



Brief

Education should matter – addressing preschool teachers' leadership

Lovisa Skånfors* & Kristin Ungerberg

Karlstad UNiversity, Sweden

*Contact corresponding author: Lovisa Skånfors, e-mail: lovisa.skansfors@kau.se

The aim of the study is to contribute knowledge about views on responsibility and collegial leadership among staff in early childhood education and care (ECEC), with focus on preschool teachers. According to the Swedish national curriculum preschool teachers have gained a partly new mission separated from the work team's joint mission, pointing out that preschool teachers are to lead the work team's joint work. This change in role represents a fairly significant change as Swedish preschools have a long tradition of sharing assignments on an equal basis within the work team.

Previous research shows that policies regarding the preschool teachers' enhanced responsibility are clear. However it also shows that there is an uncertainty when it comes to how this responsibility is to be carried out in the everyday practice where preschool teachers and care takers work together. There is a need for more research addressing preschool teachers' perspectives on their collegial leadership in practice.

Four focus group interviews, holding 18 preschool teachers, have been carried out. Each focus group contained 3-6 preschool teachers, some of which worked in the same preschool. In the analysis positioning theory as described by Harré & Langenhove and Davies & Harré was used, pointing out how people in interaction always position themselves in different ways, by e.g. reflexive and interactive positioning.

The results show how the preschool teachers' views change from a collective and consensus oriented view on leadership where experience is crucial, to an understanding of leadership as something that should be based on academic education. The results also

show the presence of a culture of silence regarding different competences within the work team. In conclusion, staff in ECEC need formal support and mandate delegated by the principal as well as tools and strategies in order to exercise leadership in practice.

Keywords: *preschool teachers' leadership; clarified responsibility; preschool teacher's profession; work teams; positioning theory*