the necessary conditions for the joint work. In accordance with "The Typical Regulations of Pre-School Education Institutions," the leader performs many functions:

- determines the duties of employees in accordance with Labour Laws;
- ensures the enforcement of Labour Laws, the Charter /a normative document, regulating the functioning of a day-care centre/parents' contract, the rules of day-care centre regulations, sanitary and hygienic regime, directions on life and health protections, labour protection;
- ensures the training and instruction on industrial safety measures;
- organises the dissemination of pedagogical and hygienic knowledge among parents, directs the work of parents' committee, realises connection with school and leadership department;
- ensures necessary conditions for strengthening children's health, an effective up-bringing and education;
- the leader is responsible for life and health protection, the rational dietary, total health of children, financial and economical activity, building conditions and so on.

A leader works on behalf of a day-care centre, representing it at all state and private institutions. He/she distributes credits and takes care of the property of a day-care centre. A leader issues orders and gives directions, which are obligatory for all the staff in a day-care centre.

The contents of the management work regarding the pedagogical process in a day care centre requires a leader with professional and business qualities. He/she must be able to apply his/her professional knowledge and experience in different life situations that occur in the pedagogical process. The leader is expected to have high competence in supervising the educational work of day care centre. He/she is expected to have good knowledge of the basic theories of development, moral education, and teaching children of pre-school age, of existing educational programs, methods, physiology, psychology, etc. He/she is expected to take care of his/her own professional development.

1.2. PEI personnel

The proof of correct administration is the leader's ability to lead with the help of people, and to delegate his/her commission. Co-participants of administration of day care centre work are:

- the assistant of leader responsible for educational and methodical work (senior teacher), who carries out leadership in the educational process of a day care centre;
- the assistant of leader who is responsible for the condition of the day care centre building and its equipment, and who organises material-technical supply for the educational process. This person is responsible for cleanness and order in the building and on the territory, and he/she organises fire- prevention measures and labour of service staff;
- The medical nurse, who controls the sanitary condition of building and grounds, and maintenance of sanitary-anti-epidemic regime. He/she is also responsible for the quality of food products, arranging meals and for the quality of cooked food. He/she provides children with medical service and also works with the staff and parents concerning any medical questions they may have.

Certain rules, which are only for the leader, are specified in the regulations about Pre-school Education Institutions. The leader specifies the rights of his/her assistants, taking into consideration the experience and abilities of each employee. The instructions, which are given by the senior teacher, the medical nurse, and the assistant of leader on economy, are obligatory for the whole staff.

The third level of leadership is carried out by teachers, a psychologist, the instructor on physical education, the musical teacher, and medical and service staff. At this level, the objects of control are children and their parents.

1.3. Pedagogical meeting

In the administration of a day care centre, the principle of one-man management is opposed to the principle of collective nature. These two principles are like opposites of one process. The most important questions of the life and activity of a day care centre are discussed at the level of collective nature. The collective nature is more obvious in discussions and decision-making, while the one-man management is at the disposal of a leader. In the Leadership of Early Childhood Educational institutions, the correlation of one-man management and collective nature is evident in the decision-making process concerning the questions at the Pedagogical Meetings. The Pedagogical Meeting is the working body of collegiate leadership of educational work in a day-care centre, which implements the general leadership.

The selection of the most important questions, the profundity of their readiness for being discussed at the Pedagogical Meetings, the creating of a working atmosphere, and the providing of co-ordinated work, depends to a great extent on the leader.

The co-ordinated work of all levels of administrative leadership, and their connection with bodies of collegiate leadership, is important in achieving the aims of a staff.

The leader, through the support of his/her assistants and social organisations, can achieve effective communication and relations among members of the staff in both lateral

and horizontal positions. Following the principle of delegating responsibility and interacting at all levels of leadership, the leader precisely defines the spheres of influence and powers of all leadership bodies.

2. New tendencies in pre-school education

The approaches to studying and explaining problems connected with leadership in Russia have greatly changed during the last ten decades. At present, the problem of leadership has scientific status.

Humanisation and democratisation of the Russian system of education have affected the leadership of Educational Institutions. Earlier, before the reform of education began, there were very strict mechanisms of subordinating to the higher bodies of leadership. The leaders of day-care centres acted only according to the instructions and directions from higher bodies. The administrative activity of leadership of different levels was strongly regulated.

A great change in the work of educational administrational bodies has happened lately regarding the nature of how daycare centres function. We can say the same about the activity of a leader of a day-care centre. The leader now has more professional duties, and is responsible for the qualitative level of pedagogical work at a day-care centre. One of the changes in the administrative activity of the leader is that now he/she has the ability to make important administrative decisions independently and to develop strategies to achieve aims that are more meaningful within their own day-care centre.

3. Survey of literature

Scientists such as Bondarenko, Demurova, Pozian, and Ostrovskaya have studied the problems of a day-care administration in Russia. Their research resulted in the production of special manuals on the administration in a day-care centre, in which all aspects of the leader's activity were described, including work with the staff, administrative-economic work, planning of the educational process, etc. Nowadays, such scientists as Afanasyev, Gvashiani, Popov, Sigov and others study the development of the scientific bases of a modern, developing day-care system administration. Their scientific interests are concentrated on problems of the psychology of administrative activity, as well as the study of methods and principles used to administer the educational process.

There are two magazines in our country that are quite popular among the staff of Pre-school Education Institutions (PEI).They are the most widespread sources of information about the state of affairs in the system of early childhood education. In the magazine, "Early Childhood Education," you can find news about the latest innovations in educational technologies, new decisions of government in the educational sector, and many valuable recommendations from specialists concerning the content, technologies, and methods of organising the educational process. There are also recommendations from leading specialists in the sphere of child psychology and pre-school pedagogy, as well as publications by practitioners from different

regions in Russia. Materials on children's literature and music can also be found. One part of the magazine is devoted to the activity of PEI leaders.

For some time, the magazine, "Pre-school Education," had been the only one addressing questions of pre-school education. Then, the alternative, popular-scientific and methodical magazine, "Obruch," was published. It provides leaders and teachers of day care centres, teachers of primary school, specialists in methodology, and parents with concrete directions on the activity of PEI. For instance, you can find the special sections or columns in the magazine on the following:

1) The notebook of the PEI leader.
2) Stories from individual day care centres.
3) Specialist's advice: e.g. lawyer, doctor.
4) Information bureau: documents, seminars, training, courses.
5) Advice on pedagogy by Psychologist (e.g. tests, training, etc.).

The book by Belaya, "200 Answers to the Questions of the Day Care Centres Leaders" was published in 1997. It presents actual problems that leaders of PEI have had for the last ten years since reforms were introduced in Early Childhood Education. New social-economic conditions that have been formed in our country require flexible leaders to work on the strategy of PEI development and also in planning and realising decisions concerning questions of PEI activity. As a result, special attention in the book is paid to the activity of day care centres in the marketing of educational services, to the analysis of additional sources of financing education, to the preparation of programs of PEI development, and to the organisation of innovational processes. A big part is given to the normative-legal basis. (Belaya 1997.)

Besides the publications discussesed above, information concerning significant questions of management and, in general, of Early Childhood Education, is distributed in PEI in the form of handbooks on methods. For example, in the special course, "Basics of PEI Management," the author, Pozdnjak, lets the leaders know scientific basis of management that are suitable for PEI. He brings to light such problems as the role of a leader in the system of PEI management, the style of the leader's work, the basics of working out and implementing decisions of management, the planning of PEI work, the organisational activity of the leader, and ways of its democratisation. (Pozdnjak 1994.)

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise that in spite of the attention paid to the questions of Early Childhood Education by scientists and researchers, there are many more publications devoted to the problems of School Education and School management.

4. Job analysis study in Russia

4.1. Methodological problems of qualitative data analysis

Before we start to consider methodological problems concerning qualitative analysis of research data, we must determine the meaning of qualitative data. As it is known, any fact that interests a researcher can be the result of research, i.e. any combination of characteristics, either quantitative or qualitative, can be the result. Qualitative characteristics are understood as characteristics that can not be measured. Qualitative data are words, word-combinations,

phrases, and text passages, which are used to describe and characterise the object of research. Qualitative description is not precise enough, as it is difficult to express the differentiation of the studied phenomena with the help of linguistic characteristics.

Respondents can mean different things using the same words and phrases or, they can describe one characteristic with different words. It is natural that every researcher has difficulties connected with the development of methodological and methodical problems of processing and interpreting qualitative data. The procedure for processing consists of transforming data into a form, which is convenient for their comprehension and further use. The difficulty of processing qualitative data lies in the fact that all respondents' answers are given in a natural form, rather than in a limited-choice format. While this form of answer lets the respondents express their own opinions with some emotional-psychological colouring, it also makes analysis difficult.

Qualitative analysis most often consists of the classification of material and the construction of typologies. If the sample is small in number, it can also include the method of description of separate cases. The most successful variant is when the quantitative analysis of the received data follows the qualitative analysis. The most suitable method of qualitative data analysis is the method of analysing documents. In our project, the specially made questionnaires, forms, lists of recording, and observation records play the role of documents as sources of information.

In modern research, two methods of document analysis can be used: a traditional/classical method and a formalised/quantitative method, which is often called the method of content-analysis. These two methods are different in essence, but in research practice, they supplement each other, providing the researcher with necessary and reliable information.

In the traditional form of analysis, the basis is formed through the mechanism of text understanding. The researcher tries to interpret the main contents of the document in accordance with raised aims and objectives. The main drawback of this form of analysis is the possibility of subjective interpretation of the material.

The formalised method that was developed later is directed at overcoming the subjectivism of the traditional method. As it is known, this method was used for the first time in the USA in the 1920's and the 1930's. Its use is connected with the names of G.Lassuel and B.Berelson. In Russia, this method was initially used in the 1920's, but was used most intensively beginning in the late 1960's.

Content analysis implies using the procedure of different contents, elements, and calculations in the process of text analysis. The aim of using this method is to reveal possible social tendencies, which are presented in these materials, and also to try to reveal the aims, interests, and values of different groups of respondents reflected in the contents.

Using the method of content analysis seems expedient if there is extensive and non-systematised material, when textual material can not be covered without total grades. The use of this method in practice requires development of special procedures and techniques. Apparently, each side of the project participants has already attempted to carry out the analysis of the data, presented in self-reports of the staff. The main purpose of our meeting is to unify the procedure of analysing different masses of data to make them suitable for comparative and cross-cultural analysis. In the procedure sense, the step of analysis represents the correlation of received information with already available knowledge or with developed theoretical schemes.

The main problem that we came across at this stage of the project is the development of analytical categories to describe how the data will be sorted. The nature of the results will strongly depend on the choice of the analytical categories. That is, we must work out categories that will satisfy the aims of the research. This is the first step.

Categories derived from the data are supposed to be worked out jointly by all participants of the project and must meet the following requirements:

- must be exhaustive, i.e. cover all parts of contents;
- must be mutually exclusive, the same parts must not belong to different categories;
- must be reliable, i.e. they should be formulated so that different researchers have a high degree of agreement, of which parts of the content should be related to this or that category

The second step: It is necessary to point out features which define respondents' utterances that will be related to specific categories. These features are usually designated as coding units of analysis. Pointing out these features represents a very important methodological goal, and the solution depends on initial theoretical suppositions of a researcher.

The third step is to define the unit of counting that will become the basis of quantitative analysis of the material. The most well known method of measuring content characteristics is counting the frequency of their use, so that every appearance of some feature of this characteristic is fixed. Such a system of counting implies that there is a possible linear dependence between the frequency of appearance in the text and the significance of this characteristic.

4.2. Views to analysing self-study report data

Our aim is to work out categories of analysis and to define the units of analysis/features that describe every category. But before solving this problem, we have to determine which information included in the self-reports is interesting to us and answers the aims of our research.

We would like to remind the reader that at this stage of the research, three different groups of specialists of Pre-school Education Institutions participated. Here in Russia we had leaders, leaders' assistants, and teachers. Thus, to process the data received from the self-study reports of each of these groups of respondents, separate categories of analysis were worked out and units of analysis were defined.

Studying the peculiarities of the work of supervisors and members of the staff of Pre-school Education Institutions with the help of self-study reports, we can form an idea of the structure of their work in the process of fulfilling their labour duties, and describe how they allocated time to various tasks during the day. We can then compare documentary data with their official duties. From our point of view, this information is interesting for comparative data analysis with all countries participating in this project.

Our suggestions, according to the analysis procedure of given self-study reports, are based on the ideas about the Pre-school Education Institution activity, as work of some pedagogical system, the main objective of which is education and bringing up children.

This objective comes true in the management process of the Pre-school Education Institution activity. There is a question: what does the management process in the Education Institution consist of? There are lots of classification schemes looking at the

functions of management. During the ILP-meeting, which was held in May 1997 in Oulu, while discussing methodological problems of quantitative analysis we suggested one of these classification schemes.

When we began to analyse the self-study reports according to this scheme, we faced a lot of difficulties. The whole series of different activities of a Pre-school Education Institution leader, an assistant of leader and teachers appeared, which were beyond the outlined scheme. In order to keep within the framework of the functional approach, we used another scheme of analysis. Principally, it does not differ from the first one, but the list of analysed management functions and other activities was expanded.

In our classification scheme, we adopted the functional ideas of pedagogical activity as discussed by Kuzmina and finished by Yakunin and other authors. We developed two classification schemes, one for leaders and the assistants of leaders and another for teachers, and these are described below.

Functions of leaders and assistants of leaders: The formal organisation of every day care centre has these two key positions of leadership. The following functions performed by the leaders and the assistants of leaders refer to the administrative activities of day care centres.

- Planning (P) – administrative functions aimed at setting activity objectives and tasks over a particular period of time, and determine the means of how they are to be achieved.
- Organisation (O) – administrative functions aimed at creation the activity conditions for the teachers' joint work to achieve the chosen objectives.
- Regulation (R) – administrative functions aimed at the maintenance of the optimal regime of the day care centre's activity.
- Control (C) – administrative functions aimed at getting, processing and keeping information about how the work is carried out.
- Analysis (A) – administrative functions aimed at assessing the quality of work, its values and its effectiveness and to offer recommendations for its improvement.
- Correction (Cr) – administrative functions aimed at correcting the mistakes made in the day care centre's work.

  In addition to these six functions there are two more analytical categories:
- Professional development (Pd) – these include all activities which imply transformation and receiving information, aimed at staff development concerning questions of education and bringing up children. For example, various seminars, open lessons, work with methodological literature and specialist literature are included.
- Other activities (Oa) – these include the remainder of the activities which are hard to define under any of the previous seven categories.

It is very important to mention that activity management of a day care centre is not limited by the pedagogical processes only. The administrative activities, having no relation to the pedagogical processes, takes much time as well. That is why while analysing the self-study reports, we recorded the administrative functions, connected with the fulfilment of the pedagogical process, and the administrative functions, connected with the other administrative activity, separately. To show the difference between these orientations, the code with the apostrophe was used to indicate a 'pedagogical' sense of purpose of the functions.

Functions of teachers: Teachers perform the basic work connected with education and bringing up children. The analysis of teachers' self-study reports was based on counting the periods of time, that it took to complete an activity during work hours. These activities have been classified under the following analytical categories:

- Regime process (Re) – these include basic routines at meal times, sleeping, dressing and undressing, and walks.
- Children's activities (Ch) – these are all activities supervised by a teacher and can be divided into three subcategories as follows:
  - Educational activity (E) – these include teacher directed learning in different spheres such as mathematics, grammar, painting, and physical training classes.
  - Group play (G) – the teacher leads small and large groups in playing different games.
  - Labour activity (L) – the teacher directs the children in housekeeping tasks such as cleaning the tables and watering the flowers.
- Individual consultations (Ic) – the teacher works with individual children to develop and reinforce specific needs, abilities and interests.
- Children's independent activity (Ci) – these include activities where children act on their own, independently. The teacher's task is to create the conditions, which can help to organise the game. The teacher does not lead the game, does not take part in it. The teacher only observes the game.
- Teacher's activities (T) – these are activities which do not involve the children directly, and can be divided into two subcategories as Organisation (O) and Professional development (Pd). These are the same as for the leaders and assistants of leaders.

4.3. Data collection

Information gathering about the Pre-school Educational Institutions' staff activity was held from February until April 1997. One hundred twenty questionnaires were distributed to the students, who had their practice in day care centres in different parts of Karelia.

It is necessary to note that the Republic of Karelia, where the investigation was held, is a part of the Russian Federation - a large country, with wide areas, and a mixture of different nationalities and cultural traditions. There is great disproportion between the provinces, between thinly populated towns and heavily populated megalopolises, such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg. It goes without saying that the various cultural environments formed there have an influence over some aspects of Pre-school Education Institution activity.

Of course, we can not say that the Pre-school Educational system in Karelia is somehow representative of all Russian pre-school systems. In the national review, we have explained the Pre-school Educational system in Russia in detail. It is unique enough and supervised by the centre, but the specific character remains. When we speak about Russia as a project participant, it is necessary to note that the investigated sample represents an insignificant part of the general totality and that one cannot generalise these findings to all Pre-school Education Institutions in Russia.

4.4. Response rate

Three groups of Pre-school Education Institution representatives took part in our investigation: leaders, assistants of leaders, and teachers. The sample of these staff groups was

specified with the other project participants during the working meeting in October 1996, in Petrozavodsk. We decided not to include a group of nurses in the sample, because in our Kindergartens, nurses perform only household activities connected with the care of children, and do not participate in the pedagogical process.

Thus, we have distributed 120 questionnaires - 40 copies per each group of respondents. Only 64 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 53.3%. Here is the response rate for each group: leaders (n=21) 52.5%; assistants of leaders (n=17) 42.5%; teachers (n=26) 65.0%.

4.5. Background characteristics of the respondents

Within these three groups of Pre-school Education Institution representatives, the most complete answers dealing with Institution characteristics, such as the amount of children and staff, were given by leaders. The large number of refusals to answer these questions were in the teachers' group (15 out of 26 persons answered). Apparently, teachers lacked this information and did not want to make inquiries. In the leaders' assistant group, two persons did not indicate the number of Kindergarten children and three persons did not know the number of staff.

According to the data collected, the largest day care centre had 284 children and the smallest one, 21 children. The sample included one specialised day care centre for children with speech difficulties and intellectual disabilities. The average size of the centres in our the sample is 172.7. In general, the Pre-school Education Institutions which took part in the investigation were rather large: 24 day care centres had over 100 children, and another 19 had over 200 children.

The number of staff working in these day care centres ranged from 14 to 76 persons. The average index of the sample is 47. The average for staff who work with children is 30.4 (with the interval from 9 to 55), and the average is 16.6 (with the interval from 5 to 30) for the staff who do not work with children. As we see, the average indexes do not reflect the different centres that formed the sample.

As to the staff qualifications, we can say that according to the present requirements, Pre-school Education Institution leaders and assistants of leaders must have higher pedagogical education consisting of 5 academic years. Teachers may have either higher education or secondary pedagogical education consisting of 3 academic years.

The participants' ages vary from 22 to 60 years of age (x=41.4). The average indexes in the groups are: leaders - 47.3 years; assistants of leaders - 38.4 years; teachers - 38.5 years.

The length of service in the area of pre-school education averaged 19.9 years in the average (within the interval from 3 to 42 years). The average indexes in the groups are: leaders - 24.3 years; assistants of leaders - 18.4 years; teachers - 17.1 years.

According to the facts, we learned that the leaders' group was the most experienced, the eldest, and the most well-informed in the questions of Pre-school Education Institution structure.

4.6. Preliminary results of the analysis regarding the daily tasks of the groups of respondents

The data from the self-study reports were categorised using the coding scheme discussed earlier. The results of leaders and assistants of leaders are presented in table 1 and are discussed below.

Table 1. Categorisation of functions of leaders and assistants of leaders.

Functions	Leaders		Assistants of leaders	
	Administrative	Pedagogical	Administrative	Pedagogical
Planning (P)	6.6% (n=12)	5.6% (n=9)	5.5% (n=3)	8.1% (n=9)
Organisation (O)	23.9% (n=21)	9.4% (n=16)	9.3% (n=8)	18% (n=17)
Regulation (R)	10.8% (n=16)	11.7% (n=13)	4.6% (n=5)	19.3% (n=17)
Control (C)	13.7% (n=21)	15.1% (n=16)	13.2% (n=11)	19.2% (n=15)
Analysis (A)	7.7% (n=9)	11.1% (n=16)	6.3% (n=3)	13.8% (n=17)
Correction (Cr)	6.3% (n=1)	0	0	0
Professional development (Pd)	12.3% (n=8)		10.8% (n=11)	

Leaders

The average working day is 7.9 hours. The investigation showed that leaders' work has rather intensive characteristics. Leaders' activities are usually short, fragmentary, and various. The analysis of self-study reports showed that most of their activities only lasted for 10-15 minutes. In the analysis of a leader's functional essence activity, we learned that leaders spend about 1.2 times more in activities connected with the administrative work of the centre than they do in activities connected with the pedagogical processes. The major part of the day was devoted to the organisation's work (ie, O=23.9%) and control (ie, C=13.7%). These kinds of activities are marked by all the respondents of the given group. The activity on organisation and control of pedagogical process is marked by 16 respondents and takes 9.4% of working hours, and the control activity takes 15.1% of working hours. The work on administrative regulation is marked by 16 respondents (ie, R=10.8%) and regulation connected with the pedagogical process is marked by 13 respondents (ie, R=11.7%). Nine persons mentioned the analysis of the Pre-school Education Institution activity such as fire-protection of buildings and menu planning. On the average, it took 7.7% of working hours, and the analysis of pedagogical activity took 11.1% of working hours (n=16). With reference to planning, 12 respondents identified tasks related to administration (P=6.6%) and of these 9 referred to pedagogical tasks (P=5.6%). Eight respondents marked different forms and methods of professional development (Pd) that took about 12.3% of working hours.

Assistants of leaders

The working day of this group consists of about 7.5 hours. The investigation showed that the assistants' activity is mainly connected with the pedagogical process management

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in the day care centre. These activities take 2.3 times more than the administrative functions. The analysis of the assistants' function showed a variety of administrative activities. All the respondents of this group (n=17) marked in their self-study reports various activities on organisation (ie, O=18% of working hours), regulation (ie, R=19.3 %) and analysis (ie, A=13.8 %) of the process of education and bringing up children. Fifteen persons indicated that some control measures were carried out (ie, C=19.2 % of working hours.)

Planning takes about 6.8 % of working hours; planning of pedagogical work was the type of planning most often indicated. The professional development activities take 10.8 % of working hours. It is necessary to note that an assistant's specific work character let us observe his/her activity in two directions: his/her own qualification improvement - seminars attendance and reading methodological literature (n=5 persons, Pd=10 %) and his/her activity on education of the rest of the staff of a day care centre such as consulting classes and presentation of new methods of work with children (n=6 persons, Pd=11.6 %).

Teachers

When describing the investigation facts, we have been faced with some difficulties connected with the different length of the teachers' working day. The problem is that the working regime of a teacher may vary in individual day care centres. In some centres, teachers work all day for 11 hours: they work every two days and then receive a day off; in other centres, teachers work in shifts: the first shift is from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. (7 hours) and the second shift is from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. (4 hours); the next day teachers switch shifts. When we sent our questionnaires to those teachers who work in shifts, we gave them two days to complete the papers. However, they did not follow our instructions, as 50 % of teachers (n=13) described their work during one shift only. As a result, in the analysis of facts, we divided the teachers' group into two subgroups: a full working day - 11 hours, and this was the 1st subgroup (n=13). Those who worked one shift, on average 6.4 hours became the 2nd subgroup (n=13). As the analysis showed, the average indexes of the two subgroups do not differ much.

As we see, the major part of working time is devoted to children. The regime process (Re) took 20% of working hours (n=26). Time spent on children's activities were as follows: Educational activity (L) (n=24) - 13.8 %, Group play (n=23) - 13 % and Labour activity (n=22) - 5.4 %. Individual consultations (n=23) accounted for 9.1 % of the working time, and creation and observation of children's independent activity (n=23) took up 9.5 % of the time. Teachers own work, consisting of organisational activity (n=18) on the average accounted for 9.7 % of working hours. Twenty-four persons indicated their participation in some form of professional development and this took up 10 % of working hours on the average. It is necessary to note that teachers' activity contents is determined by the calendar work plan for a day, a week, and even a month ahead.

The self-study reports noted the number and the types of people in the environment at each half hour as per children, parents and staff. We used this information to analyse the amount of time each respondent spent interacting with children, parents and staff during the target day. The results are presented on the table 2.

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Table 2. Activities related to children, parents and staff.

Orientation	Leaders	Assistants of leaders	Teachers
Child related	19.2% (n=19)	32.6% (n=17)	81.8% (n=26)
Staff related	44.5% (n=21)	41.9% (n=17)	9.9% (n=23)
Parent related	9.5% (n=18)	6% (n=7)	4.2% (n=20)

The main focus of the work of leaders and assistants of leaders were staff related, where as the teachers' main focus were child related activities. Parent related work was the least important sphere of interaction for all three categories of day care centre staff. We were not surprised with these results.

4.7. Beliefs and values guiding professional practise

In addition to the analysis of the daily tasks described in the self-study reports, we also analysed their responses to changes in the field of Early Childhood Education. Some respondents (n=12) referred this question to their own professional growth and changes in their own lives. Others pointed out changes, the most important of which were:

- Democratisation of Pre-school Education Institution management
- Increase of work independence and creation
- Creation of new and interesting programs for work with children
- Humanisation of pedagogical process - adoption of person-oriented pedagogy
- Reduction of discipline methods in work with children.

Along with all of this, many respondents indicated some decrease in financial support, which lead to a decrease in the teachers' quality of living, and loss of prestige as a pedagogical profession.

As we have already mentioned, the majority of day care centres in Russia are state controlled, and as a result of the decrease financial support, leaders feel the inevitable necessity to look for new jobs and new financial resources. That is, leaders have been forced to focus on operating administrative functions, and be more oriented to the day care centres external activity. A question that continues to surround the leader's work is as follows: What should leaders be like, in order to provide staff with effective work and achieve the chosen educational objectives, to bring up children, and to take into consideration parents' expectations and societal demands?

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Surveying leadership in united states early care and education: A knowledge base and typology of activity

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Abstract

This article reports the findings of Phase I of the International Leadership Project (ILP) conducted in the United States. From a theoretical perspective, the aim of the study is to explicate the view of leadership as a situated phenomenon and develop a research agenda and related methods that reflect and support it. On an applied level, the aim is to provide a descriptive account of leadership activity in child care settings and to identify connections between leadership capacity and educational quality. This study represents the first steps in addressing these larger goals. The purposes were to survey: (1) the knowledge base on leadership in early childhood in the United States, and (2) the activity in child care settings with potential for leader action and development. Results from the survey of the literature showed that research is relatively recent and tends to focus on traditional views. From the survey of early childhood settings, two observations were salient. Activity among directors, teachers, and teaching assistants showed a lack of role differentiation and cross-functionality. Although lack of role differentiation may constrain leadership potential, the element of cross-functionality gives promise to the capacity for leading. Implications of these findings and future directions for the study of leadership are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, early childhood, day care

1. Introduction

In different parts of the world, interest in early education leadership is propelled by the growing recognition that leader qualities influence the quality of early learning conditions

and instructional practice (Kagan 1994, Rodd 1994). Individuals' knowledge and leadership actions in a mutual relation with their settings impact the learning potential of early childhood programs (Cost, Quality 1995, Kontos & Fiene 1987). When leadership is strong, sound, and vigorous, children benefit in terms of their access to and interaction with abundant, rich resources. What we know and understand about leadership in American early education and care, however, is quite slim, overshadowed by more pressing issues related to systemic changes, e.g., community-based planning, and compensation or "worthy wage" campaigns (Kagan & Bowman 1997). Research specific to the nature, development, and application of leadership in the early childhood context, in fact, is quite rare.

Still we do know some about the significance and capacity for leadership in early education. Looking through the broader lenses of leadership theory and research from other fields, we recognize, for example, that newer conceptions of leadership arising out of systems theory align well with leadership orientations historically held in the early childhood community (e.g., Cortes 1996, Senge 1994). Concepts such as teamwork, participatory management, shared decision-making, and collaboration, now espoused in the larger educational arena and the business community, are familiar and accepted ideas in the administration and management of early childhood programs. While the knowledge base and training opportunities to develop these qualities are sparse, the ideas are prevalent, nonetheless, thus helping to create conditions that nurture and support more modern transformational leadership approaches (Leithwood 1992).

Drawing on the leadership knowledge base, there is a good deal of consensus as well around the qualities, skills and competencies required for early childhood leaders. Speaking in broad terms, Espinosa (1997) describes three personal characteristics of leadership which she argues are at the core of leader effectiveness: moral principles that cultivate strength, power, and persuasiveness; vision that is inspiring and embraced by others; and courage born of self-knowledge and inner security. Others outline the knowledge and skills necessary for competent leadership in the early childhood context. Skills, such as articulating the organization's mission, communicating effectively, solving problems, motivating and inspiring others, remaining open to new ideas, and knowing child and family development well, appear critical to leader success. Effective early childhood leaders are also competent at managing human and material resources. They make plans and see them through; create an organizational culture; supervise staff; and maintain an effective, well-understood curriculum (Mitchell 1997).

But, the truism "experience is the best teacher" aside, how early childhood practitioners develop and grow as leaders is vastly understudied. Moreover the very concept of leadership specific to early care and education is not well understood. Leaders' informal reflections highlight the importance of mentors who offer emotional strength and support, opportunities to practice in real settings, and personal relationships that model certain skills, e.g., vision setting. Yet, access to these learning resources faces serious obstacles, some of the profession's own making, which complicates the development of leadership in the early childhood field and clouds understanding. Regrettably, it also frustrates comprehensive and systematic research.

Along one front, there is a constellation of contextual factors that work against more widespread acquisition of leader knowledge and skill among early childhood professionals. Historically, the profession has permitted a "learn as you go" policy, giving individuals

without training or credentials the opportunity to work. Life experience, very often, is the best evidence for entree into the profession supported by periodic in-service training, at best, to fill in the gaps. But, easy access often goes hand in hand with low compensation, which yields a low work status that in turn sets the stage for short-term commitment and consequently high turnover. Such unstable conditions create neither the time nor inclination for the kind of professional education that develops and nurtures leaders. Pressed to respond to the immediate and unpredictable concerns of children's daily care, minimally trained workers have little opportunity for acquiring new skills and experience, for thinking and rethinking their assumptions and practice, or for developing confidence in their own leadership potential.

Along another front, the field is confronted by a cluster of conceptual issues that, in some ways, pose a more formidable challenge to understanding. Low pay and high turnover are foes people can readily see and feel, and thus deal with more tangibly and forcibly, although not necessarily successfully. But concepts of leadership are far more slippery, given shape and significance through the social construction of meaning by group, professions, and cultures (Mitchell 1990). An ancient myth about leadership, for example, is that leaders are born, not made, situating the phenomenon in individual genetic endowment - an either "you have it or you don't" state of affairs. While knowledge of leadership has certainly expanded beyond this simplistic view, traces of this primitive idea persist in different layers of understanding and practice in early education. It can be found lingering, for instance, in the conventional tendency to equate leadership with management, which restricts leadership roles to center directors and administrators. What appear to be the individual inherited abilities (e.g., organizational skills) as exercised in the managing role outside the classroom is seen as "leading." Shrouded by the "leaders are born" myth, this view narrows the professional vision of leadership in the early childhood context by first limiting it to individuals in traditional roles and second ignoring the ecological conditions that recruit leader strategies.

In debunking the myth, however, there is an equally strong tendency to conceptualize leadership as a job role or function, thus locating the phenomenon outside the individual. What leadership is, then, is carried by role rather than the qualities and capacities of individuals who enact the role. Whoever steps into the role becomes by definition a leader, so to speak. This view, however, again limits an understanding of leadership development in early childhood, because it restricts the nature of leadership to institutionally derived forms that by necessity narrowly construe its complexity. There are qualities of leadership, for example, that cannot be captured in a job description nor can the role, in and of itself, invest someone with leadership characteristics, such as virtue, passion, and optimism. The role, in short, can bring individuals to leadership status, but cannot make them leaders.

Considering these points, the conceptual challenge for early childhood thinkers and researchers, we would argue, is to look at leadership from both sides, as inside and outside of individuals. This familiar solution to an either-or problem does not necessarily make it an easy one, especially when applied to matters of knowing, thinking, doing and growing. As noted, focusing too exclusively on leadership as indigenous to the person or to the position limits any explanation of leadership activity. To develop a more complete understanding of leadership in the early childhood arena, therefore, requires an

approach that examines the integration of person and context (Butterworth 1993, Rogoff 1982).

Certainly, an emphasis on the human environment interdependence is not a new concern in social science, though in recent years theorists have begun to stress more vigorously an inextricable link between context and knowledge acquisition (see, for example, Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994, Cole 1996, also, Barker's concern with behavior settings, 1978 & Erickson's treatment of taught cognitive learning, 1982). Assuming an integrative perspective, some theorize that cognition is an activity that spans the roles of person and context (e.g., Gibson 1979, Leontev 1981, Vygotsky 1978). Thought and action ultimately cannot be explained as characteristic of the person separate from the context in which the person thinks. In other words, the context cannot be treated as a separate variable from the person's cognitive and motoric actions (activity) nor the other way round – the person's actions separate from the situation wherein they arise. But maintaining a unit of analysis that incorporates simultaneously human activity (e.g., leading) as well as objective features of setting (e.g., child care) is no small intellectual feat. Indeed, from a research perspective, this methodological concern is at the very root of our conceptual challenge with respect to leadership in early education. How do we "see," grasp, and describe leadership as activity in the early childhood arena?

In this regard, Rogoff (1982) may be helpful in that she proposes a contextual event or transactional approach wherein the context and the person's activities are seen as "jointly producing psychological events" (p. 132). The approach assumes that neither context nor activity can be adequately explained apart from the other, since meaning is ultimately derived from both. But the approach also incorporates an interactive view that permits the separation of contextual and individual elements for the purposes of study. It relies on eclectic methods for examining (1) setting and task features; (2) person characteristics; and (3) their integration. In addition to standard methods (e.g., statistical or descriptive analyses of separate person-context elements), ethnographic methods are also used to map the interdependence of person and context, e.g., ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) or microethnography (Erickson 1982). The unit of analysis is an event or activity, which preserves the mutuality of person and situation; the emphasis is on what individuals do (verbal and nonverbal actions) and how what they do changes or adapts across the life of an event. Close scrutiny of what happens allows physical and mental processes to surface for detailed description and subsequent analyses, which facilitates examining the context and the person's actions as they fit together to produce activity.

Viewing leadership as situated activity, we have joined an international group of scholars committed to understanding leadership in daycare centers. Representing the countries of Finland, Russia, England, and Australia, the group is studying leadership from an ecological and social construction perspective (Berger 1990, Bronfenbrenner 1979, Hujala *et al.* 1997). Broadly the group's work is guided by the premise that leadership is not a set of localized individual traits but rather processes that evolve as a joint function of person, near and far environments, and desired outcomes (Bronfenbrenner 1994). Leading, in sum, is a phenomenon that arises from the integration of activity and setting. The character and strength of this phenomenon, it appears, may more or less contribute to the quality of early childhood education (Bloom & Sheerer 1992, Kagan 1994, Rodd 1994, 1996). The aim of the group's collective inquiry is to better understand

leading in these terms so as to develop a body of knowledge that informs the development and realization of leadership potential in early care and education endeavors.

Our investigative work in the United States seeks to contribute in at least two ways to the group's study of leadership as a situated phenomenon. On a theoretical level, we intend to explore the study of leadership from a situated perspective, striving to explicate this view and developing a research agenda and related methods that reflect and support it. On an applied level, we hope to provide a descriptive account of leadership activity in child care settings and to identify connections between leadership capacity and educational quality. This study represents our first steps in addressing these larger goals. Following the general plan of the project, we first surveyed the research literature and then gathered data on activity that might contribute to leadership potential in a representative sample of early care and education settings. Our survey work was guided by two questions: (1) What do we know about leadership in early childhood? and (2) What are the kinds of activity in child care settings with potential for leader action and development?

2. Method

We are in the early stages of our study of leadership as situated activity in the child care context and thus approach the topic broadly. In this study, we first examined the literature on early childhood leadership in the United States to determine to what extent the topic has been explored and what has been learned about it. We then conducted a descriptive survey of activity in early childhood settings to investigate it as a situation that may contribute to leadership and leader actions.

Procedures

To address our first question pertaining to knowledge about leadership in early childhood education, we surveyed a wide range of professional literature on the topic, using a three-phase approach. First, we searched four electronic databases to identify the frequency and kinds of references that discussed early childhood leadership topics within the last 20 years (1977-1997): the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Dissertation Abstracts, Psychological Literature, and Sociofile. From this broad-based listing, we then culled those records that explicitly considered leadership in early childhood settings, i.e., where the word "leadership" or related terms occurred in the title, descriptors, and /or abstract, and leadership was stated as the primary focus. We obtained abstracts of these records and, based on the contents, organized publications into three types of professional genre: Expert Opinion and Policy Positions; Research Studies; and Professional Training Materials. We developed a matrix of these sources, indicating and identifying characteristics of each publication and key content. In the third phase, we critically analyzed the matrix for research-based themes and evidence on leadership in early education. We then summarized our critical review, describing the quantity and quality of the body of knowledge of this topic.

To develop a descriptive picture of everyday activity in early childhood settings, we used an 8-page questionnaire that included three parts. In part one, the participants were provided an activity log to record in their own words the activities they carried out each

half hour of their work day and the number of adults and children involved in the activities. They were asked to write as many details as possible so that the researchers could get a clear picture of what their working day entailed. Part two asked the participants to reflect on their reported activities and to respond to open-ended items. We asked, for example, "Which five activities do you consider to be the most important? What are your beliefs about young children and early care and education that guide your work?" The participants were also asked who or what influenced their activities and their beliefs. In part three, the participants provided information about their age, experience, educational backgrounds, and characteristics of the center.

We mailed questionnaires to all full day, state-licensed day care centers serving 3-5 year olds in northeastern Ohio (N=295). In a cover letter to the center director, which explained the purpose and parameters of the study, a particular staff member (director, teacher, or teaching assistant) was identified to complete the questionnaire during a typical day within a two-week span and return it in the postage-paid, self-addressed envelope provided. After one month, when only 23 (8 %) completed questionnaires had been returned, we made telephone calls to all non-responding centers. In some cases, contact was not made because the center was no longer in operation; in other cases, phone messages were not answered. We then mailed a second questionnaire to 98 centers who reported that the original one was misplaced.

In total, 43 questionnaires (15%) were returned. Although the sample from northeastern Ohio is small, it appears to be representative of the administrative auspices of child care centers typically found in the USA (Willer *et al.*1991). Table 1 shows that the sample contains similar proportions of center types to those found in the United States, with the exception of Head Start.[1] Our sample includes a larger percentage of Head Start centers than are represented in the USA data.[2] The sample centers range in size from less than 50 (23%) to 250 children (2%), with 50% of the centers serving 51-100 children. The centers operate between 8 and 12 hours per day.

Table 1. Comparison of day care administrative auspices in the sample and in the United States.

	Sample (n=43)	United States
Independent non-profit	33	33
Religious-sponsored non-profit	12	15
Head start	28	9
Independent for-profit	24	29
For-profit chain	2	6

Note. Values represent percentage of centers according to type of auspice.

One male and 42 females responded to the survey. Twenty-three (53%) are teachers, 13 (30%) are directors, and 7 (16%) are teaching assistants. Table 2 shows the demographics of the participants according to age, experience, and educational background. Sixty-three percent of the participants are between the ages of 20 and 40. The average

1 Head Start is a federally funded preschool program serving low income 3- to 5-year olds. It is administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services

2 This is explained by Ohio's significant state contributions to funding Head Start programs and by the nature of the sample which was drawn from a metropolis where Head Start centers are typically more concentrated with high levels of low income families.

ages are 37 for directors (range of 24-55), 37 for teachers (range of 20-60), and 30 for teaching assistants (22-39). The average experience in early childhood education is 12 years for directors, 10 years for teachers, and 5 years for assistant teachers.

In the United States, each state sets the standards for early childhood credentials. In Ohio, the minimum requirements for director are: high school diploma, two years of experience or training as a child care worker, and four courses in early childhood education at an accredited post secondary institution. The minimum requirements for teachers and teaching assistants are: at least 18 years of age; a high school diploma or its equivalent; and an accumulated 45 hours of in-service training in early childhood, child abuse recognition and prevention, first aid, and prevention, recognition and management of communicable diseases (Ohio 1995). In our study, the educational background of the participants vary according to position, with directors holding the most advanced degrees. All directors have a minimum of an associate degree. Sixty percent of the teachers have college degrees, 39% of which are at an associate's level (two years of college). Thirteen percent have certificates of training, which means that they have completed minimum state certification requirements for the position. Twenty-three percent of the teaching staff have high school degrees with some post-secondary training. The largest percent of teaching assistants (43%) are high school graduates with some post secondary training; 29% have associate degrees; and 14% have certificates of training.

Table 2. Age, experience in early childhood, and educational backgrounds of directors, teachers, and teaching assistants.

	Director	Teacher	Teaching assistant
Age	37	37	30
Experience in early childhood	15	10	5
Education			
Master degree	24	4	
Bachelor degree	38	17	
Associate	38	39	29
Post-secondary certificate	13	14	
High school degree with some post secondary training	23	43	
No response	4	14	

Note. Values for age and experience represent years; values for education represent percentages.

Data analysis

The literature matrix served as the basis for analysis of the knowledge base (see Fig. 1). Using a critical analysis approach (Jupp 1996), we focused on the general orientation of each record, targeting three areas. First, we identified the type of document (i.e., journal article, dissertation, report). We then examined the kinds of genre used to define the concept, e.g., expert opinion, research studies, training orientation. Third, we identified key concepts used to describe leadership. Finally, we inferred an implicit theory of leadership that seemed to underpin the concept. We viewed these data as foundational knowledge about leadership in early education. We also summarized basic descriptive data about the collection, which permitted us to observe the primary sources of professional knowledge.

Title	Author	Document type	Year	Genre: 1: expert opinion & policy; 2: research; 3: training	Key concepts
Analysis of leadership qualifications and skills of head Start administrators in the state of Arizona	Axman	Dissertation	1994	2	– investigated perceived and actual leadership qualifications of Head Stard administrators and lead teachers in Arizona – findings: years of experience and education, and CDA training schoed varying degrees of influence on perceived confidence levels in 10 skill areas of leadership
The professional development of early childhood center directors: Key elements of effective training models	Bloom & Rafanello	Paper presentation	1994	3	– training program in management and leadership functions of director
The effect of leadership training on child care program quality	Bloom & Sheerer	Article	1992	2	– examined effects of 16-month leadership training program on: staff's perceptions of knowledge, skill, and decisionmaking; classroom teaching practices; and program inventiveness
Characteristics of administrator's leadership style and quality child care centers	Bobula	Dissertation	1996	2	– investigated leadership style of quality center directors – findings: leaders vary approaches depending on situation; particular approaches lead to high quality center
D+E+S+C = How to deal with difficult people	Broe	Article	1995	1	– responsibility of caring/effective leader is to promote good work environment
A comparison of teacher perceptions of perceived and preferred leadership behaviors manifested by directors of selected early childhood centers	Burch	Dissertation	1987	2	– explored teachers' perceptions of directors' actual and preferred leadership behavior (maintain programs and people, ability to use management tools, ability to provide educational leadership – findings: teacher preferred more management and leadership, maintaining programs and peple occurred more frequently than preferred
Self-perception of work behavioral leadership styles of Project Head Start middle level managers in Region V: A descriptive analysis of leadership behavior	Caraber	Dissertation	1990	2	– explored similarities and differences in perceived leadership behavioral styles among Head Start middle managers – findings: no significant differences between educational level, personal variables and self-perceived work behavioral style
The administrator/leader in early care and edcation settings: A qualitative study with implications for theory and practice (child care)	Culkin	Dissertation	1994	2	– investigated quality center aministrators as leaders in 3 parts: work of administrator leader, development of scale describing work, validation of scale
Early childhood program administration: An application of situational leadership theory	Fish	Dissertation	1981	2	– investigated directors', teachers' and parents' perceptions of leadership – findings: leadership profiles related to participant satisfaction; differences found between parents' and teachers' views of effective director
Leadership and the use of power in ECE adminstration	Jones	Guidebook	1980	1	– leadership and use of power in programs management – techniques for effectiveness in social interaction
Leadership training for collaboration	Kagan	Report	1993	1	– collaborative leadership model
Leadership: Rethinking it Making it happen	Kagan	Article	1994	1	– multible leadership definitions and theories applied to EC settings – importance of shared leadership
Project Dakota Outreach: Replicating family centered, community based early intervention policy and practice, 1991-1994	Kjerland	Report	1995	2	– examined relationship between effective leadership and quality early childhood program implementation – findings: leaders' work supports quality as a function of improvement of coworker relationships
Stabilizer, catalyst,troubleshooter, or visionary - - Which are you?	Kurtz	Article	1991	1	– conceptualization of leadership styles – impact of conceptualization on directors' administrative tasks and functions

Fig. 1. Continued.

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The preschool administrator: Perspectives on leadership in early childhood education (day care)	Larkin	Dissertation	1992	2	– explores directors' perceptions of role in relation to organizational structure – findings: multi-dimensional role shaped by the individual, social factors, economic resources
Administrative leadership: Styles, competencies, repertoire	Lay-Dopyera & Dopyera	Article	1985	1	– models of leadership: personal style, set of competencies, function of repertoire
Leadership essentials: Some unconventional advice to directors from some unconventional leaders	Neugebauer	Article	1988	1	– essential characteristics of leaders
The leadership knowledge, skills, and behaviors of directors of quality, state-funded child care centers in the San Francisco Bay Area	Pipa	Dissertation	1997	2	– explored knowledge, skills, and behaviors of quality center directors and compared to effective traits identified in literature – findings: majority used knowledge, skills, and behaviors for instructional program improvement and sought family support and recources for program; relied on management vs. leadership attributes; did not have access to systematic leadership preparation program
Defining management activity and organizational structure in day care centers	Teichbert	Dissertation	1990	2	– examined day care directors' work and leadership styles – findings: styles influenced by organizational factors of the center
How can I be a leader with chicken noodle soup in my pocket?	Zeece	Article	1990	1	– qualities of leaders related to child care management

Fig. 1. Leadership in early childhood knowledge base: Sources of evidence, genre and key concepts.

Qualitative methods were used to analyze the data generated from the activity log and the open-ended responses on the questionnaire. General procedures included several readings of a computer-generated database followed by independent analysis of the data. The researchers then met to discuss their analyses, to work out coding rules, and to define categories. After consensus was reached on the categories, the researchers coded the same three cases independently. In keeping with an inductive method of analysis, allowance was given to define other categories which emerged from the data. When this occurred, the researchers discussed their coding and reached consensus on naming and defining the category. The researchers then calculated inter-rater agreement on the three cases. With rates of .90 or higher, the researchers agreed to each take a portion of the remaining cases and code them independently. Inter-rater agreement across the analyses ranged from .86 to .95, with an average of .91.

Typically, the coding of qualitative data can present researchers with interesting dilemmas to resolve, which, if explicated, can allow others to "see" the researcher's thinking and, therein, lend validity to the results. Data gathered from the activity log was particularly challenging to analyze. The participants tended to record what they did during a particular half-hour period using phrases or one-word responses that named rather than detailed their activities. Secondly, they tended to list more than one activity for each half-hour period. Thus, in order to preserve the integrity of the data, the researchers devised a method for analyzing the data that would capture both the type and the number of different activities within each period. Further, the researchers needed a method of analysis that would adequately describe the activity in day care without

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leaping to interpretations about how a staff person was involved in the activity. A coding unit was a word or phrase that indicated an activity. In recognizing that the half hour time frames were somewhat arbitrary, as activity in day care is ongoing, the researchers agreed that prior to coding each half hour period, they would reread the log entry before and after the half hour in question. Further, the researchers agreed to code each unit but to count only the different activities occurring in the same time period. For the entire sample, a total of 1380 activities were collapsed into ten categories (see Table 3).

Table 3. Categories and descriptions for activity in day care settings.

Category	Description
Play	Children engaged in inside or outside play; e.g., puzzles, blocks, toys
Transitions	Moving from here top there; e.g. greet parents and children, bring groups of children together
Basic Needs	Taking care of children's basic needs; e.g., feeding, napping, washing, nursing
Maintenance	Arranging/rearranging the setting; e.g., taking milk to refrigerator, putting away chairs, cleaning tables
Administration	Communication with parents, staff, others outside of center on the order of business; e.g., making phone calls, writing reports, assisting staff
Teaching	Teacher-led activity with children; e.g., art, music, circle time, calendar, discipline
Curriculum and Assessment	Instructional planning and child assessment; e.g. collaborating with staff to plan lessons; writing anecdotal records about children
TV watching	Children watching television
Supervision	Staff supervising children; e.g., watching children on the playground, during lunch, during nap time
Personal	Personal time during work day; e.g., eating lunch, taking a break

The following log entry illustrates the method of coding. In one half-hour block, a respondent wrote: "Arrival of children begins. Greet child and parent by name as they arrive. Answer questions for parent. Children help open room and bring out materials (they can make choices of what to bring out/areas to open)". In this case, the researchers identified five coding units: (1) arrival of children; (2) greet child and parent by name as they arrive; (3) answer questions for parent; (4) children help open room and bring out materials; (5) they make choices of what to bring out/areas to open. Of these five activities, 1, 4, and 5 were considered different from one another. Thus, this entry was assigned three different categorical codes: transitions, maintenance, and play.

For each type of staff person, the codes were tallied and percentages were calculated for each activity category in each half-hour of the day. The frequencies presented a picture of both the type and the amount of activity carried out by the day care staff. From this analysis, the researchers constructed a typology to describe the nature and complexity of day care activity and to make comparisons across different types of day care staff.

Several methods were undertaken to analyze the responses to part two of the survey:

1. The categories for coding the activity log were also used to code the participants' rank ordering of activities and the activities they did not get accomplished. For each type of day care staff, tallies were figured. The frequencies were then used to describe

their perceptions of the most important work they do as well as the kind of activities which they may not get accomplished in a typical day.

2. Responses to the questions regarding who or what influences the activities and beliefs were coded: director, other center staff, parents, children, professional development, personal development, or organizational policies and practices. Frequency counts (higher than one) in each category illustrate the most important influences on activity and the workers' beliefs.
3. A content analysis of responses related to beliefs about early care and education led to themes, which suggest the ideals that guide the day to day work of directors, teachers, and teaching assistants.

Taken together, the kinds of activity, the themes generated from participants' beliefs, and the descriptions of influences on beliefs and practices present a multi-dimensional picture of activity in day care settings.

3. Results

Survey of the knowledge base

In our survey of the literature on leadership in early childhood, we extracted a total pool of 193 records. We then undertook a process of data reduction in three broad sweeps. Since our intent was to focus on US research studies, articles, and journal publications, we reduced the pool by rejecting all books, annotated bibliographies, videotapes, directories, and publications from other countries. Next, we combed the remaining 172 records to identify those publications that focused specifically on the concept of leadership in early education settings. This analysis allowed us to eliminate 152 records because they focused either on leadership in settings other than preschool environments (30%) (e.g., schools or advocacy organizations), factors related to center quality but not specifically leadership (15%), or on the training and development of early childhood workers (55%). Through this process of data reduction and analysis, we selected 20 publications that met our focus on leadership in early education settings.

We then conducted a content analysis of these 20 publications. Fig. 1 summarizes the sources of evidence, the genres, and key concepts that describe the professional knowledge base. From our analysis, we derived three observations. First, the study of leadership in early childhood is a relatively recent focus as indicated by the paucity of both published and unpublished research on the topic over the last decade. Second, although leadership is a new topic of research, the theories that frame and guide investigations appear to be rooted in traditional views of leadership. Many of the studies, for example, have pushed to further understand the individual characteristics of head persons in early childhood centers and the ways in which people possessing certain desirable characteristics shape optimal environments for children. The goal appears to be describing the personal traits that characterize leaders. Others have focused on leadership as "position" through examination of the roles and responsibilities needed to carry out the complex work required of the director. The emphasis of this kind of work is on what directors must do in order to lead.

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Both of these observations - the recency of these inquiries on leadership and also the reliance on traditional theory - lead us to our third point. We are stuck by the lack of systematic investigations of leadership through new theoretical lenses. A view of leadership as situated provides new possibilities. Thus far, situated leadership has been studied in terms of leaders adapting their styles according to circumstances that arise in center life. While this kind of work moves us closer to recognizing that context plays a role in leaders' decisions, it is not enough. Well-grounded studies that examine leadership as an interplay between persons in the immediate environment and external forces that shape what happens in the environment are warranted. In sum, leadership appears to be a new topic in early childhood, but old ideas have tended to guide the research. Current thinking, therefore, needs to steer the way we design studies of leadership in early childhood settings. In other words, to study leadership as a new, important topic in early childhood, we need to examine it in new ways.

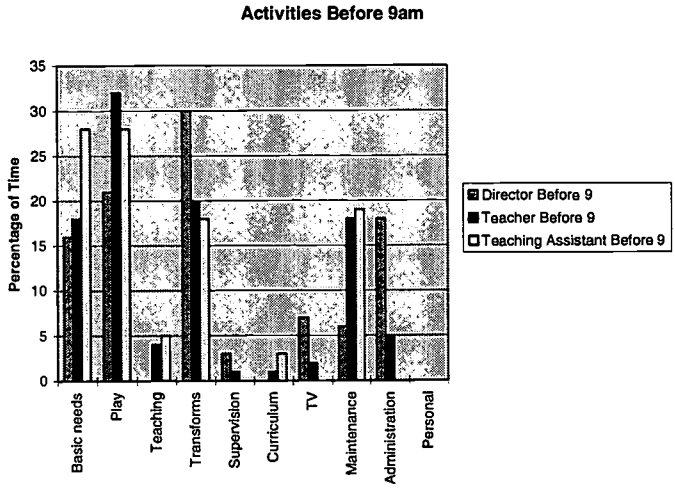
Survey of daily activity

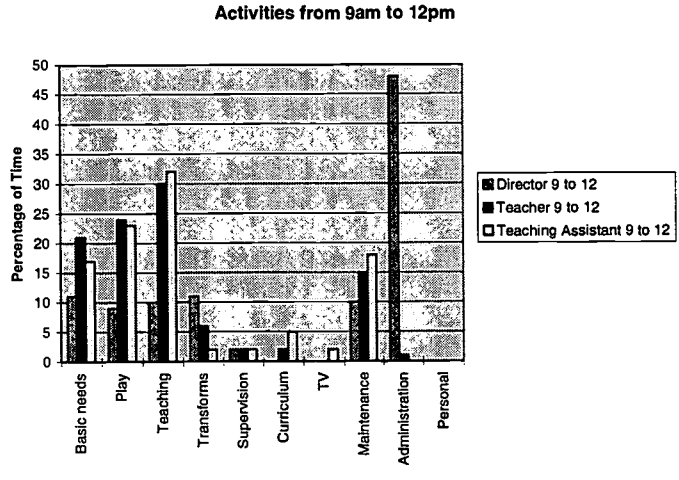
Our analysis of the survey results produced a typology of activity that represented the typical early childhood program day. The typology and brief descriptions of each category type are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Categories and descriptions for activity in day care settings.

Category	Description
Play	Children engaged in inside or outside play; e.g., puzzles, blocks, toys
Transitions	Moving from here top there; e.g. greet parents and children, bring groups of children together
Basic Needs	Taking care of children's basic needs; e.g., feeding, napping, washing, nursing
Maintenance	Arranging/rearranging the setting; e.g., taking milk to refrigerator, putting away chairs, cleaning tables
Administrative	Communication with parents, staff, others outside of center on the order of business; e.g., making phone calls, writing reports, assisting staff
Teaching	Teacher-led activity with children; e.g., art, music, circle time, calendar, discipline
Curriculum and Assessment	Instructional planning and child assessment; e.g. collaborating with staff to plan lessons; writing anecdotal records about children
TV watching	Children watching television
Supervision	Staff supervising children; e.g., watching children on the playground, during lunch, during nap time
Personal	Personal time during work day; e.g., eating lunch, taking a break

Working from the typology we examined the frequency of activities by personnel role and by time of day and role to explore the potential for leader actions and development in daily activity as illustrated in Figs 2 and 3.





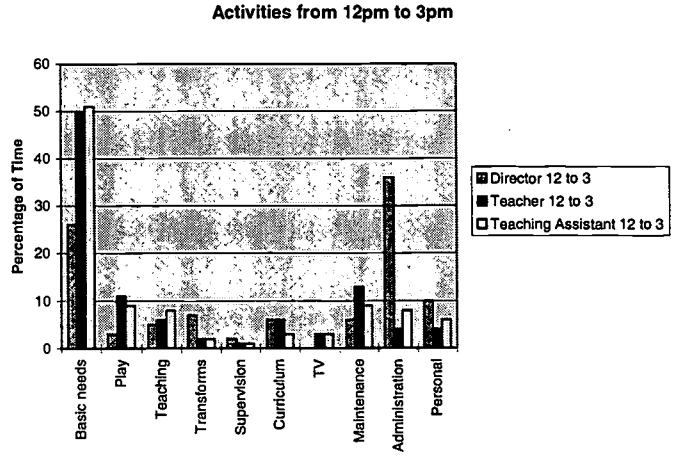


Fig. 2. Continued.

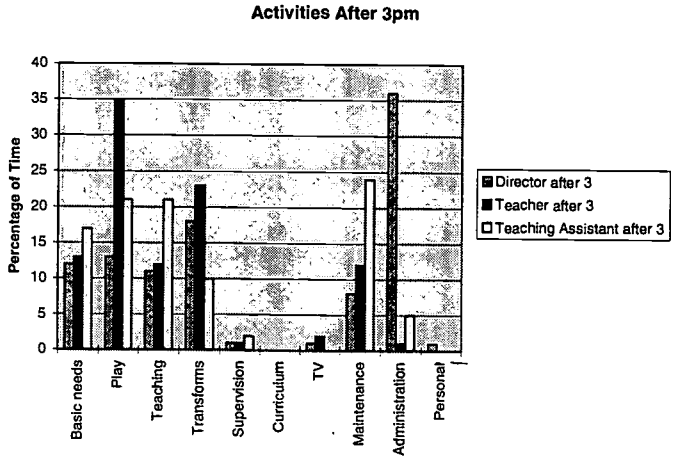


Fig. 2. Frequency of activities by personnel role.

As Fig. 2 shows, directors, teachers, and teaching assistants reported that they were all involved to some extent in each type of activity. As expected, directors engaged in more administrative work than teaching staff and teaching staff were more involved in the direct care and education of children, e.g., teaching, meeting basic needs, and play. Less anticipated, perhaps, is the striking similarity in what teachers and teaching assistants do, indicating little role differentiation between these positions in the setting. While direct observations would likely reveal subtleties that distinguish the two, fundamentally the work looks the same, which may have implications for professional education and teacher licensure. Relatedly, the frequency of activity devoted to curriculum considerations was minimal across all roles, suggesting a lack of attention to program goals and curriculum-related planning on a daily basis. In general, the data reflect the traditional parsing of educational work between administering and teaching/caring for children with clearly assigned roles for these tasks - director and teaching staff. Beyond this distinction, daily activity shows no other roles.

Fig. 3 provides a more detailed picture of who is doing what across the course of a day. Before 9:00 am everyone is involved in greetings and getting organized for the day. From 9:00 am to noon, activity becomes the most differentiated as directors engage heavily in administrative duties and teaching staff focus primarily on instructional-type activity, e.g., calendar time and structured play. Between noon and 3:00 p.m., the quiet time of day, teaching staff and directors exchange roles to conduct center business and do paperwork and also meet children's basic needs as well as their own, e.g., eating lunch. After 3:00 p.m., directors and teaching staff return to the morning's activities although in a less differentiated way, as directors assume more child care responsibilities and teaching staff focus on maintenance activity in preparation for children's leaving. Overall these data indicate the strong cross-functional nature of roles and responsibilities in the child care setting. For a major portion of the day (3 out of the 4 time blocks), directors and teachers move back and forth, into and out of each other's roles to meet the pressing, immediate needs of serving young children and their families. Roles become most sharply defined in the morning when

directors, teachers, and teaching assistants part ways to accomplish operational and educational tasks. Administration activity clearly separates directors from teachers; but, teaching work does not appear to differentiate teachers from teaching assistants.

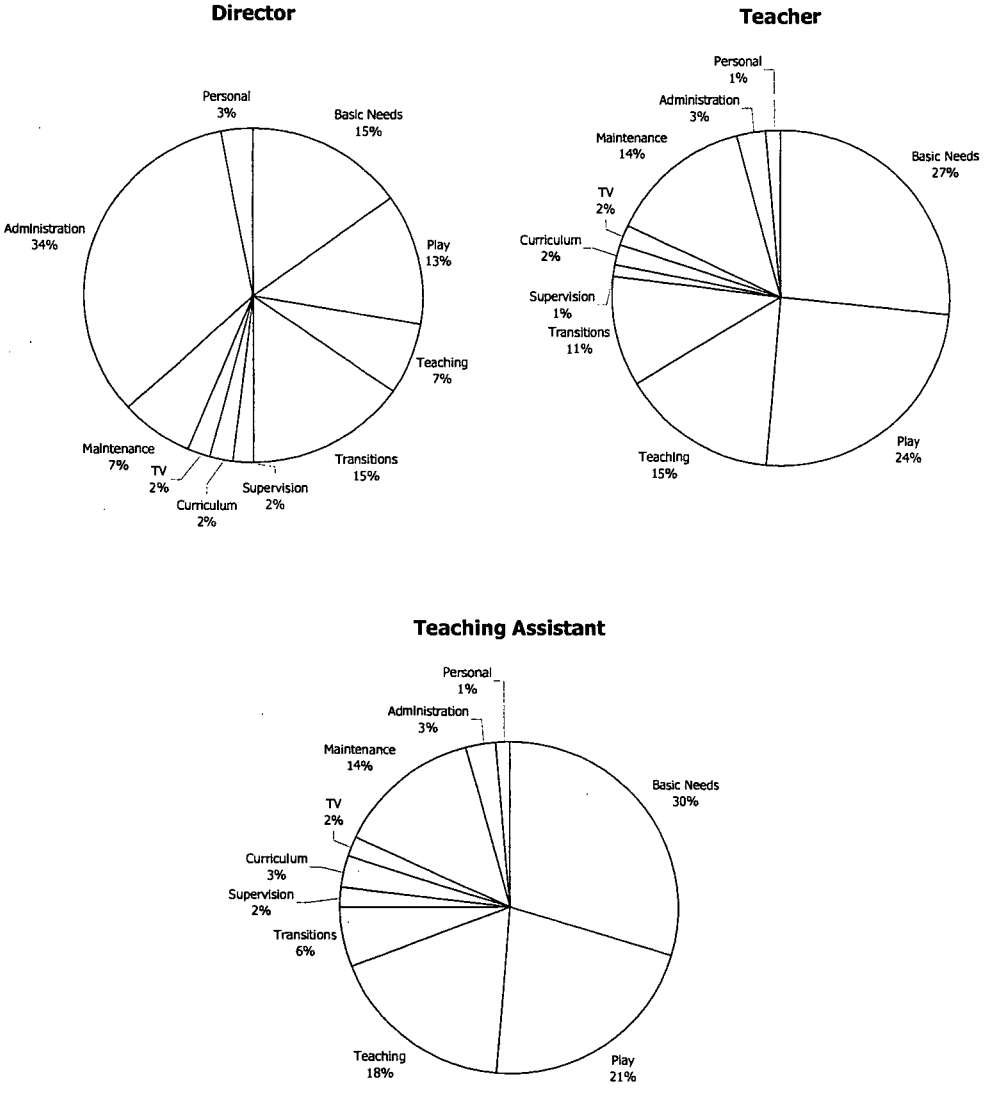


Fig. 3. Frequency of activities by time and personnel role.

What can we glean from these frequency data that might relate to leader actions and development? Our analysis yields at least two rather useful observations at this point. One is the lack of role differentiation in the child care setting, which certainly limits access to a broad range of leadership possibilities for individuals to discover, learn, and practice their leader potential in the setting. Quite clearly, there is the traditional director role and the teaching/caring role with leadership capacity limited to a rather narrow band of activities in relation to them. Curriculum development and planning activity, for example, appear to have been virtually ignored in our sample. Yet, albeit limited to but two roles, there is strong evidence of cross-functionality between these roles that affords leader actions and therefore may support the development of leader qualities. The activities in the setting, in sum, may offer opportunities for learning and developing leader processes and skills less accessible in more bureaucratic and more sharply differentiated settings, such as schools. Granted both of these observations emerge from a preliminary survey of activity at child care. Still, they warrant further investigation, given the exploratory landscape of leadership in early education.

In addition to an analysis of the frequency of participants' activity by role and time, we examined how they prioritized their activity and viewed their accomplishment of tasks. Again, consistent with their activity level, directors gave high priority to administrative work and teaching staff to meeting children's play and basic needs. Both groups, however, also ranked teaching and curriculum work as a high priority yet neither actually committed substantial time to these activity areas (directors: 7% teaching; 2% curriculum; teachers: 15% teaching; 2% curriculum; teaching assistants: 18% teaching; 3% curriculum). Directors more so than teaching staff complained that they did not have sufficient time to meet their administrative duties and also teach children – an understandable complaint when faced with a situation of "trying to do everything." About one-third of the teaching staff also expressed concerns about not having time to fully realize their teaching role, which may reflect more so their vision of teaching than the opportunity to do so. Teaching, for example, could be embedded in caring for children's basic needs or integrated into play, as well as be carried out more explicitly, e.g., in circle time or during storybook reading.

Our final analysis probed respondents' comments for evidence of beliefs that seemed to guide and shape daily activity. We induced five themes from the data as described in Table 4.

Table 4. Themes in day care workers' beliefs about early care and education that guide daily activity.

Theme		Director	Teacher	Teaching Assistant
1.	Learning environments should be stimulating, safe, nurturing, and geared to the developmental needs of young children.	x	x	x
2.	Learning environments should be structured in daily routines and schedules.	x	x	x
3.	The primary responsibility of the day care worker is to support the individual child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.	x	x	x
4.	A primary responsibility is to promote positive relationships among day care staff, parents, and children.	x		
5.	A primary responsibility is to promote the education of young children as a profession.	x	x	

These themes reflect the commonly held child-centered focus of early care and education. From a leadership perspective, however, they also reflect a rather insular view of director and teacher roles and responsibilities in early education as professional work. For example, there is no mention of professional activity or communication beyond the immediate setting other than with parents, such as advocacy efforts or active involvement in organizations and experiences to improve practice. Even within the setting, activities that might encourage reflection, challenge deep-seated beliefs, and stimulate intellectual growth and problem solving are rarely mentioned, e.g., strategic planning, curriculum, or assessment work. In short, the beliefs, as we understand them, tend to reflect a literal interpretation of "child-centered" that ties professional activity, albeit important activity, directly to work with children and the immediate environment. Such a narrow view, however, does not lead to a deeper understanding of leadership nor one's capacity to lead.

4. Discussion

In this preliminary work, we surveyed leadership in early childhood from two perspectives. From a theoretical view, we analyzed two decades of selected literature focused on the topic of leadership in early childhood. On an applied level, we surveyed the activity of child care personnel for leadership potential and development. As a result of our analyses, we made a few key observations.

Our survey of the literature indicates the need for a new approach to the study of leadership. Although recent leadership discourse propels our thinking away from traditional notions that embody the concept in person or in position toward a constructivist view of leadership as process(es), this discourse has typically taken the form of expert advice and conventional wisdom. Empirical work is narrow in focus and rare. Thus far, the research has tended to focus on the personal attributes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors of the director in terms of (1) what workers desire of a person in this role, and (2) what qualifications lead to effective centers. Typically, the real-world factors at work in structuring action and the actors have been ignored (Gronn & Ribbins 1996). Yet, when so little is known about these contextual factors that shape leading, training efforts have sprung forth to develop and refine directors' leadership qualifications, and, therein, perpetuate traditional thinking about leading.

To develop a more complete understanding of leadership in the early childhood arena, therefore, requires an approach that examines the integration of person and context (see Butterworth 1993, Gronn & Ribbins 1996, Rogoff 1982). The conceptual challenge for researchers is to look at leadership from inside and outside of individuals--to consider all persons' capacity to lead and the conditions that induce leading. Thus, we suggest a contextual approach to future research on leadership in early childhood.

Through our analysis of child care personnel's activities, we noted two salient forces operating in their daily routines: lack of role differentiation and cross-functionality of role. Generally, the activities seemed to characterize a traditional director role and a teaching/caring role, with leadership capacity limited to a rather narrow band of activities in relation to them. This pattern was evidenced in the high degree of similarity between

teacher and teaching assistant activity and high levels of administrative work carried out by the directors. Further, curriculum development and professional work outside the center appeared to be rare.

We also noted that the directors, teachers, and teaching assistants showed cross-functionality in their roles, suggesting a non-hierarchical structure to their work. Teachers and directors engaged in very similar activities, although the extent to which they did so varied. Teachers and teaching assistants tended to share equally in caring for children's basic needs and in providing educational activities.

Although lack of role differentiation may constrain leadership potential, the element of cross-functionality may offer promise to the capacity for leading. Without the constraints of hierarchical job structures, child care personnel may be afforded multiple opportunities to discover, learn, and practice their leader potential in the setting. Responsibilities, however, need to be well-defined to ensure purposeful activity, expanded to include more opportunities to lead, and legitimated so that task-sharing can maximize wholesome center operations and provide optimal services for families and children.

Our observations emerge from a preliminary survey of activity at child care and education settings. Still, they warrant further investigation given the exploratory landscape of leadership inquiry in early education. As a fair amount of educational research demonstrates, leading exerts a powerful influence on the quality of education. As states revise standards to provide quality care and education for children, the preparation of leaders becomes an important aspect of these reforms. To more fully understand what preparation is needed, it is important to begin establishing a research base that examines the relationship between context and leadership potential. Grounded in a deeper understanding of this concept, we can then more clearly and fully articulate the impact of leadership on quality to early childhood personnel, parents, policy makers, and the public.

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Appendix

Reference List for Fig. 1: Leadership in early childhood knowledge base: Sources of evidence, genre, and key concepts

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