



## Brief

# Shadowing as an Exploring Method: Research Between Closeness and Distance in a Diverse Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Context

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The focus of this article is how the researcher's role oscillates between closeness and distance when using shadowing as an exploring method. The article is part of a doctoral project and is based on a pilot study in which I tried out shadowing as an exploring method, in research on leadership in a diverse ECEC context. The purpose of the doctoral project is to explore diversity leadership at group level in a ECEC context. The purpose of this article is to explore dilemmas in closeness and distance, and how these can be handled.

Shadowing can be described as an observation on the move, where the researcher follows the person being shadowed in the organization. Through gaze, body, and movement the researcher observes what the actor does in interaction with colleagues and the environment. In this way, the method can give researchers an opportunity to produce detailed material, and new knowledge, about leadership in everyday practice. But it is also a method which, due to its mobility, means that ethical dilemmas will arise along the way (Hognestad & Bøe, 2016, p. 6; Nissen et al., 2021). As a researcher and ECEC teacher, I am both close to and distant from the ECEC context. When diversity leadership is to be explored in ECEC, a conscious attitude to similarities and differences, one's own preconceptions and blind spots is required. Through theories about diversity competence, closeness and distance, intersectionality, and shadowing as a method, I explore how the researcher can adopt a sensitizing gaze as a basic attitude in shadowing.

**Keywords:** *researcher role; shadowing; diversity competence; intersectionality; pedagogical leadership*