



## Brief

# ***Teacher students comes in with something new – about collaboration between early childhood education and the university***

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Cooperation between early childhood education and care and the university to enable practicum for student teachers can be realized through different models of cooperation and needs a mutual approach to succeed (Ukkonen-Mikkola & Turtiainen, 2016). When early childhood education and care and universities develop collaborations to offer practicum to student teachers, the leaders of the early childhood education activities (later the leaders) are in a key position. Their position contributes to establishing a collaboration between the university and early childhood education centres, where student teachers do their practicum. In order to understand models of collaboration between school and university, theories of the third space have been developed internationally to examine the meeting between the university and practicum which should serve as a meeting place for collaboration between teacher educators, supervisors and student teachers (Daza et al., 2021; Pajchel et al., 2021; Zeichner, 2010).

The purpose of this article is to increase understanding regarding cooperation between early childhood education and care (ECEC) and the university within the third space. The question is based on how leaders in ECEC describe the collaboration regarding student teacher practicum with the university.

The focus is on student teachers' practicum, which is completed through different models of collaboration at ECEC centers. An inductive approach permeates the study. The study's data consists of 21 semi-structured interviews with leaders in ECEC. The interviews have been analyzed through thematic analysis and the phenomenon has then related to

the theory of the third space. The theory highlights that new knowledge arises when student teachers are welcomed into the ECEC centers during their practicum.

The results show two main themes: cooperation with universities and student teachers' entry into ECEC centres. The leaders want to connect their ECEC centres to the university's network for practicum and see collaboration as valuable for an exchange of knowledge. Through student teachers, opportunities are offered to bring in new pedagogical methods and strengthen the units pedagogically. In a collaboration within the third space, universities have a central role to create meeting places.

**Keywords:** *collaboration; early childhood education and care; student teachers; third space*