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Leading site-based knowledge development; a mission impossible? Insights from a study in Norway

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ABSTRACT

This chapter considers formal teacher leaders at the department level in early childhood settings and how leading knowledge development in everyday practice are enabled or constrained by social and educational conditions. Using the theory of practice architectures as a lens is productive for exploring how discourses, social relations and working conditions shapes leading site-based knowledge development. The value of this idea is illustrated by a qualitative shadowing study on leadership in early childhood settings in Norway. The findings demonstrate that professional knowledge, situated practice, structural conditions and staff composition are practice architectures that enable and constrain practices of leading site-based knowledge development in different ways. Moreover, the study reveals that certain conditions have to be in place to realise a knowledge-oriented leadership and develop early childhood settings as a learning organisation.

Keywords: leadership, knowledge development, practice architectures, shadowing.

ABSTRAKT

Dette kapitlet handler om pedagogiske ledere på avdeling i barnehagen og hvordan det å lede kunnskapsutvikling i daglig arbeid muliggjøres eller hindres av sosiale forhold og barnehagens rammefaktorer. Teorien om praksisarkitekturer er fruktbar for å utforske hvordan diskurser, sosiale relasjoner og arbeidsforhold former ledelse av kunnskapsutvikling. Studiet er et kvalitativt skyggestudie på ledelse i barnehagen i Norge. Funnene viser at faglig kunnskap, situert praksis, strukturelle forhold og sammensetningen av personalgruppen er praksisarkitekturer som muliggjør og hindrer ledelse av kunnskapsutvikling på ulike måter. Videre avslører studiet at

bestemte forhold må være tilstede for å realisere en kunnskapsorientert ledelse og for å utvikle barnehagen som en lærende organisasjon.

ABSTRAKTI

Tämä luku tarkastelee virallisia opettajajohtajia varhaiskasvatuksen instituutiossa ja kuinka osaamisen johtaminen arkisissa toiminnoissa on mahdollistettu tai rakennettu sosiaalisten ja kasvatuksellisten tilanteiden kautta. Käyttämällä näkökulmana käytännön teoriaa tarkastellaan sitä, miten diskurssit, sosiaaliset suhteet ja työolosuhteet muokkaavat osaamisen johtamista. Tätä ideaa havainnollistetaan laadullisella varjostukseen pohjautuvalla tutkimuksella, joka käsittelee johtajuutta norjalaisissa päiväkodeissa. Tulosten mukaan ammatillinen osaaminen, käytänteet, rakenteelliset olosuhteet ja henkilöstörakenteet ovat käytännön arkkitehtuuria, jotka mahdollistavat ja rakentavat osaamisen kehittymistä monilla tavoin. Sen lisäksi tutkimuksessa todetaan, että tiettyjen olosuhteiden täytyy olla kohdallaan, että osaamisen johtaminen ja kehittyminen realisoisivat päiväkodin oppivaksi organisaatioksi.

Keywords: johtajuus, osaamisen johtaminen, käytännön arkkitehtuuri, varjostus.



INTRODUCTION

Research in early childhood settings shows that leading knowledge development take place in everyday work and in communities of practice (Hognestad & Bøe, 2014; Vannebo & Gotvassli, 2014). In a shared and collaborative way of working, which characterises early childhood settings at the department level, participating in social relationships and communities of practice is essential for the process of knowledge development (Wenger, 1998). Being concurrently a teacher and a leader, the formal teacher leader¹ in early childhood centres has a key responsibility in developing staff' knowledge in line with the concept of a learning organisation (MER, 2011). This chapter focuses on how social conditions enable and constrain the formal teacher leader's practices leading knowledge development among staff in a community of practice. In accordance with Kemmis et al. (2014), these everyday practices are embedded in practice architectures. Theorising practices of leading knowledge development in the form of practice architectures, this chapter illuminates the social and educational conditions that enable and constrain the formal teacher leader's leadership activities. The following extract presents a formal teacher leader's story to illustrate how she experiences leading knowledge development in everyday work:

1 In Norwegian early childhood settings formal teacher leaders are early childhood teachers with a bachelor degree who have positions as department leaders. This means that they have multiple responsibilities for teaching and leading both staff and children (MER 2011).

When I think about the assistant, I think the learning potential is huge in here and now situations. I believe, if I am able to guide and support them directly in a here and now situation and having a conversation together, I think they may learn in a better way. Because of time and structural frames in everyday work, it is limited time to guide and support the assistants in formal settings, so I have to take advantage of emergent situations.

As the above case illustrates, the formal teacher leader recognises that situated practice is important for common reflections about what is going on, and that leading knowledge development emerges within a community of practice.

Joseph Dunne's statement, that there is an even stronger sense in which practices construct the practitioner than the practitioner constructs practices (Dunne, 2005, p. 382), points to the research question of how social conditions shape the formal teacher leader's leadership practices of site-based knowledge development in communities of practice. In this chapter the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) is used as a lens to explore how discourses, social relations and working conditions shape knowledge development as leadership practices.

THE THEORY OF PRACTICE ARCHITECTURES

Leadership studies in early childhood settings have explored leadership as a contextual phenomenon (Heikka, 2014; Nivala & Hujala, 2002) that defines its discourse and culture. The contextual leadership model (Nivala, 2002) provides a useful framework for understanding leadership within early childhood settings, and it examines the interaction between micro and macro contexts (Heikka, 2014; Nivala & Hujala, 2002). However, a more comprehensive theoretical framework is needed to gain a better understanding of leading knowledge development in communities of practice.

As implied earlier, practices of leading should not be regarded as merely individual actions but framed by social and educational conditions embedded in the practice architectures, that is, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements (Kemmis et al., 2014). These three arrangements capture languages and discourses used in and about a specific practice, activities undertaken in the course of the practice, and the relationships between people and nonhuman objects that occur in the practice (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32). For example, in early childhood settings, this process entails knowledge about pedagogy and leadership, the physical environment as time and space, working conditions, and how the leader and the staff deal with one another in collaborative and interdependent relationships. Within

this approach, practices of leading knowledge development are enabled or constrained by these certain practice architectures. The theoretical framework of practice architectures contributes to discovering how leading knowledge development is already structured by people's ways of thinking and perceiving the world (sayings), performing tasks and working conditions (doings) and relating to others (relatings) (Kemmis & Smith, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014).

Both the national curriculum and the literature in the field emphasises staff' knowledge development and learning as important in creating learning organisations. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in formal teacher leaders taking on a position as change agents who are leading professional development "from within" to achieve quality improvement (Clark & Murray, 2012; Hognestad & Bøe, 2014; Hujala, Waniganayake & Rodd, 2013; Lazzari, 2012; Osgood, 2008; Vannebo & Gotvassli, 2014). Although the early childhood field recognises the importance of leaders as change agents, the conceptualisation of agency has also been problematised because of its limited understanding of the relationship between personal agency and the external context (Simpson, 2010). When leadership agency is embedded in everyday practice in terms of leading knowledge development, the practice architectures are useful to investigate what kind of conditions leadership agency and actions have in a particular community of practice.

Researchers have positioned practice architectures in qualitative research and explicitly included the social and educational conditions beyond the individual actor (Aspfors, 2012; Edwards-Groves & Rönnerman, 2012; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Wilkinson, Olin, Lund, Ahlberg & Nyvaller, 2010). Wilkinson et al. (2010) have investigated the context of leadership in schools and universities in Australia, Norway and Sweden using the theory of practice architectures as a lens. The study reveals how practice architectures as a concept illuminate leadership practice and teacher leaders influence on the educational conditions for professional development and change. Further, Kemmis et al. (2014) reveals how changing practice architectures of leading enable staff meetings in schools to be learning arenas. In order to better understand leadership work, the theory of practice architectures has been applied.

METHOD AND BACKGROUND

The research design in this research used the qualitative shadowing method as a means of understanding practices (Hognestad & Bøe forthcoming, 2016). Shadowing can be explained as "a research technique which involves

a researcher closely following a member of an organisation over a period of time” (McDonald, 2005, p. 456). Qualitative shadowing is a method situated in localised practice, which means that the researcher, who comes very close to the practitioner, gains access to detailed and rich data on knowledge development, hence sayings, doings and relatings (Hognestad & Bøe forthcoming, 2016). Investigator triangulations and video observations were conducted to ensure quality and collect the necessary data. Actions of knowledge development between the formal teacher leader and her staff were video recorded in informal settings on the department level, extended with detailed field notes and contextual interviews. Also, six separate stimulated recall interviews were conducted in which the positional leaders watched selected video situations and commented on what had happened. The stimulated recall interview is a productive method when the researcher is interested in obtaining the practitioners’ comments on their work practices (Dempsey, 2010; Haglund, 2003). The video recordings required each participant to confront her actions as they actually happened, and provided an opportunity to reflect on them with the researchers. These were not idealised actions that the practitioner might or should take or those that she wrongly remembered as having performed. The formal teacher leader would therefore be in a position to remember her sayings, doings and relatings, then retrace her thoughts as they unfolded in real time (Dempsey, 2010).

While giving voice to the practitioners, this study seeks to produce insights into social and educational conditions for leading knowledge development. During a fast-paced workday, without warning, situations may emerge that require ethical considerations. Such situations need to be taken into account when shadowing. This issue underpins the importance of *research ethics on the move* (Dewilde, 2013), where the researchers have to adjust to changing circumstances. Moreover, the demand for anonymity and confidentiality of the participants is guaranteed in this study.

RESEARCH SETTING

In the early childhood centres, the formal teacher leaders are not the heads but have the responsibility of teaching and leading one department. This means that they have the pedagogical responsibility for one group of children while assuming the leadership role with their staff, usually two assistants with no formal pedagogical education required. All of the six participants in this study were female early childhood teachers with a bachelor’s degree, at least five years of experience as formal teacher leaders and between the ages of 35 and 60.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analyses were based on data from one activity category, *leading knowledge development*, one of 19 categories from a leadership study in early childhood (Bøe & Hognestad forthcoming, 2016). This category was developed from the leadership taxonomy, *purpose of verbal contact* (Mintzberg, 1973; Vie, 2009). The data analyses involved watching and analysing the video recordings of a team, as well as reading the stimulated recall interview transcripts and observational field notes several times. The data were organised in relation to the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014). The analytical table of practice architectures and the structure of this table as a set of topics was systematically used to consider what knowledge development (as leading practices) comprises in terms of its sayings, doings and relatings (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 224). Together, the selected data constitute the unit of analysis discussed through the lens of practice architectures.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The section presents the findings by locating the practice architectures of the leading of knowledge development organised under three main themes.

1) Professional knowledge as a condition for leading knowledge development

The data show that languages and discourses on leading knowledge development are strongly connected to those on teaching in that they support the leader's language on leadership. Accordingly, leading knowledge development builds on intertwined practices of teaching and leading, in which the situated character of leadership work is described.

In the stimulated recall interviews, the participants comment on their leadership role in knowledge development. They highlight core concepts within early childhood discourses on learning and care. *Care, learning, safety* and *social competence* are all terms from pedagogical theories learned in their formal training that they use in their daily work. They emphasise that they use their professional knowledge about children and pedagogy when they lead knowledge development among their assistants. To create a supportive learning environment, they find it most appropriate to reinforce the positive aspects of their assistants' work performance, as they are concerned about building the assistants' strengths:

This is why I am aware of creating a safe environment. I believe that this is the same for both children and adults. When supporting a child, it is essential to focus on the positive things, rather than the negative. Thus, what I have learned from my early childhood teacher education, focusing on the strengths of a child, is what underlines my practices of knowledge development.

When the leaders describe the connection between leadership and knowledge development, these intertwined practices are also related to being a role model. In their leading of knowledge development among staff, they are aware of their positions as role models and they argue that this is a significant way of leading learning. Although they associate being a role model with their leadership position, this is not related to leadership theories; rather, it is explained in relation to how children learn:

You are a model for better or [for] worse. You are judged for what you do and do not do. Then I recall again what I have learned about children's development and interaction because I use my professional knowledge of children in my staff leadership especially that children learn from role models for better or [for] worse. So I am pretty humble about this part of my leadership role.

When children learn through participation and social interactions, they identify with significant others who become role models for knowledge and learning. As teachers, they conceptualise the concept of a role model to explain knowledge development among staff and how knowledge development results from social interactions in communities of practice where the assistants observe their actions as teachers. The term 'role model' is part of their everyday conversations about knowledge development, and they use it to highlight their leadership position and how to be a good example for their assistants to emulate.

2) Working conditions for leading knowledge development

In the data all actions of knowledge development are brief moments and take place anywhere inside and outside the early childhood centre intertwined with pedagogical practices situated at a particular time and place. When pedagogical work occurs in different locations and is distributed among the staff, the formal teacher leaders and their assistant(s) are able to occasionally meet for brief moments, sharing thoughts and talking about practice. Among others, the data shows that such communicative spaces occur spontaneously during the day when the formal teacher leaders and their assistants work together and participate with a group of children. At other times, knowledge development occurs in transition to a new activity, or when the assistants

work independently and need support from the formal teacher leader. One participant emphasises that communicative spaces there and how this is then fruitful when leading knowledge development:

I think this is a very good way of working, when you have time to sit like this and talk about practice there and then instead of bringing it up fourteen days later in a formal meeting. When the workday become too hectic I really miss the time to just sit together and observe.

In a stimulated recall interview one participant explains how she must lead knowledge development there and then:

When I faced this situation, I become very conscious about the opportunity I had to guide the assistant there and then. I believe that it is in such moments of everyday work that knowledge development has the greatest potential. When I lead knowledge development among staff members, I build on my own knowledge of teaching children, and I express an awareness of our roles and responsibilities as professionals to arrange for fruitful learning conditions and interactions for the children, placing the focus on what is the best thing to do under the circumstances.

Knowledge development that happens in informal settings is what the participants consider the most productive way to support and guide the staff' learning and best practice. They argue that the potential for learning has best outcomes when guidance is directed to here and now situations. While claiming that knowledge development is most effective when related directly to practice, they still find that the working conditions make it difficult to create communicative spaces where individual actions and reflections are set in a broader context:

We have to put the pressure on here-and-now situations and everyday situations. To be able to guide there and then is perhaps the most effective way because then we can relate it to practice. What is a pity, I think, is that unlike in a formal meeting, it is difficult to pull the thoughts further and follow up on the assistants' reflections. It is a danger that the reflections can be brief.

In terms of the structural conditions of form of time and extra staff resources, the participants find it difficult to engage in collective reflections there and then. With the increasing demand on formal teacher leaders to manage effectively and achieve high-quality performance, the participants point to the difficulty in having sufficient time to engage in professional reflections together with their assistants:

In here and now situations there is a huge learning potential. And this is something we have tried to argue to the municipality leadership level. When structural frames are constrained and the working days become much more hectic, then it may be just this kind of situations that become worse. Although this is very important regarding knowledge development, it is easy to become a bit stressed out because you have to consider if you have enough time to engage in the situation.

They are afraid that an effective leadership style will change the character of knowledge development from collective reflections on practice to instructions on how to carry out pedagogical work. With scarce resources available and the increasing pressure for multitasking, the participants worry about fewer opportunities to engage in site-based knowledge development, as building practices/praxis that may become one time experiences.

3) Staff composition as a condition for leading knowledge development

The data show that the formal teacher leader steps forward to take responsibility for leading knowledge development in a working community where the entire staff is involved in leading pedagogical work. Being aware of the huge differences in staff' competencies, they become agents who facilitate and monitor knowledge development to create a fruitful, collaborative pedagogical leadership.

Working concurrently as teachers and leaders challenges and changes the leaders' relationships with their assistants in two ways. First, they become the experts who must support and develop the assistants' competence, given the latter's lack of professional knowledge. In this case, the leaders function as teachers for their assistants' learning and professional work:

The staff members have very different competencies, as you have someone who has worked for many years and someone who has just started working in early childhood centres. Then you simply have to teach the staff.

The relationship changes from a shared and democratic pedagogical leadership to hierarchical leadership when the participants step forward to teach the staff and support their learning. In situated practice, they find opportunity to use their positions as qualified teachers and leaders to influence the assistants' work performance. To do so, they emphasise their responsibility as professionals to guide and give directions for desired practices.

Second, the relationship changes from the expert-to-assistant type to shared leadership, where the leader becomes supportive and caring and demonstrates her similarity with the assistants by avoiding instructions on what and how to do:

...You have some staff [members] who are reluctant to [learn] pedagogical theories, and that is why there is a need to lead them in certain ways. In order to change their way of thinking, you must be a bit smooth and sensitive, and you can't be a leader who just tells them what to do and asks them to do the work like you do. To find the right moment, it requires a lot of thought – you have to find time, and there is a lot of deliberations; is this the right time or not, in addition to all the other work.

Constantly changing between a democratic and hierarchical leadership style requires the leader to be 'smooth and sensitive'. Leaders must constantly deliberate how to manage the staff in a way that develops the latter's professional knowledge. They must also be prepared to shift moods and styles quickly and frequently to meet the concrete demands of practical situations:

In what way we, as leaders, encounter situations like this is crucial to building a learning relationship with an assistant. My aim is to create a trusting and caring relationship with the assistants because I know this is crucial for quality improvement.

The leaders highlight care and consideration as prerequisites for fostering knowledge development. For knowledge development to be dynamic and contribute to professional development and quality improvement, it is important for the participants to create a trusting and caring relationship in the communities of practice.

The respondents emphasise that there is a need to be careful and conscious about what and how to communicate to whom. In this case, the formal teacher leaders use everyday language to explain professional work in a way that the assistants can understand.

Being aware of differences in staff members' levels of competence and how differences in competence level challenge the leading knowledge development, the participants find it challenging to use their professional language and theories when communicating with their assistants:

The language must be understandable and not just words that go over their heads. It has to be understandable, so I have to make a professional understandable language.

Then staff feel much more competent. This is something that I get feedback on, that they learn something.

Another participant put it this way:

Maybe we should use more pedagogical concepts and expressions. However, we cannot do that because then some of the assistants drop out along the way.

This statement expresses why the teacher leaders feel that they must use everyday language. A shared and democratic leadership presupposes trusting and supporting relationships, so the use of everyday language is a way of building democratic relationships among staff, at the same time, maintaining a position as a participative member of the learning community.

DISCUSSION

In the following discussion, we discuss how leading knowledge development is enabled or constrained by the social conditions and practice architectures that emerge from the findings of this study. In Norway, learning at the organisational level, is emphasised in the national curriculum. Through this plan, the concept of a learning organisation is introduced.

As an important educational institution in society early childhood institutions must be in a process of change and development. Early childhood centres should be a learning organisation prepared to meet new demands and challenges. Quality development in early childhood institutions involves continuous development of staff. (MER, 2011, p. 22)

It is stated that, to become a learning organisation, a knowledge-oriented leadership is highlighted which involves knowledge about the characteristics of early childhood institutions and what it means to lead knowledge development in a learning organisation (MER, 2013b, pp. 62, 65). This chapter examines the conditions for leading knowledge development in everyday work at the level of formal teacher leaders at department level.

Acknowledging that learning takes place in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the findings show that the formal teacher leaders use their professional knowledge about teaching children within social cultural theories on learning. When the formal teacher leaders lead knowledge development, they convert their knowledge about teaching children to the context of leading knowledge development among staff. The early childhood leadership literature indicates a variety of theoretical applications on staff leadership arising from other disciplines. A problem with adoption of theoretical applications is that they are seldom useful because of the many unanticipated tasks that usually occur in everyday contexts (Tengblad, 2012). This could be one reason why they do not relate their leadership practices to external leadership theories. Rather, they take advantage of their intertwined practices of teaching and leading and use their professional knowledge as a base, which enables site-based knowledge development in everyday practice. Emphasising care, support and social relationships as important become a way

of strengthening their communities of practice. Following up on the formal teacher leader's responsibility as a community leader, professional knowledge appears to be a link between the core values of teaching and the communities of practice that they lead because it provides for the conditions for a positive learning environment. If the formal teacher leaders did not take advantage of their professional knowledge, this could constrain possibilities to lead site-based knowledge development and thus develop a community of practice.

Building democratic relationships among staff and at the same time, maintaining a position as an equal member of the community, the participants in this study have emphasised how the use of everyday language and building social relationships are of huge importance in strengthening a learning community. As a formal teacher leader, s/he must act as a legitimate member of their communities through their presence (for example, sharing first-hand experiences with their staff). In this way, they are able to share their individual knowledge and thus guide knowledge development from within. Sharing their knowledge with staff, the formal teacher leaders adapt their professional language to match their assistants' everyday language. This could weaken the formal leaders' professionalism (Eik, 2014). Using everyday language linked to first-hand experiences could be insufficient to challenge the cultural knowledge in a community of practice. Nonetheless, communities of practice presuppose trusting and supporting relationships, so the use of everyday language could be understood as the formal teacher leader's way of building a practice community.

Research studies have reported that early childhood teachers generally have not perceived themselves as leaders (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 2013) and teachers tend to be reluctant to engage in discussion about power and authority because they have found it irrelevant when working with children (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). These aspects of identity seem to have favoured pedagogical leadership, which could be another reason why discourses on pedagogical theories influence practices of leading knowledge development as the discourses with which they are familiar. Understandings about staff leadership are also underpinned by the limited access to leadership literature at the level of teacher leaders, which takes into account the specific pedagogical context of the field (Hard, 2005; Ødegård, 2011). However, in a Norwegian context, research has shown changes in the role of formal teacher leaders in that they appear as hierarchical leaders who are conscious about their staff leadership responsibility (Børhaug & Lotsberg, 2014).

As core members in communities of practice the teacher leaders highlight themselves act as role models. How they act is an important source of

knowledge. The leaders use their influence in their community of practice as a participant to guide and support assistants' knowledge development. In this case, supporting and guiding activities may be looked upon to be trivial because they often escape notice. In reality, the leadership responsibility involved makes these supporting and guiding activities crucial. Many unnoticed activity may in fact be categorised as leadership because of their intended outcome. According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) trivial acts manifests the leaders' activities as leadership and not reduced to petty acts. The concept of 'role model' is a part of their everyday professional language.

Although they appreciate the concept of being a role model to explain how children learn, it is clear that being a role model is an embodied leadership style, which is present through their presence. Such actions are far from petty. Goffman's (1971) concept of metaphors for front stage and backstage social interactions are relevant describing the concept of being a role model in a community of practices. When a leader acts as a role model in front of an 'audience', one's actions happen front stage, subjecting one's performance to interpretation. This interpretive process evolves from situated work, which the formal teacher leader orchestrates by leading. Stepping forward as a role model is understood as more than teaching technically how to do pedagogical work. Here, the concept of imitation is challenged because the purpose of being a role model transcends the assistants' acts of observing and copying a teacher leader's behaviour. Rather, it is an interpretive activity that encourages the assistants to confront the situation and be challenged by the leader's practical knowledge. In this case, the formal teacher leader is a role model for practical knowledge where knowledge development is learning from others' and one's own experiences in pedagogical work (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Being a role model is more than just being physically present with others, it also includes an authenticity that emphasises the leader's practical knowledge as a special form of attention, sensitivity and awareness to others and includes a responsibility for taking purposeful action (Duignan, 2008; Marsh, Waniganayake & De Nobile, 2013).

The findings indicate that the leading of knowledge development has great potential for learning when it is linked to the here and now situations. According to Schön (1983), reflection-in-action is something practitioners do, but in busy early childhood centres, both leaders and assistants rarely have this opportunity to reflect on their reflections-in-action. As a consequence, one might lose the opportunity of collective reflections because the staff' judgement and deliberations along the way are rarely talked about as

they happen. When the formal teacher leaders find time to reflect in action together with the assistants, they emphasise site-based knowledge development as an effective way of working.

Research has questioned the limited division of labour at the department level in early childhood settings in Norway (Steinnes & Haug, 2013) and whether a shared and democratic working community could weaken the formal teacher leaders' professional knowledge and thus their positions as leaders and core members of the practice community. However, as the findings in this research illustrate, a shared and democratic leadership appears to be a precondition for site-based knowledge development. As participative leaders in a community, the leaders look upon themselves as the best informed members at the department.

As this study demonstrates, a weak division of labour sets the conditions for both non-hierarchical and hierarchical practices of leading knowledge development. However, the discourse on similarity could constrain productive conditions for stepping forward as a knowledgeable and skilful leader who questions established practices. A shared pedagogical leadership poses the danger of leaders demonstrating similarities with the staff rather than the differences evident in their positional leadership role (Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013). Tendencies to 'work' down to the levels of their assistants rather than raising the standards through acknowledgement of different roles, experiences and expertise could make it difficult to assume leadership. When the structural conditions such as staff composition, inadequate time resources and increasing numbers of children constrain teacher leaders in creating a learning arena in a non-hierarchical setting, they lose the opportunity to engage in collective, interpretive activities. Despite this drawback, working interdependently highlights the need for formal teacher leaders to find ways of guiding and supporting their assistants' work.

Changes in the division of labour regarding pedagogical and practical tasks could create a stronger hierarchical relationship between pedagogical leaders and assistants and highlight the leadership role and responsibility of the leaders in a community of practice. However, a division of labour could also prevent a shared pedagogical leadership that opens up spaces for leading knowledge development by sharing first hand experiences and enables joint engagement in interpretive activities. Instead, it is possible that knowledge development becomes detached from the situated practice and reduced to formal meetings.

There are increasing demands for leaders to be accountable for building a learning organisation. Although the data show that the participants take this

responsibility seriously, they highlight how the economic conditions become a threat to being knowledge-oriented leaders. They think that leading knowledge development is only possible as brief, on-the-spot occurrences. Although they argue that such happenings are fruitful in relation to the staff's professional development, the participants find it difficult to find time to follow up on the staff and organise knowledge development systematically, hence develop a collective praxis. When the working conditions only support such brief incidents, they may be valuable for the individual but limit the possibilities to develop a competency system that acknowledges collective reflections (EuCoRe, 2011; Frogh, Bøe & Hognestad, 2013).

When the structural conditions do not support leading praxis, a possible consequence could be that leading knowledge development becomes informed and replaced by instrumental values and technical actions. If knowledge development is confined to instructions on how to perform best practice and omits the purpose of education (Biesta, 2009), the consequences could be that such technical actions could lower the quality standards when developing a shared understanding of core tasks of early childhood settings. In this case, lowering the requirements becomes a poor substitute in relation to the purpose of promoting education in early childhood settings.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research question examined in this study focused on how social conditions shape the formal teacher leaders' leadership practices of site-based knowledge development in communities of practice. It explored how practices of leading knowledge development are enabled and constrained by the practice architectures of everyday work in early childhood settings in Norway. The study reveals how the practice architectures of professional knowledge, working conditions and staff composition shape actions of leading site-based knowledge development. Moreover, this study reveals how intertwined practices of teaching and leading are practice architectures that shape actions of leading site-based knowledge development. When the formal teacher leaders take advantage of their professional knowledge by acting as role models, using everyday language, emphasising care and trusting relationships and finally build on their leadership practices on pedagogical theories, they enable knowledge to be developed from within the communities of practice. Further, improving knowledge development from within centres offers valuable conceptual understanding about leading knowledge development and helps identify areas that current leadership practices do not pay sufficient attention to.

Working concurrently as a teacher and a leader participating in a community of practice can create fruitful conditions for the teacher leaders to balance control, authority and power with adequate influence, trust, support and participation. In this case, being present and sharing first-hand experiences, enables knowledge development to emerge from everyday work as hybrid leadership practices (Hognestad & Bøe, 2014). It is recommended that the responsibility for leading knowledge development should lie with the early childhood centre owners and at the head leaders' level to prevent leading pedagogical work and staff development at the department level from becoming two competing roles (Eik, 2014, p. 372). Proposing that pedagogical leaders drop the responsibility for leading knowledge development among the staff may contribute to early childhood teachers' reluctance to enact leadership (Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013). Suggesting that someone else possesses the competence to lead knowledge development may suggest to teacher leaders that reluctance to step up as a leader is a failure at a personal level, rather than a result of other contributing factors.

In contrast to the owners and head leaders of the early childhood centres, the formal teacher leaders lead the staff in direct ways, including face-to-face interactions in which knowledge development contributes to building pedagogical practice/praxis. However, indirect ways of leading (by owners, head leaders and early childhood authorities of the municipalities) such as providing adequate tools, support and guidance resources and structures on the department level can change the architectures and thereby strengthen the conditions for leading site-based knowledge development.

Insufficient resources, including lack of time, limited staff, qualification requirements for assistants and the increasing pressure on leading professional development from within, constrain teacher leaders' ability to lead knowledge development by lowering the requirements. As a consequence, following up on situated reflections and taking thoughts further can become an almost impossible mission. When the Norwegian government documents (MER, 2010, 2011, 2013a) hold teacher leaders accountable for being knowledge-oriented leaders, they may face a double bind because they could easily be blamed for a failure of agency at the personal level when the issues may depend on structural and systemic conditions (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012). To prevent such a failure, it is necessary to consider conditions for leading site-based knowledge development so that the formal teacher leaders are given reasonable terms to fulfil their mission of leading knowledge development.



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