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Education and Care

by

Nancy Thomas

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Exploring Pedagogical Leadership in Alberta's Early Childhood Education and Care

by

Nancy Lynne Thomas

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) focuses on young children's early learning and well-being, as mighty learners and citizens. Making curriculum decisions that reflect guiding principles that view children as active, co-constructors of knowledge is challenging work. This way of working requires integrating theoretical and practice-based knowledge in pedagogical processes to create meaningful learning opportunities that reflect children's everyday experiences and encourages children's theory building. Pedagogical leaders play a vital role in the pedagogical process by creating transformative shifts in EC practice and curriculum decision making. Now seems to be the moment when views of ECEC leadership are broadening to include a focus on leading practice and learning, and inspires a vision that situates pedagogy as the core of leadership. This research examined the not yet well-defined and sometimes misunderstood role of the pedagogical leader in ECEC in Alberta by exploring participants' perspectives on leading practice within ECEC teams.

Wenger's Social Learning Theory (1998) helps to situate pedagogy and leadership, and their emerging connectedness within the context of the ECEC. Building on Wenger's notion of a community of practice described as an assembly of people with a common pursuit to interact to improve learning (Wenger, 1998), highlights the collaborative nature of shared meaning making. Wenger's (1998)

notions of communities of practice was an apt lens to explore the dynamics of pedagogical leadership within ECEC centers.

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews, a focus group dialogue, and a follow-up questionnaire to explore how pedagogical leaders described the pedagogical practices used to support and engage EC educators in curriculum decision making.

Findings illustrated how formal leadership often began with practice experience and recognition of leadership potential, as participants drew parallels between the pedagogical process used with children to the process used while supporting educator in curriculum meaning making. Findings also illustrated the various conceptions of leaderships, levels of formal leadership that emerge within organizations and the pedagogical enactments that leaders use. Participants detailed the need for formal and informal learning opportunities to further animate their work. The implications for practice focus on creating formalize pathways to leadership; expanding local practice circles for pedagogical leaders to collaborate with one another, and professional learning opportunities focused on pedagogy and leadership specific to ECEC contents.

Acknowledgements

It took a village…. My husband, Dave and my daughter, Greta, were by my side throughout these three years and had to "make-do, without Mom." And they mostly did! My parents, Lloyd and Jane Thomas have offered constant encouragement to continue moving forward in my life. Their unwavering support made these three years possible, especially during the final months. When I needed encouragement as a child, my dad always told me, "Don't get discouraged!" These words were never needed more than during this process, and my dad continues to be a constant supporter and an energetic cheerleader in my life. My mom cared for us all and helped in ways too numerous to mention; but most importantly, she offered help before I could request it, and knew what I needed even before I did. Mom, your love and support are everlasting and have influenced me in all aspects of my life. Thank You so much, Mom and Dad!

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I feel so fortunate to have been a part of a great community of graduate students, Edmonton EdD cohort, and I thank them for their camaraderie, support, and laughter (and snacks). As well, I thank the professors that I had for my doctoral course work. Your thoughtful feedback and encouragement continue to support my learning beyond the scope of the coursework.

I am indebted to the participants in this study, and I hope they realize how much I value their participation. I learned how incredibly resistant leaders in ECEC are required to be, especially in times when resources are scarce, and possibilities seem limited. But it is your commitment to educators, children and families that sets you apart and continues to make your work dynamic, sometimes spontaneous, and ever evolving. As Dr. Sherrill Brown often said when describing the curriculum planning process: "Always, always have a plan, and always, always, always change it!"

Finally, I want to thank all the children I have worked with. After all these years, our shared experiences still shape my journey, as I am continued to be amazed by you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Significance

This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, objectives and research questions, as well as an overview of the study's context, including relevant aspects of leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Canada. As the field of ECEC evolves and begins to receive increasing societal recognition, notions of Early Childhood (EC) curriculum are complexifying. Given these changes, there is an increasing sense of urgency to theorize the roles of ECEC leaders and their enacted pedagogical practices. This chapter includes a discussion of the three following important aspects related to ECEC in Canada: (a) key determiners and predictors of quality in Canadian ECEC; (b) newly defined frameworks for EC curriculum decisions; and (c) emerging ideas around pedagogical leadership in ECEC.

Early Childhood Education and Care Context

The field of ECEC is traditionally defined as providing early learning and care for children from birth to 6 years of age. In the broadest sense, ECEC refers to the theory and practice of caring for and providing learning experiences for young children (Doherty, Friendly, & Beach, 2003). Early childhood education occupies a significant global platform for labour, economic and social policies and assumes an increasingly formative role in the way young children and their families are conceptualized in contemporary society (Cannella, 1997; Friendly & Prentice, 2009; MacNaughton, 2003; Moss, 2013). With increased public awareness regarding the importance of early learning experiences for young children, especially regarding advancements in brain imaging and research, the field of ECEC is no longer regarded

as simply babysitting (Friendly, Grady, Macdonald, & Forer, 2016). As a result of the increasing value placed on high-quality early learning and care in children's lives, ECEC practice is being theorized (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999).

With an increased focus on the professionalization of the EC educator, long-standing theories have been disrupted, and new theories have emerged. Previous theories that focused on developmental norms and homogenous notions of quality are being replaced by evolving theories that have reconceptualized early childhood curriculum, the role of EC educators and formal leaders, and how their work contributes to children's learning and well-being as mighty learners and citizens (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, & Sanchez, 2015; Waniganayake, Rodd, & Gibbs, 2015). At the same time, these theoretical perspectives have become embedded in societal constructs that shape the context of ECEC centers and regulate the educators and educational practices within them.

Statement of the Problem

In Alberta, Canada, ECEC center leaders (i.e. center directors) have primarily focused on managing ECEC centers (Garrow-Oliver, 2017). Much of the management responsibilities focus on physical space management, human resources associated with hiring and attrition, accessing funding for children who require specialized support and managing finances (Atkinson & Biegun, 2018). In a 2013 Muttart Foundation report, most non-profit childcare center directors reported that they did not have the time, experience or confidence to play a role in supporting educators in making practice decisions that support children's learning and care (The Muttart Foundation, 2013). In other words, as they are tasked with so many administrative duties, ECEC

center directors did not feel adequately prepared; pedagogical leadership was not on their *to-do* list. There is literature in the K-12 domain that has articulated similar tensions between conceptions of instructional leadership, school management and issues of gender (Lambert, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There are reasonable comparisons between school leadership in the K-12 system, but there are also important distinctions. What may be an aspect of developing conceptions of leadership in the field of K-12 education may be more acutely experienced in the ECEC field, which is also highly feminized, with nearly the entire workforce composed of women (The Muttart Foundation, 2013). Traditional leadership models that include more masculine leadership traits and a *s*tyle of management does not reflect the emerging pedagogical leadership role, which privileges relationships over efficiencies (Campbell-Barr & Leeson, 2016; Clark & Murray, 2012).

Considering the various individual leadership experiences and the highly contextualized nature of ECEC, notions of pedagogical leadership in ECEC remain without clear parameters. With the creation of the curriculum document, *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette & Thomas, 2014), space is emerging for center leaders to play a more pedagogic role by drawing on theoretical perspectives and pedagogical practices, with the latter rendering the co-creation of inspired early learning experiences and responsive play environments with children and families. Now seems to be the moment when views of ECEC leadership are broadening to include a focus on leading learning. Alberta's curriculum framework, *Flight* (2014), inspires a vision that situates pedagogy as the core of EC leadership. However, an important issue remains, namely that ECEC

leaders are negotiating between two competing spaces: center administration and leadership of curriculum enactments influenced by *Flight (*2014).

The next section explores ECEC contextual features and their influence on EC leadership of pedagogy.

ECEC in Canada

In Canada, all provinces/territories license regulated childcare services according to their provincial legislation and regulations (Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al., 2016). Regulated ECEC services include three contexts: center-based full-day childcare, regulated family childcare, and school-aged child care. According to 2016 figures, there are only enough full and part-time childcare spaces across Canada for 28.9 percent of 0-5-year-old children requiring care (Friendly et al., 2016; OECD, 2017). Therefore, a reasonable implication from these figures is that most childcare is provided through unregulated care arrangements in Canada.

In the last few decades, as early learning and child care (ELCC-a term used across Canada, and consistently used in Alberta, to define childcare services) has become more prevalent, questions have emerged about what constitutes high-quality care, and the factors that influence standards of care (Doherty et al., 2003; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Throughout the research literature, there is considerable discourse around the characteristics, assessments and measurements of quality in ECEC, both globally and nationally (Bloch, Swadener, & Cannella, 2014; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Doherty, Lero, Goelman & Tougas, 2000; Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al. 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Overwhelmingly, the literature shows that Canadian children—but especially children who are considered at risk–positively

benefit from ECEC that is deemed to be of *high quality.* Conversely, children may be negatively affected when placed in poor-quality programs (Doherty et al., 2000; Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al., 2016). Ideas around quality are inextricably linked with society's image of the child, how childhood and early learning are perceived and valued, and how appropriate conditions for young children to learn, grow and develop are determined (UNICEF, 2008).

Key determiners and predictors of quality in Canadian ECEC. Canada has not yet developed a national statement on ELCC quality. Still, there is general agreement that some ECEC program characteristics are vital to achieving, at least, a minimal threshold of quality. According to Doherty et al., (2003), there are predictors that signal notions of quality in Canadian ECEC (Table 1).

Table 1

Basic Elements and Key Predictors of Quality in ECEC (Doherty et al., 2003)

Elements	Predictors
Positive interactions among children and adults are supported within an engaging environment (physical and socio-emotional)	Staff training in EC education Staff-to-child ratios and group size
Inclusive (equality of opportunity regardless of gender, abilities or other differences)	Auspice (non-profit versus for-profit care)
Play-Based (opportunities for play and development of all domains of development)	Educational approach/program philosophy
Health and Safety (including good & nutrition; appropriate opportunities for rest)	Wages/working conditions

The elements and predictors listed above are widely accepted as fundamental in defining quality in care (Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al., 2016). However, in Canada, these quality indicators have not yet become a commonly experienced reality; Canadian ECEC program characteristics lag behind international standards. UNICEF (2008) issued a ranking of 24 Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries against minimum benchmarks. These proposed minimum standards include (but are not limited to) the following indicators (Table 2).

Table 2

OECD Childcare Quality Indicators

Entitlement to paid parental leave of at least one year at 50 percent of salary
A national plan with priority for disadvantaged children
Subsidized and regulated childcare for 25 percent of children under three years
Subsidized and regulated childcare for 80 percent of children aged four years, with a staff-to-children ratio of 1:15 in groups of under 25 children
Accredited training for 80 percent of childcare staff
For children under six years, public funding amounts to one percent of GDP

Note: UNICEF, 2008

Of the 24 (OECD) countries, Canada ranked lowest (tied with Ireland) on measured ELCC benchmarks (UNICEF, 2008). Both Canada and Ireland reached only one benchmark, namely that half of the staff in accredited early-education services have proper post-secondary qualifications. Sweden topped the list and was the only country to meet all ten benchmarks; Iceland met nine, while the United States of America met just three benchmarks. Noting that since this report, there have been

minor improvements, say paid parental leave, nevertheless, Canada has identifiable room for improvements when creating policies that enrich children's lives.

The marketization of ECEC in Canada. Many advocates point to the fact that childcare services in Canada are organized on a market model, resulting in unaffordable parent fees, inequitable availability of childcare spaces, and prevailing low or modest quality (Ferns & Beach, 2015). Without a national childcare agenda, many stakeholders forecast a bleak future for Canada's youngest citizens and the field of early childhood (Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al., 2016; The Muttart Foundation, 2013).

ECEC Curriculum Frameworks

Over the past 15 years, many Canadian provinces have developed early learning curriculum frameworks to help define the organization of ECEC programs and support the provincial goals and philosophies (Friendly et al., 2016). Langford (2010) states that curriculum frameworks are not neutral documents. Instead, they intend to inspire reflective and critical ECEC practice, while challenging and shifting EC educator values, beliefs, and theories about learning. Curriculum frameworks articulate a view where EC educators are more than practitioners who use standardized technical skills advised by experts, and this invites a more complex image of the ECEC professional (Moss, 2006). Imbedded in ECEC curriculum framework documents such as *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* (2014), are the multiple theoretical perspectives that shape the context of ECEC centers and focus on relationships in learning, and the practices that educators draw on when making curriculum decisions. With increased discourse around (re)conceptualizing ECEC

curriculum, the pedagogical practices, strategies and curriculum tools of pedagogical leadership are developing in form. There are growing expectations for EC leaders to possess the ability to articulate and realize the reciprocal nature of pedagogy and practice.

ECEC in Alberta

In Alberta, the Ministry of Human Services regulates minimum standards of practice in ECEC centers and provides recognition for high-quality care beyond minimum standards. Licensed centers must meet the minimum standards in three areas: center operations, physical spaces, and human resources.

Minimum training requirements for EC staff. ECEC is a regulated occupation in Alberta; therefore, training requirements for childcare center staff are legislated. There are three levels of certification: Child Development Assistant (CDA), Child Development Worker (CDW), and Child Development Supervisor (CDS). Staff working in licensed ECEC programs have six months to be certified and cannot be left alone with children without certification. CDAs most commonly complete a 54-hour introduction to childcare course (no-cost). CDWs must hold a 1-year certificate in ELCC from a post-secondary institution or private vocational training institution. CDSs must hold a 2-year diploma in ELCC, at minimum (with some approved educational equivalencies). Current standards require program supervisors and 25% of workers in licensed daycare programs to hold child care (Alberta Ministry of Human Services, 2013b).

There is an implied assumption that those who are engaging in curriculum decisions have an intermediate knowledge of child development and curriculum

design, along with relevant practice knowledge rooted in play, inclusive practice, and family systems theories, among others. In the scope of this study, the term *EC educator* is used to describe someone who works in an ECEC center and holds a CDS designation, therefore possessing intermediate practice knowledge. The definition used in the study does not suggest that all persons supporting young children in ECEC centers are *not* acting as EC educators; however, the focus of this research is centered on the pedagogical leaders and their pedagogical engagement with educators who are curriculum decision-makers.

      ELCC Accreditation in Alberta. Beginning in 2004, the Alberta government, under the ministry responsible for child care services, implemented an accreditation program for ECEC centers. Accreditation, a voluntary process, required prospective child care programs to meet a standard of practice that was higher than childcare licensing standards (Alberta Ministry of Human Services, 2013a). Once accredited, programs were required to renew their accreditation every three years to maintain their accreditation status. Provincial government funding was available to make enhancements that enable a program to meet accreditation standards or invest in ongoing quality improvement to achieve or maintain accreditation status (Alberta Ministry of Human Services, 2013b).

      At the time of this study, Alberta had a system of accreditation for child care centers that promoted excellence through standards, based on current research and leading practices. Soon after data had been gathered and analyzed, while I was finalizing the write-up of this study, it was announced that effective April 1, 2020, the Government of Alberta would no longer support a child care accreditation system.

Although the immediate impacts of this decision on centers remains unknown, any

loss of resources effecting the funding and delivery of ECEC impacts children,

families and educators. As described in the next section, the expanding knowledge

base of professional practice combined with the intensity of the public policy agenda

is having a profound impact (positive and negative) on the profile and expectations of

ECEC professionals in Alberta and beyond.

Learning and Curriculum in ECEC

Pedagogy in ECEC is the intersection of theories centered on the children's

play, learning and care (Doherty et al., 2003; Friendly et al. 2016; Siraj-Blatchford,

2008). Loris Malaguzzi describes learning as "a tangle of spaghetti—with no

beginning or end, no linear progression but always open to new possibilities"

(Edwards et al., 2012, p. 156). Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualize

learning as rhizomatic, with endless connections, and limitless points of meeting and

departure. Both concepts emphasize that play and learning happen in non-linear ways,

placing encounters and relationships at the heart of learning processes. Rooted in

theories such as these are ideologies around play, ethics of care, the image of the child

and family, and the role of the ECEC environment (Clark & Murray, 2012; Siraj-

Blatchford & Hallet, 2014). It is these theoretical perspectives on early learning that

continue to inform how curriculum in ECEC is theorized. In turn, these principles

shape how curriculum is defined and enacted (Siraj-Blatchford, 2008). These

definitions and enactments begin to unfurl the diverse ways that pedagogical leaders

and educators engage in practice conversations. However, all of this is not a linear

process when considering that theory and practice inform one another in rhizomatic

patterns. Canadian curriculum theorist Ted Aoki's (1993) notion of "curriculum as lived," describes the emerging and unfolding ways that learning happens through engagement in pedagogical situations and relationships. With all this mind, and within the scope of this research, the curriculum in ECEC describes "a way of thinking about what young children are doing in relationships of care, play, learning, and development, rather than something done to children" (Makovichuk et al., 2014). ECEC curriculum embodies children's daily experiences with their families and within local communities and seeks to inform interactions, routines, learning experiences, which become curriculum decisions (Makovichuk et al., 2014).

Child-centered pedagogy has the potential for fostering children's creativity, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, dispositions to learn, and socio-emotional/behavioural development. ECEC curriculum, shaped by child-centered pedagogic decisions made amid engagement with children, focuses on broad, holistic goals rather than the distribution of predetermined content (Bennett, 2004). To fully understand the ECEC-specific iteration of leadership focused on *pedagogy* is to understand that curriculum and curriculum decision-making are not entirely analogous with the types of curriculum standards or decision-making outlined within traditional ideas of curriculum (Tyler, 2013). The integration of curriculum and curriculum-decision making in ECEC, as distinct from K-12 contexts, is an important dimension establishing the significance of the study.

Emerging pedagogical language. As EC theorists respond to the interplay of Western societal trends along with advancements in areas of research such as brain imaging and early years pedagogy, the ECEC field is no longer reliant on borrowing

broad ideas and practices from other disciplines, such as social work, nursing and K-12 education (Cannella, 1997; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). Instead, a new ECEC language is emerging, along with developing pedagogical practices (Clark, 2017). For example, EC leaders may support educators in the process of creating occasions for learning by providing provocations for children to build theories through their engagement in the play environment with materials and other learners (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). This example illustrates a noticeable shift in practice from custodial caregiving, that requires the carer to be kind and needed towards a more dynamic early learning approach, with the pedagogical leader and EC educator co-creating invitations for the child, who is viewed as a learner and citizen (Langford, 2011). These notions of ECEC educator practice–along with the image of the child as the protagonist in her learning who co-creates play environments with others–disrupt traditional thinking of what is possible when educators have pedagogical leadership support to create these endeavours. However, traditional views of childcare as simple custodial caregiving and substitute mothering are still the norm in Canadian society (Doherty et al., 2000).

International examples of innovative practice in ECEC. The infant-toddler and preschool programs in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia are widely recognized as a long-time center for the development of emerging philosophies that are coming to the fore internationally. Educators in Reggio Emilia are working to change patterns of thinking related to views of young children, the theorization of early learning, and the ways curriculum is co-designed and documented alongside a pedagogista, a pedagogical partner (Fillipini, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). By

interrogating the image of the child that is reflected in each aspect of society, Reggiano perspectives challenge traditional ways of conceptualizing young children and way of learning. This movement towards reconceptualizing ECEC recognizes the importance of advancing thinking rather than transmitting facts. Rinaldi (2006) describes the belief that a young child's potential is stunted when the endpoint of her learning has a preformulated outcome (Rinaldi, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998).

In New Zealand and Australia, national EC curriculum frameworks have created the conditions for rich dialogue and theorizing within the academic and practice communities (Rodd, 1998; Rodd, 2013; Waniganayake et al., 2015). These and other inspiring international examples lead the way in helping Canadian EC educators to gain new insights into how other dynamic and evolving EC theory and practice communities could inspire and transform local contexts. This is not to suggest that all Canadian ECEC centers are or should become Reggio clones, but these philosophies/approaches offer a critical entry point for Canadian EC professionals to articulate and problematize all aspects of ECEC practice knowledge. These exemplars, acting as beacons of light, signally shift the theory/practice discourse.

Defining EC Curriculum Decisions

Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework (Makovichuk et al., 2014) was developed as a curricular tool and reflective guide for EC educators in Alberta and focus curricular decision making, rather than determining teaching strategies for educators or learning outcomes for children. *Flight* (2014) describes an

early learning and child care curriculum framework as being different from a

traditional curriculum in the following ways:

- In early childhood, the curriculum focuses on broad, holistic goals rather

    than specific outcomes for each subject area.

- Early learning and child care curriculum frameworks embrace children's

    everyday experiences as the sources of curriculum meaning-making.

- Early childhood educators use the goals in the curriculum framework to

    describe and interpret children's everyday experiences.

- In early childhood, curriculum content is integrated, emerging from

    children's fascination with the world.

- When educators notice children's interest in exploring nature, people,

    places, and objects as well as print, stories, numbers, shapes, and patterns,

    and when they name the connections between these experiences and the

    holistic goals and children's dispositions to learn, they are co-constructing

    early learning curriculum with young children and making the curriculum

    visible to others   (Makovichuk et al., 2014)

Flight Framework (2014) is focused on how young children learn and experience their

worlds, as well as a guide for EC educators to foster thinking about early learning.

Making 1000+ curriculum decisions per day. Making curriculum decisions

that reflect guiding principles that view children as active, co-constructors of

knowledge is challenging work. This way of working requires that EC educators

integrate theoretical and practice-based knowledge, a task made more challenging

because, in Alberta, only 25% of the workforce is required to hold even an ELCC 2-

year post-secondary diploma (Alberta Ministry of Human Services, 2013b). Without foundational knowledge in EC theory and practice, co-creating curriculum with others is an uncertain process.

Podmore and Carr's (1999) research observations reports of EC educators in their New Zealand study and found that EC educators make on average 936 decisions around curriculum within a six-hour time frame. Commonly most EC educators work more than six hours per day in Alberta, and it is logical to surmise that many EC educators could be making more than 1000 curriculum decisions within an eight-hour workday. Although the volume of decisions is staggering, the specific nature of these decisions is also noteworthy. Due to the emergent nature of ECEC curriculum, many decisions are made in-the-moment and require that EC educators are in a constant state of balancing possibilities and practicalities in supporting children's learning and care. For example, a curriculum decision is made when delaying going to the outdoor play space because two children are gathered around a shadow casting on the playroom wall and trying to figure out the source of the shadow. This event could lead to several subsequent curriculum decisions emerging from this one observation and decision Wien, 2008). The educators may decide to add some different light sources and paper silhouettes to the block area or hang various objects in the trees outside the room to see if the shadows will cast in exciting ways. This complex pedagogical process requires leaders who can guide educators through a labyrinth of interpretations, principles, practices, and goals resulting in thoughtful and engaging curriculum decisions that are reflective of the socio-cultural context and overall vision of the ECEC setting.

Curriculum decision making in Alberta's ECEC. According to Flight (2014), "curriculum is focused on the uniqueness of childhood, considering learning and care with broad, holistic goals for children's development and learning, highlighting the importance of play, relationships and family diversity" (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p.4). When EC programs adopt these constructivist approaches to curriculum planning (child-led; emergent), decisions made by educators begin to reflect the socio-cultural context that children, educators and families occupy (Doherty et al., 2003; Fleet & Reed, as cited in Alcock & Stobbs, 2019; Friendly et al., 2016). Therefore, no two ECEC programs will look and act alike; they will not derive curriculum from universal tools, such as commercially prepared, prepackaged kits. Rather, curriculum will be co-constructed, reflective of children's play interests and the socio-cultural context of the program. Nxumalo (2018) describes this approach to early learning as a hopeful step toward "radically re-imagining the kinds of curriculum and pedagogy that are needed for young children inheriting ecologically challenged lifeworlds" (para. 13).

Leadership in ECEC

Nicholson and Maniates (2016) stress that leadership (while extensively studied in other domains) is a concept under development within ECEC. "Current interest in the development of leadership capacity within the early childhood profession provides an important opportunity to critically examine our field's conceptualizations of leadership" (Nicholson & Maniates, 2016, p. 66). Prevailing notions of educational leadership tend to conflate leadership with management and, consequently, with hierarchy and authority (Aubrey, 2007; Rodd, 1998; Rodd, 2013;

Sims, Forrest, Semann, & Slattery, 2015). ECEC leadership theory has developed from traditional leadership traits toward a more diverse perspective that recognizes that leadership in ECEC is more than just managing the tasks of the organization. Historically, the leadership profile in ECEC was *supervisory*, with a relatively flat organizational structure. Commonly, in Alberta, centers have a team of frontline early childhood educators and one center director; this is the current reality in most Alberta EC centers (Langford, 2011). Generally, an educator with extensive frontline experience is promoted to the center director or room lead, with the focus of the supervision centering on best practice, accreditation outcomes, mentoring novice staff and general program functioning (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). This organizational structure results in constructing a supervisor/worker binary, which conceals the complexity of EC curricular decision making, practice processes and professional identities (Bloch et al., 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). From the straight-ahead management/supervisor view of leadership, conceptions of leadership began to expand to include some support of EC educators' pedagogical practice. The early prevailing notions, though, retained the focus on management and administrative duties. In sum, ECEC leadership theories have developed from an emphasis on more traditional leadership traits towards a more diverse and dynamic conception that recognizes leadership in ECEC casts a broader net than managing the tasks of the organization.

As theories of pedagogical leadership within ECEC contexts are reconceptualizing, the scope of the developing role of pedagogical leader is taking form (Macdonald, Richardson, & Langford, 2015). Prevailing notions of pedagogical

leadership tend to reduce pedagogical leadership to mentoring and curriculum

consultation (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Newly emerging research is beginning

to challenge the manager who mentors archetype (Campbell- Barr & Leeson, 2016).

According to Pelo and Carter (2018), pedagogical leadership is more than

managing and mentoring. Instead, they suggest that pedagogical leadership asks the

leader to engage with children, EC educators, and families as *co-constructors of*

knowledge rather than guides and mentors (Pelo & Carter, 2018, emphasis mine). This

view of pedagogical leadership in ECEC is highly contextual, negotiated, and cannot

easily be transported or consigned. There does not appear to be a blueprint for this

work. Consequently, understanding of ECEC curriculum and the acts of curriculum-

decision making are enacted in such a way in ECEC that the leadership practices may

distinctively echo the role of the educator.

Leadership profiles. As notions around pedagogical leadership are

(re)formed, leadership profiles are (re)examined, along with how leadership is situated

within EC constructs, resulting in new knowledge. According to Sergiovanni (1998),

pedagogical leadership promotes capacity building by developing social and

theoretical capital for children, and intellectual and professional practice capital for

educators-- meaning that pedagogical leadership not only invests in the learning

experiences of children but also of educators. Moss (2013) describes the role of the

pedagogical leader as the knowledgeable other who co-creates a meeting place within

the context of pedagogical relationship building. As a researcher, I wonder how these

meeting places are co-created and how pedagogical conversations between EC

educators and leaders take place. The process of curricular engagement between the

knowledgeable other and EC educators is a developing idea in the practice

community, but appears to suggest that with pedagogical support, complexified

thinking about curriculum—how the image of the child influences curriculum

decisions–can take shape (Rodd, 2013; Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley,

& Shepherd, 2017; Waniganayake, Morda, & Kapsalakis, 2000).

Nevertheless, the challenge remains. As the field looks at how different types

of pedagogical supports enliven curriculum decision making, the process of

understanding the nature of *leading* the practice is still undetermined and not well

articulated in the literature (Hujala, 2004; Perry, Henderson, & Meier, 2012). This

study explores three main ideas around pedagogical leadership development in ECEC:

how leaders describe the development and shaping of leadership practices, how

leaders describe the pedagogical strategies used with educators, and the potential

learning experiences and supports pedagogical leaders imagine and desire?

Emerging ideas around Pedagogical Leadership in ECEC

Sergiovanni (1996) regarded pedagogical leadership as all educators'

pedagogical work with young children. Sergiovanni's term "leadership as pedagogy"

(p. 92), draws on van Manen (1991), who related the origins of the term pedagogy

with leading. From the perspective of EC leaders, pedagogical leadership means

taking responsibility to ensure that practices are inspired and reflective of the child.

Pedagogical leadership is (re)imagined. With increasing complexities in

curriculum decision-making, finding emerging ways to *think otherwise* about

curriculum is a struggle without a partner to provoke deeper reflection (Macfarlane &

Cartmel, 2012). There is a growing desire for a new role to be created, yet there is an

increased discourse around the nature of this new role (Campbell-Barr et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2012; Waniganayake & Semann, 2011). There are calls for a consultative curriculum professional from outside the EC center to play the role of the pedagogical mentor/partner, much like instructional coaches who offer curriculum and instructional support in P-12 school-based settings (Thornton, in Murphy & Thornton, 2015). As previously asserted, curriculum decisions within ECEC are highly contextualized, and EC educators require, what Whalley calls "leadership of practice" (2008, p. 4). The leadership of practice is not about implementing a strategy, as it might be in K-12 but rather envisioning an emerging pedagogic role, played by an EC professional who draws on theoretical understanding and practice expertise. This pedagogic role centers on engaging with educators in an iterative pedagogical process (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). This reimagined leadership role is not about "training" in specific competencies. Instead, this role is about imagining pedagogic possibilities alongside EC educators, all within the ecology of the EC center (Vintimilla, 2018).

Significance

This study examines the not yet well-defined role of the pedagogical leader in ECEC in Alberta by exploring participants' perspectives on leading practice within ECEC teams. Creating a working definition of pedagogical leadership included drawing a circle around the possible pedagogical practices used by pedagogical leaders in curriculum conversations with educators. As pedagogic and leadership roles are re-established and transformed, the construction of how pedagogical practices continue to shift. Learning from those acting as pedagogical leaders informs

understandings of how pedagogical leaders become and develop and of how they support the construction of the various roles and the practices that articulate curriculum decision making with EC educators (Cooper, 2014; Waniganayake et al., 2000).

In ECEC, pedagogical leadership is an emerging discipline, and while the ample literature on school-based leadership can be of some relevance, the distinct nature of ECEC requires focused attention on defining and representing pedagogical leadership within ECEC contexts. Pedagogical leadership involves sharing knowledge around approaches to early childhood curriculum and engaging in conversations with educators around curriculum decisions. As understandings of early childhood curriculum evolve, curriculum decisions must articulate and reflect contemporary theoretical understandings, including the extent to which the socio-cultural context informs EC curriculum decisions. Hewes, Lirette, Makovichuk and McCarron (2019) describe further:

The shift toward a pedagogical foundation for professional practice in EC, along with the introduction of curriculum frameworks in early learning and child care [ECEC], calls for approaches to professional learning that move beyond transmission modes of learning towards engaged, localized, participatory models that encourage critical reflection and investigation of pedagogy within specific settings. (p. 37)

There is an increased urgency to further create theories around the roles of the ECEC leader to understand better how pedagogical practices and strategies influence curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how practicing leaders explained the journey to becoming a pedagogical leader, and the pedagogical practices they describe using to support and engage EC educators in curriculum meaning-making within ECEC centers in Alberta.

Research Questions

Principle questions that guided the research are:

1. How do ECEC center leaders describe entering into and developing in their pedagogical leadership role? What experiences have informed their pedagogical leadership practices?

2. How do pedagogical leaders describe their roles and the pedagogical practices used when engaging in curriculum decision making with EC educators?

3. What experiences do pedagogical leaders describe as potentially enriching and enlivening their work?

The idea that pedagogical practices foster a shared construction of meaning has been suggested as a central aspect of pedagogical leadership (Campbell-Barr & Leeson, 2016; Rodd, 2013). Therefore, the study explored the participants' views of how they engage with EC educators in shared meaning-making processes, and how acting *in pedagogical ways* informs their work as a leader (Fillipini, in Edwards et al., 1998). Interwoven throughout this study are the notions of how pedagogical leaders describe and translate pedagogy and practice, and what they believe would further support and nurture that practice.

Discussion of Key Terms

Key terms, based on the review of the literature, are presented below. Chapter Two will present a more comprehensive discussion of each term.

Early childhood curriculum. In ECEC, the curriculum is conceptualized as the whole range of experiences, planned and unplanned, that takes place in a child's learning environment. "Curriculum is the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster learning and development" (Te Whāriki, New Zealand's Early Childhood Curriculum, 1996, p. 99).

Emergent curriculum planning in ECEC. Emergent curriculum, also known as the emerging curriculum, is the planning of play experiences and projects that emerge in the daily lives of children and educators together as a community of learners. Emergent curriculum is a way of teaching and learning where curriculum emerges from interactions between children, educators and the surrounding environment, and in so doing, benefits everyone involved (Halls & Wien, 2013; Katz, 1997).

The focus of the emergent curriculum often begins with a child or group of children expressing a play interest. This is followed up by the educator who co-plans and frames the content around an established play topic and creates provocations within the play environment and acknowledgement of the time, space and materials that support and enliven the play further. "Emergent curriculum is sensible but not predictable. It requires of its practitioner's trust in the power of play-trust in spontaneous choice-making among many possibilities" (Jones & Nimmo, 1994, p. 1).

Environment as third teacher. Imbedded within the definition of emergent curriculum is the related concept of the learning environment. According to Reggio Emilia philosophy, the learning environment is "the third teacher" that can enhance learning and support children to respond creatively and meaningfully to future challenges. Susan Fraser writes: "A playroom that is functioning successfully as a third teacher will be responsive to the children's interests, provide opportunities for children to make their thinking visible and then foster further learning and engagement" (2011, p. 67).

The Hundred Languages of Children. Beginning with the idea that children are capable, competent citizens with rights instead of needs, Malaguzzi (1994) termed the belief that children express themselves hundreds of ways: drawing; painting; speaking, and writing, to name a few. With consideration of this idea, early learning is more complex than the replication of mimicry of adult thinking. Instead, this view encourages children to realize their own thinking and understandings through facilitating expressions of their knowledge, using multimodal literacies. EC educators approach learning from diverse perspectives and emphasize theory and relationship building within a diverse community of learners.

Summary

This introductory chapter presented the background of the research, identifying the research objectives and questions. The research context was also presented here by discussing aspects such as ECEC in Canada, defining curriculum in ECEC and leadership profiles in ECEC. The purpose of the current research is to explore pedagogical leadership in ECEC centers within Alberta. Examining pedagogical

leadership brings to the surface the diversity in understanding, around how pedagogical leadership is defined, theorized and enacted. The study's purpose was to shine a light on pedagogical leadership in the ECEC context to create a richer understanding of the role, including how participants described the joys and challenges of their work. As previously asserted, pedagogical leadership in ECEC has no widely agreed-upon definition, despite several perspectives on pedagogical leadership, in general. Tensions exist between leadership intent on assuring quality through administrative approaches and leadership that cultivates a collaborative environment for shared decision-making by leading the learning.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Several scholars have attempted to link the terms pedagogy and leadership (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). Clark and Murray (2012) define leadership in ECEC to be continually evolving: "(A)s a social construction and experienced phenomenon, leadership can be a broad and changing notion. It has no fixed identity because it is in a constant state of deconstruction, interpretation, and reconstruction" (p. 5). However, others have argued that when pedagogy is attached to leadership, the result is an ambiguous term in need of further examination (e.g. Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012). This literature review begins with a theoretical framework to provide orientation to the positionality of pedagogical leadership within broader educational/learning contexts. Exploration of these relevant theories serves to situate pedagogical leadership within a more defined ECEC milieu, acknowledging both the similarities and differences between the two applied fields: education and ECEC. A review of the relevant literature moves from broad perspectives on pedagogy and leadership towards a more sophisticated understanding of pedagogical leadership practices in ECEC.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, leadership was understood according to the social constructivist orientation as an action constructed by people in social interactions (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998; Zeitlin, 1973). This ontological standpoint supports the notion that pedagogical and leadership practices and the creation of meanings are shaped within social interactions. Social constructivism takes the philosophical position that active

learning within a sociocultural context builds knowledge. Vygotsky, in Vygotsky & Cole (1978) emphasized the role of culture in learning and how perceptions form within sociocultural contexts. People construct and negotiate shared understandings of the events and contexts in everyday life happenings. Social constructivism places the focus on learners as part of social groupings, and views learning as emergent and co-created through interactive social processes, not as an individual discovery. Therefore, this theory posits the notion of pedagogical leadership as a social construction, co-created by the local ECEC community.

A social constructivist perspective is a general view shared by many theorists and, in this study, places emphasis on exploring pedagogical leadership as constructed in social actions and within shared dialogues with participants (Hausfather, 1996; Zeitlin, 1973). It examined how pedagogical leadership was experienced and enacted within EC communities. Through this lens, pedagogical leadership draws on the understanding of roles through engagement in a shared pedagogical process with others. Supposing a Social Constructivist perspective makes explicit how learning is both an active and social process, with people generating new understandings and co-constructed theories through interactions with others (Vygotsky, in Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Social Learning Theory

Wenger's (1998) Social Learning Theory is a particular focus within social constructivist theory, with its own set of assumptions and principles for understanding learning. Social Learning Theory (Wenger, 1998) places attention on the nature of learning as a process of coming to know and create meaning through shared

participation as social beings (p. 280). For Wenger (1998), participation is the social act of becoming participants within communities that share practices and constructing identities within these communities. Social constructivists suggest that, within sociocultural contexts, we are continually co-constructing with others (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). While Social Learning Theory is particularly focused on the context, or types of communities (communities of practice) where groups of people are intentionally pursuing common aims (joint enterprise). A c*ommunity of practice* is defined as a group of participants within shared conditions that negotiate meaning together through mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 126). Within defined communities**,** shared repertoires **(**particular tools and norms) are established through mutual engagement, (a web of relationships that have defining characteristics). Wenger's (1998) characterizes social participation as a process of learning informed by the main four components: identity, meaning, practice, and community.

Community: learning as belonging. As indicated above, Wenger (1998) conceptualized a community by mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. A community of practice requires participants to be mutually engaged in a joint enterprise with a shared repertoire. The shared repertoire consists of daily routines, practices, documents, as well as the theoretical foundations that influence and give meaning to interactions as a community. In ECEC, the shared repertoire (consists of both the abstract and tangible materials) could mean diapering routines, creating play spaces, learning stories and any practice that a community has assumed or negotiated over time. EC educators are mutually engaged in a joint enterprise in that

they are committed to the learning and care of children in the ECEC center and are members of a playroom team.

Identity: learning as becoming. Constructs of identity create a relationship between the social and the individual and highlights the individual within the practice (e.g. pedagogical leader in ECEC center). Wenger (1998) characterizes identity as "a constant becoming," defining who we are by:

the ways we participate and reify ourselves; our community membership; our

learning trajectories (where we have been and where we are going); reconciling our

membership in a number of communities into one identity; and negotiating local

ways of belonging with broader, more global discourse communities (p. 149).

The understanding of the role and the beliefs that guide the work have evolved within a practice community. Meaning is made in the in-between spaces, with pedagogical leaders and EC educators as mutually engage in co-creating curriculum. Wenger (1998) described this process as *forming* and *acting* in communities of practice.

Importantly, Wenger views identity and practice as "mirror images of each other" (p. 149), with one "inheriting the texture of the other" (p. 162). Notions of identity, defined by the leadership practices engaged in (participation), as well as the leadership practices not used for engagement**.** Applying Wenger's (1998) conception to this study, a pedagogical leader's work supports focused collaboration with educators in mutually meaningful experiences that include negotiating and making meaning. Membership in communities of practice cultivates a sense of becoming and belonging. Thus, *becoming* is a purposeful term to suggest an ever-evolving process of an individual's identity formation and reformulation within the community of practice.

A significant aspect of Wenger's (1998) theory regarding identity is the three modes of belonging and sources of identity formation (becoming): engagement, imagination: and alignment. Engagement centers on shared participation in meaningful experiences and interactions. Imagination means remaining open to all possibilities with a willingness to seek, take chances, and build connections while creating evolving images of our worlds and ourselves. Alignment describes a process of co-constructing meaning, emerging from shared perceptions and practices.

Meaning: learning as experience. Creating meaning is how we change our ability to experience and understand life and living. Wenger (1998) closely connected meaning with practice, and described how a practice, in social ways, is how we make sense of our experiences in the world. Meaning is produced on a personal level and on a collective level (organizations). Within communities of practice, members share their understandings, beliefs, and goals through collective processes. Embedded in these shared experiences are the meanings that are continually shaping.

***Reification*.** Wenger (1988) describes the term *reification*, as attempting to make an abstraction into something material. Wegner explains, "Indeed, no abstraction, tool, or symbol captures in its form the practices in the context of which it contributes to an experience of meaning" (1998, p. 58-59). Wenger contrasting and compares reification with participation (being part of a process) and suggests that experiences need not remain as mere conceptions, only shared and understood by those who participated in the experience. The tools and materials are part of our shared repertoire and interact with relationships, or our mutual engagement as we articulate and move toward our joint enterprise. It is essential that we understand how tools are

being understood and used with the contexts. For example, a photo is worth a thousand words, yet the memories of the experiences are not erased by destroying the photo. On the one hand, the entirety of exchanges, relationships, and interpretations in a playroom could never fully be captured and expressed through a curriculum tool, such as pedagogical documentation. However, the process of pedagogical documentation is part of a shared repertoire. Coming to understand how to engage in the process of documentation happens within constructing relationship (roles of educator and pedagogical, leader) for an organizational purpose (children's learning).

These ideas are of relevance to the study in that pedagogical leadership can be described as a leader's enactment through engagement with educators (participation) using curriculum planning tools (concrete materials) within an organization (EC center). Wenger (1998) states that one cannot be separated from another and further illustrates the complexity of capturing a multidimensional, multi-perspective process that often considered invisible, such as using curriculum materials to evidence a curriculum conversation.

Practice: learning as doing. In ECEC, the discipline-specific language around curriculum continues to shape practice in new and unfamiliar ways and creates spaces for dialogue around pedagogical leaders' practices with EC educators. Dialogues that focus on curriculum create shared meaning around emerging ideas and practices. Within a community of practice, a pedagogical leader's work focuses on engaging with others (mutual engagement), and negotiating new language and practices, along with making sense of new tools (curriculum documents) and practices (pedagogical documentation as shared repertoire).

Wenger's (1998) notion of brokering, describes how connections are created between contexts, creating new possibilities of meaning. Within the context of an ECEC center as a community of practice, a pedagogical leader and educator are brokering together to engage in pedagogical processes and make shifts in current practice. Wenger described brokering as multifaceted:

[I]t involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives. It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilize attention, and address conflicting interests. (p. 109)

Changing pedagogical understandings around EC curriculum requires new ways of curriculum meaning-making and brokering with EC educators to share experiences and make meaning of the complexities of co-creating curriculum.

Wenger's Social Learning Theory (1998) offers a means to situate pedagogy and leadership, and their emerging connectedness within the context of ECEC. Wenger's work theorizes concepts such as shared construction of knowledge, practice, meaning, and identity. Wenger's notion of a community of practice describes it: as an assembly of people with a common pursuit to interact to improve learning (Wenger, 1998). Within an ECEC center, educators with a pedagogical leader (assembly of people) engage in collaborative curriculum decision making (common pursuit), using emerging and localized practices (regularly interact with learning) in pedagogical processes that are still taking shape (how to do it better). With this description in mind, the theories related to Wenger's (1998) communities of practice are an apt lens to explore the dynamics of pedagogical leadership within ECEC centers.

Leadership Constructs

Establishing a definition of pedagogical leadership and, more broadly, leadership, in general, is an essential step in understanding the complexities of these roles and sets the stage for a richer understanding of how these contextualized terms fit within ECEC. A key message from the literature about leadership in ECEC is that it lacks a broadly accepted core of definitions, understandings, and theoretical framing. With leadership models that reflect a more corporate view of ECEC in general, opposing discourses of leadership for management and leadership for learning compete with one another. Nivala (2002) calls this "leadership confusion" and points to the mixed messages surrounding leadership competencies and pedagogical practices in ECEC (p. 14). She asserts: "the more you read, the more it is difficult to build a clear picture of what is good leadership or what skills you need, or you have to develop to call yourself a good leader" (2002, p. 14).

In analyzing the literature on leadership within the North American ECEC contexts, Kagan and Bowman (1997) were among the first to clarify the importance of developing leadership theories that are relevant and meaningful to early childhood audiences. Although others have emphasized this view over time (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2002; Rodd, 1998; Rodd, 2013), to date, the level of theorizing continues to linger behind other human services disciplines/fields, especially in comparison to school and nursing leadership understandings.

Primarily, the literature depicts leadership in ECEC as the same as management (Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012). Two powerful characterizations capture notions of leadership in ECEC. First, the great (wo)man/heroic leadership, in which one individual uses their acquired skills, abilities, and attributes to

singlehandedly lead subordinates. Second, distributed leadership, in which leadership

is negotiated and shared by those on a team, with all enjoying the fruits of leadership

and labour, as well as shouldering some part of the burden rather than all the burden

(Kangas, Venninen & Ojala, 2016; Timperley, 2005).

Changing views of ECEC leadership. Conventional constructions of

leadership in ECEC, derived from corporate models of hierarchical leadership, favour

the idea of Great (Wo)Man/heroic leadership and are reflected in Alberta's ECEC

communities (Garrow-Oliver, 2017). As new theories around EC leadership emerge,

the ground is beginning to shift. Rodd (2013) and Waniganayake et al. (2017) review a

relatively small but growing body of research that is challenging and disrupting these

universal descriptions of leadership in ECEC. Waniganayake and Semann (2011)

stated that leadership is "a journey of joint inquiry, exploration, and reflection that can

involve everyone who believes in making a difference for children" (p.24). This idea

supports a more collaborative and distributed notion of ECEC leadership (Kangas,

Venninen & Ojala, 2016; Timperley, 2005).

Distributed Leadership. Distributed leadership theorizing and research is

emerging, mainly in educational leadership contexts. Discussions about distributed

leadership began appearing in EC literature only recently and are still evolving

(Aubrey, 2007; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2002; Rodd, 2013).

In separating the roles and responsibilities of EC leaders from the operational

dimensions of administration, management, and leadership, it has become necessary to

reconsider how ECE leadership is researched and reconceptualized (Woodrow &

Busch, 2008). According to Waniganayake (2000), distributed leadership offers the

potential for achieving organizational agreement through the integration of these three orientations under a single leadership framework, suggesting that there can be more than one person involved in leading learning, based on their knowledge and practice expertise (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). The connection found in the contemporary theorizing and research on distributed leadership addresses pedagogical aspects of leadership responsibilities. As a result of the conceptualization, distributed pedagogical leadership is understood as the interdependence between multiple levels of formal and informal leadership enactments in pedagogical processes (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

Current distributed leadership theorizations are dominated by the ideas of Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris (2012); Harris (2009); Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011; Spillane (2006); and Waniganayake et al., (2017). Spillane et al. (2004) state that leadership is understood as a practice "distributed over leaders, followers, and the school's situation or contexts." Spillane et al. (2004, p. 9) discuss distributed leadership practice as being "stretched over" the educational, social, and community contexts, and involves multiple people, who hold either formal leadership or informal leadership roles and responsibilities. A central aspect of distributed leadership is interdependence amongst people. Harris (2009) connects "interdependence" and "emergence," with distributed leadership, while Spillane et al. (2004) emphasizes the interdependencies between leadership practices by analyzing the enactments of leadership. Leadership sits within relationships between the formal leader, "followers", and the situation in which leadership is being practiced. The

interdependence of leadership practice exists when leadership enactments include interactions between multiple people within an organization.

Leadership in ECEC

Kagan and Hallmark (2001) identify five aspects of leadership in ECEC. First, community leadership, which involves building and nurturing connections between the EC community and stakeholders by constructing partnerships amongst families, community services/resources, and the public and private sectors. Second, pedagogical leadership, which focuses on building bridges between research and practice through disseminating new information, shaping agendas, and fostering critical engagement in reflection and action alongside EC educators. Third, administrative leadership, which requires the management of financial and human resources and other organizational management tasks. Fourth, advocacy leadership, which means creating a long-term vision of the future of early childhood education, including developing a firm understanding of the ECEC field, legislative and regulatory processes, the media, as well as being a skilled communicator. Finally, conceptual leadership, which asks that the leader demonstrate the ability to conceptualize early childhood leadership within the broader framework of social movements and change (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). While this list of aspects appears comprehensive, some of these roles have competing agendas, further complexifying the role of leader in ECEC. The notion of providing work performance appraisals (i.e. administrative leadership) while simultaneously engaging and supporting educators in professional learning and self-reflection (i.e. pedagogical leadership) may result in complicated relationships.

Male and Palaiologou's (2015) work highlights a study conducted when the researchers were headteachers and leaders of early years settings in England in 2012. Their research explored how EC leaders understand pedagogical leadership and whether models of leadership serve to inform or merely distract those in positions of leadership in ECEC settings. The researchers concluded that there should be a shift away from using traditional models of leadership toward a more holistic view of leadership as creating the integrated environments (and ecology) for inspired learning, and teaching, and the interplay amongst them. Male and Palaiologou (2015) conclude that notions of pedagogy shape EC leadership constructs rather than the other way around:

> Pedagogy, therefore, is cultivated by the quest for understanding the being of the learners (the ecology of their community), the experiences of the learners and their community and the meaning-making and problem-solving required in that context for creating effective educational interactions and relationships (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p. 6-7).

The findings describe the role of the leader in understanding the complex forces that influence a system or context as leaders both influence and are influenced by the pedagogical actions of others.

Leadership models. Using a model of leadership based on how practice informs professional capacity and capability while recognizing the importance of relationship, Stamopoulos (2015) uses previous research on leadership and change management that explored how EC leaders view educational changes. Stamopoulos (2015) work focuses on leadership, pedagogy and change management performances

during times of great change. The study's participants consisted of 17 EC educators and used a leadership training model (PLAR) to teach specific aspects of leadership to the teacher leaders. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed, with surveys, conversations, interviews, focus groups, individual action research reports, reflective journals and artifact analysis used as data sources. At the end of the PLAR training, the participants evaluated the training program. Starting with strong notions of educational leadership, the model serves to build a professional identity in pursuit of repositioning the profession to serve the field better. The findings reveal that networking methods to connect the participants, positively affected teacher leaders. During times of social interaction, participants were able to make sense of the learning and share how these ideas were connected to context (or not) and how they made sense of the new information. This study relates to the human side of making shifts in understanding. If EC educators make personal connections to the ideas and then relate these to their own context, they are more apt to make meaning from the learning (Stamopoulus, 2015).

Defining pedagogical leadership

Since establishing that a widely accepted definition and description of pedagogical leadership in ECEC proves to be a challenge, a more obvious starting place begins with establishing a working definition for pedagogical leadership that may lie in the two root words that come together to create the term: *pedagogy* and *to lead. Pedagogy* from pais (boy); agōgos (leader), plainly translates as to lead the child (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). Contemporary understandings of pedagogy refer to pedagogy as the art or science of what expert/experienced educators do, and the

professional knowledge necessary for enriched educational practices (Farquhar & White, 2014). Current definitions of pedagogy also explore the broader scope of educational constructs such as the meaning and processes associated with teaching and learning; and the ways of creating knowledge, and the power and authority inherent to teaching and learning (Farquhar & White, 2014). According to Moss (2006), "pedagogy is a relational and holistic approach to working with people," and within ECEC pedagogy, "learning, care and upbringing are interwoven and connected" (p.32). The term pedagogy establishes critical connections between teaching, learning, and societal, cultural and political structures embedded in knowledge (Osgood, 2006). This definition recognizes pedagogical leaders and educators as professional artists — combining practice knowledge and adept performance characterized as "intuition, improvisation, imagination and going beyond the known; and an ability to make judgements based on professional knowledge and an understanding of the context" (Sumison et al., 2009. p. 10).

While there are numerous definitions, when using *to lead* as a verb, one of the definitions seems to capture the essence of pedagogical leadership more than the others: *in being ahead* or *taking someone somewhere* (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). This definition is perhaps more fitting than some of the other suggested definitions, such as *ruling*; *directing*; and *pointing* (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). Rodd (2013) defines leadership in ECEC as collaborating with educators, families, and children, and mentoring educators to implement the shared vision and philosophy of the center as well as guiding educators in the study of the teaching and learning process. While this may seem like a comprehensive and multifaceted definition and

role description, the literature suggests that this role is more complex than Rodd

(2013) suggests. According to Berger (2015), in Canadian early childhood education,

the term *leader* is alive with disputed meanings. Images that suggest hierarchical and

autocratic models of power and oppression, often frame understandings of traditional

leadership. The term leader is a word that the field is often hesitant to own because of

the incompatibility with dominant ECEC practice philosophies that value shared

decision making and collaborative practices (Moss, 2013). Berger's (2015) work seeks

to reconceptualize the notion of pedagogical leadership in ECEC. She troubles

hegemonic thinking around making curriculum decisions in ECEC. Moreover, by

reconceptualizing the ways that pedagogical leaders can transform curricular

understanding disrupts a transmissionist paradigm in which curriculum and knowledge

are seen as merely passively transmitted to others rather than co-constructed (Ord,

Mane, Smorti, Carroll-Lind, Robinson, Armstrong-Read.,…Jalal, 2013). "Leadership,

from this angle, is about making visible the unpredictability, creativity, and messiness

of the lived experiences in the classroom as a vibrant context for experimentation,

rather than an attempt to masks or conceal them" (Berger, 2015, p.8).

Male and Palaiologou (2015) present an alternative approach to viewing both

pedagogy and pedagogical leadership. On the one hand, pedagogy needs to be

understood beyond the simplistic position of the process of teaching and learning. On

the other hand, pedagogical leadership should strive not to follow models of

effectiveness, but to seek links between educational outcomes and the set of social

realities that these outcomes need to be measured (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p. 15).

The process of seeking links between outcomes and contexts reflects Wenger's Social Learning Theory (1998) as it underscores how negotiating meaning is a process of mutual engagement with shared repertories within a community of practice.

Expressions of pedagogical leadership. Heikka and Hujala (2013) studied how leaders express their leadership responsibilities in early childhood education (ECE) context in seven Finnish municipalities. In the investigation of how ECE center directors/administrators perceive their leadership responsibilities, the researchers show that all participants highlighted the importance of program improvement, advocacy, and pedagogical leadership. The study's findings articulate the various practices within an EC team, such as collaborative problem solving, shared decision making and creating a shared curricular vision. Heikka and Hujala (2013) describe how the ethos of the leader creates occasions for engaging interactions and negotiation of responsibilities between the team members, promoting the development of leadership skills of frontline educators further and builds capacity for shared leadership in the center. "This study clearly shows that there is a need for a better way of implementing leadership by sharing and extending the boundaries of leadership" (Heikka & Hujala, 2013, para 17). The study's authors speculate that if there is a shift away from managerial work, the role of the EC leader could become more pedagogical and, in turn, increase the overall quality of the ECEC program.

In a related quantitative study, Sims, et al. (2015) explored how 351 Australian early childhood leaders understand the notion of leadership in ECEC. They report that while EC leaders mentor and lead as EC educators pursue program excellence (quality), still many EC leaders in their study report feeling ill-prepared, moving from

front line EC educators to leading the practice of other EC educators (The Muttart Foundation, 2013; Garrow-Oliver, 2017). Fleet and Patterson (2001) assert that one of the contributing factors of EC leaders' feelings of inadequacies is that leaders in the field typically hold traditional views of leadership and do not allow themselves to recognize more reconceptualized notions of leadership that lean towards more collaborative leadership approaches (Fleet & Patterson, 2001). These entrenched ideas may halt a leader's ability to make spaces for educators to co-create meaning and theorize curriculum decisions.

Murray and Clark (2013) draw on two qualitative studies to examine how British ECE leaders interpret and express their roles as leaders or actualize their leadership "purpose" within the context of an ECEC center. Using an interpretive approach, the researchers sought to identify patterns of meaning from leaders' stories on their emerging notions of leadership, and how pedagogical leadership may become the emerging construction of leadership in the field. The results show that although the leaders saw themselves as effective managers of ECE centers (traditional notions of leadership in ECE), most identified gaps in their understanding of participative leadership and of how to enact pedagogical leadership. The findings reflect a broader international concern to articulate new ECEC specific leadership understandings, to create greater leadership capacity in the ECE field.

Carroll-Lind, Smorti, Ord and Robinson (2016) detail a qualitative research project in Aotearoa, New Zealand conducted with pedagogical leaders in ECEC settings using a coaching and mentoring program (CHAT) to assess whether teacher-leaders were able to produce productive shifts in their leadership practices to increase

capacity in their teams, by leading change conversations learned through the intervention. Employing the intervention-based professional tool (CHAT) enabled the researchers to capture the shifts in practice and professional understandings. The authors, both academics, have written extensively on leadership in ECE in Australia. The study's results show that participants reported significant shifts in their conceptions of leadership and how teams are systems of collective activities rather than individuals working together.

  Pedagogical leadership as mentoring. Broadly, the literature states that there are other terms related to the role of pedagogical leaders, such as *expert coach* (Olsson, Cruickshank & Collins, 2017; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006); *consultant* (Chu, 2014, p.7); and *critical friend* (Fleet & Patterson, 2001). These terms appear interchangeably with the term *mentor*. Ollson et al. (2017) define an expert coach as someone who does more than simply apply solutions to identified problems. An expert coach is defined as someone who has specialized knowledge and the ability to integrate complex interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and use reflection and experimentation skills to support others to move from novice to more proficient performer (Clutterbuck, 2008). Although the term is used primarily in sports communities, the terms *literacy coach* and *curriculum coach* are now becoming more ubiquitous in education (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008). Chu (2014) describes the use of the term *consultant* as a mentor who facilitates work specific issues from problem-based to solution-focused. This definition seems to align well with the navigational nature of pedagogical leaders. Support is given to the educator as the pedagogical leader draws on past experiences and curriculum knowledge. However, this role

conceptualization suggests that if the educator does not self-identify a professional practice as a perceived problem or an area for growth, the mentor will most likely not become aware of the concern, and the pair will not explore the practice.

The research appears to be inconclusive on how mentoring situates within the context of pedagogical leadership (Rodd, 2013; Waniganayake et al., 2017). There does appear to be a more substantive definition of pedagogical mentoring, which I suggest is central to pedagogical leadership and would be considered *modelling leadership* (Rodd, 2013), but the pedagogical leadership profile includes more than mentoring others. As stated by Whalley (2008), the pedagogical leader focuses on leading the practice rather than mentoring practice. This study, which explores complex notions of pedagogical leadership and aims to address this gap in the literature.

Pedagogic Actions

As conceptions of pedagogical leadership continue to emerge, there is an increased recognition that EC curriculum is also being expressed in new ways. As the field shifts away from more didactic approaches that leaned heavily on developmental practice and skill acquisition, EC educators are using learning strategies that focus on sociocultural contexts of learning. The image of the early childhood educator begins to shift away from a neutral caregiver toward a more complex role that requires the educator to theorize about children's learning and to act as a *co-researcher* alongside children (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Edwards, 2005; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). As previously stated, this new image of the EC educator brings increased responsibility and requires

that EC leaders engage and lead in more pedagogical ways within the community of practice (Rodd, 2013).

There are growing expectations for EC leaders to *lead* the practice alongside EC educators, and as the practice becomes more complexified, so too does the role of the EC leader. "This shift calls for approaches to professional learning that move beyond transmission modes and workshop models towards participatory approaches" (Gandini as cited in Nuttall & Edwards, 2009, p. 34). Pelo and Carter (2018) write:

The focus of the work of pedagogical leaders is to help educators become researchers who watch and listen to children with delight and curiosity, noticing the details of children's play and conversation to plan responsively.… Pedagogical leaders invite reflective, contextual thinking, and a willingness to linger in questions and not-knowing. Pedagogical leaders view teaching as experimentation. They encourage educators to seek out divergent points of view to increase complexity. Pedagogical leaders engage questions of ethics, emotion, and imagination as surely as they do matters of intellectual learning and skill development. (p. 60)

For Pelo and Carter (2018), pedagogical leadership centers on leading others in their practice by challenging themselves and the educators to go below the shallow surface of interaction and research deeper possibilities children's meaning-making.

In the following sections, the construction of acting as a pedagogical leader is explored through examining research/theory around three central approaches: adopting a pedagogic stance, theorizing curriculum events, and co-creating curricular meaning-making. These three approaches serve to emphasize pedagogy as opposed to leadership.

Adopting a pedagogic stance. Although the genesis for the emerging work on EC educators acting *more pedagogically* is not definitively known, the work done by the early childhood educators in Reggio Emilia may catalyze the emergence of these new understandings about adopting a pedagogic stance. The formidable work done by children, families, and educators in the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia acts as a provocation for knowledge creation and increased awareness of how educators co-create curriculum through engagement with children, materials, and environments. This work is closely supported and lead by a *pedagogista* or pedagogical leader (Fillipini, in Edwards, Gandini & Forman (Eds), 1998). The pedagogista's role is to collaborate with educators in their daily work with children, families, and the broader community.

The pedagogista takes a pedagogic stance through working closely with educators to observe, document, and interpret what is happening in the classroom environment, and then works with educators to reflect, plan and project responsive learning experiences for/with children (Rinaldi, 2006). Without a content-based ECEC curriculum for young children, curriculum planning in ECEC may appear unsophisticated, lacking educational substances and intentions. However, in an interview with Gandini, Malaguzzi (Gandini, in Edwards, Gandini & Forman (Eds), 1998) describes the curriculum planning process as being centered in educators' abilities to act with focused intention and creatively impromptu ways simultaneously:

It is true that we do not have planning and curricula. It is not true that we rely on improvisation, which is an enviable skill. We do not rely on chance either, because we are convinced that what we do not yet know can to some extent be

anticipated. What we do know is that to be with children is to work one third with certainty and two thirds with uncertainty and the new. The one third that is certain makes us understand and try to understand (p.77)

Reggio-inspired pedagogy has shaped the notion of acting in pedagogical ways through the adoption of a pedagogic stance. This term suggests that when educators critically reflect on their practices play and plan rich learning experiences, curriculum reflects children's lived experiences (Rinaldi, 2006; Fillipini, in Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998; Katz, in Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). In Reggio Emilia, educators are supported by a pedagogical coordinator, a *pedagogista* who works alongside educators to identify themes and experiences for further exploration. A pedagogista acts as a liaison between theory and practice, while, Rinaldi (2006) states striving towards an immeasurable future.

The role of the pedagogista. Vintimilla (2018) reflects on her work and encounters as a pedagogista with a group of EC educators at a Canadian university's EC lab school. She describes her pedagogical work as attempting "to pose reverberant questions that open space for educators to put-in-question and, indeed, to put the educators themselves into-question" (Vintimilla, 2018, p.23). The notion that the pedagogista helps to produce echoes through asking questions and provoking educators to think more deeply about their work defines the pedagogical practices that a pedagogista engages in while in concert with educators. Vintimilla (2018) describes the complex conversations that emerge when educators receive support through a process of imagining what is possible to "think, be and do, and why" (p.23). This intensely iterative process speaks to the complexity of pedagogical practices that

engage others in "ongoing, dynamic, and transformational dialogue about learning, teaching and living together" (Atkinson & Biegun, 2018, p. 64).

Theorizing curriculum events. Using pedagogical tools such as pedagogical documentation is a process that enables educators to theorize curriculum events in pursuit of uncovering deeper meaning and enriching curriculum decision making. It is akin to tracing a circle around an experience that can be accessed later for reflection and dialogue (Edwards, 2005). Often in the form of a documentation wall panel or a Learning Story, educators use pedagogical documentation as a tool to analyze past experiences and plan for future experiences. Pelo and Carter (2018) describe pedagogical documentation in this way:

> Documentation is not reporting on what children know, or can do, or have learned; documentation is making visible how we educators think about a moment of a child's life that we've witnessed, and the insights and questions it holds for us. We do this in service of expanding our awareness and our capacity for responsiveness. (p. 261)

Pedagogical documentation is a process in which educators collect (written notes, images and video clips, artifacts) children's ideas, words, and creations, to encourage the development of and reflection about meaningful experiences with children to inform ways forward.

Narrating Curriculum. The term pedagogical narration is often used interchangeably with pedagogical documentation, but some argue that the term pedagogical narration more accurately captures the essence of the pedagogical voice in documenting children's learning (Berger, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Berger

(2015) links the act of pedagogical narration to thinking more critically about EC curriculum decision making. Berger's findings show that when educators and leaders engage in critical conversations around pedagogical practice and constructions, such as children's identities, the results produce more fruitful conversations amongst team members. As well, Berger suggests that when EC educators and leaders engage in shared meaning-making, it illuminates the spontaneous, yet often recursive nature of the work done in ECE classrooms. Berger (2015) asserts that when EC educators are co-learners with one another while engaged in curriculum decision-making, they participate in shared experiences and internalize the effects of working as a team of curriculum learners. As a team, they acquire new understandings and knowledge-a process that she connects to philosopher Hannah Arendt's "moments of not knowing" and deconstructs binaries of thinking without thought and critically thinking. Participants reported that their practice was ultimately shaped by how they viewed children as citizens and learners—in turn, transforming their identities. Berger (2015) explored phenomena such as surprise and wonder to describe how these occurrences contribute to the creation of profoundly engaged practice, rich in complexity, unpredictability and perplexities.

Co-creation of curricular meaning and decision making. Berger's (2015) work highlights the relational nature of engaged ECEC pedagogical leadership, which reflects the notion that *knowledge* and *meaning are* co-created and shaped amongst teams of EC educators and should reflect the context and the experiences of the team (including children and families).

Berger's (2015) work challenges traditional views of curriculum decision-making within ECEC environments. Pedagogical leadership is enacted through a process of creating encounters that provoke educators to do the deeply reflective work necessary for inspired practices. Her work seeks to disrupt the idea that EC leaders solely impart curricular knowledge to passive educators or that they direct educators through decision-making processes. Berger's (2015) work begins to draw a circle around the complex and highly relational nature of what it means to act in pedagogical ways within a vibrant ECEC community of practice. Berger's writing is a challenging exploration of pedagogical narration and the ways that pedagogical leaders engage in pedagogical practices. According to Berger (2015), when ECEC leaders thoughtfully engage others in the practice of pedagogical narration, the result is inspired by co-created curricula and more responsive play opportunities for young children within a community of practice.

Professionalizing Pedagogical Leadership

As this review of the literature shows, the professionalization of pedagogical leadership is still emerging, as are notions of new roles. Professionalizing pedagogical leadership requires those who are currently playing a pedagogical leadership role to describe pathways to their leadership journey. As well, as theories around pedagogical leadership prosper, the need for professional learning around leading practice will also need to be identified.

Wingrave and McMahon (2016) detailed how Scotland's *Early Years Framework* influenced the professionalization of those working in ECE centers. With one aspect of the framework relating directly to leaders in the field, this study looked

at how professional development seeks to bring a lens of academicization to professionals who may lack formalized education such as a bachelor's degree. Wingrave and McMahon (2016) explored several implications of this repositioning and restructuring of the workforce. "The challenges have been to design training programs that address mandatory requirements, meet the needs of experienced professionals in full-time employment and support the transition into adult learning" (Wingrave & McMahon, 2016, pg.710). This article draws on empirical research with students, who discuss their response to initiatives that seek to create shifts in professional identity and provide opportunities for participants to re-establish their professional identity to increase personal notions of worth alongside those who obtain more formalized schooling/accreditations.

The study found that participants expressed trepidation around re-entering the formal school settings, as they had previously reported concern that they would not be able to achieve success in a more modern and fast-paced learning environment. The findings highlight the importance of the growing professionalization of ECEC in Alberta, but they also suggest this change must be accompanied by clear and mandated educational pathways. These new pathways would encourage non-certificated educators to aspire to become more educated, which not only benefits the educator but ultimately her practice with children, families, and within the wider ECEC community.

Research Gap

The literature reviewed shows the span of the research on leadership in ECEC. However, with over fifteen years of research on pedagogical leadership in ECEC, the

picture remains somewhat incomplete and additional research is needed. Throughout the literature reviewed here, it was evident that authors and researchers did explore and address the challenges with traditional views of leadership, but this did not remain the primary focus of many authors' work (Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012; Waniganayake et al., 2017). At the provincial, national, and international levels, there appears to be a lack of focused research on theorizing ECEC pedagogical leadership as a practice, a process, or a way of being, and this lack of focus results in a diminished insight and knowledge creation around leadership in ECEC (Atkinson & Biegun, 2018; Garrow-Oliver, 2017).

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Summary

Within EC contexts, the research reviewed primarily uses qualitative methods and captures the perceptions and outcomes of both EC leaders and educators. This review highlights the limited nature of research on pedagogical leadership in ECEC in general, with a dirth of Canadian research in this area. Through the literature reviewed, authors focused on strengthening and supporting ECEC leaders, and their

influence on quality pedagogical practices. The demand for accumulating research-based knowledge on ECEC leadership is vast (Rodd, 2013; Waniganayake et al., 2017). There does appear to be a significant gap in North American research that focuses on pedagogical leadership, specific to ECEC contexts. This study contributes to this gap by exploring how ECEC leaders in Alberta describe their understandings of leadership and pedagogy and offers insights into leadership perceptions and pedagogical practices.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how formal leaders explained the journey to becoming and growing as a pedagogical leader and to identify the pedagogical practices they describe using to support and engage EC educators in curriculum meaning-making within ECEC centers in Alberta.

This study employed a qualitative interpretive approach. As pedagogical leadership is a relatively new, unexplored notion in ECEC contexts, the advantage of such an approach is that by exploring unmapped landscapes. The research aimed to contribute to the existing body of literature by bridging the gap in knowledge and contextualizing the theoretical framework within an Albertan context. However, the emerging theories about pedagogical leadership have not yet created a corpus of documentation around how leaders understand and try to enact these roles. In response to this gap in praxis literature, especially in Alberta, an exploratory qualitative approach to these phenomena is crucial to lessen the theory/praxis divide. A qualitative approach to exploring the notion of pedagogical leadership in ECEC enabled me to focus on the specificity and complexity of the ECEC context in one region of Alberta. Through examining the uniqueness of the pedagogical leadership experience, the study aimed to produce new insights into the forces and influences that affect pedagogical leaders.

This research focused on describing and interpreting social world practices rather than testing a theory or causal relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative, interpretive research has the strength of being open and critically reflective about values and biases. Additionally, by accessing participants'

perspectives, beliefs and experiences, the interpretation can articulate a more nuanced and contextualized view of phenomena within social worlds (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Principle questions that guided the research are:

1. How do ECEC center leaders describe entering in to and developing in their pedagogical leadership role? What experiences have informed their pedagogical leadership practices?

2. How do pedagogical leaders describe their roles and the pedagogical practices used when engaging in curriculum decision making with EC educators?

3. What experiences do pedagogical leaders describe as potentially enriching and enlivening their work?

Research Rationale

This study adopted qualitative methodology and used an interpretive approach, with emphasis on exploring and understanding the phenomena of pedagogical leadership (Creswell, 2008). A qualitative approach brings together participants' perspectives and experiences to explore theory in practice and the relational dynamics that exist in between.

Qualitative research begins with the notion that the participants' perspectives are central to understanding the phenomena and views all life experiences using a holistic lens, acknowledging the interconnectedness of experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative methodology considers the participants' responses to questions such as "how?" and "why?" and encourages critical reflection of the practice by which events and actions take place, as it is principally concerned with in-depth understanding (Bryman, 2008; Patton, 2002). Such an approach is appropriate to

achieve the purpose of this study: to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and actions and to discover those commonly described issues that are related to their practical experiences as pedagogical leaders in ECEC, as leadership, particularly in education, is understood and experienced in a variety of ways.

Qualitative methods. Although qualitative work often is criticized for its subjective nature (Bryman, 2008, Creswell & Poth, 2018), qualitative approaches provides the researcher with a rich opportunity to construct meaning based on collected and analyzed data, all while situating the researcher amongst the participants, rather than outside (Patton, 2002). The benefit of an insider, or *emic,* perspective was needed in this case for participant trust and to understand the "in-group" language or "shop talk." An insider perspective can also present drawbacks such as overinterpreting data and being too close to the participant experience, causing blurred perspectives and assumptions; steps were taken in this research to mitigate these.

Qualitative methods seek to explore relationships among individuals, and the dynamic and interrelated nature of individual experiences (Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012). Close interactions with those playing the role of pedagogical leaders informed and clarified perceptions, understandings (or misunderstanding), and in this way, lessening the gaps in the current knowledge of pedagogical leadership in the ECEC context.

Given the nature of this study, along with the limited application of the theoretical discourse in pedagogical leadership, particularly within Alberta's ECEC context, there was an identified need to understand pedagogical leaders' experiences better and to interpret their organizational significance. Therefore, using interviewing

techniques (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire) seemed fitting for gathering relevant and illustrative data. "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p. 34). Patton (2002) describes an interview as a dialogue between two parties, the interviewer and the interviewee, for the primary purpose of capturing information from the interviewee. The interviews were considered as *interactions* to gather interview answers and build connections with the answers relevant to the research. The quality of data and findings depends on the interaction between the researcher and respondents (Creswell, 2008). The method of interviewing allows the researcher to build rapport with the participants, and results in a vivid and more comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomena. According to Bryman (2008), interviews are frequently employed in qualitative research and are viewed as flexible, as the verbal interactions with participants can be adapted to suit the research focus. This is shown in my study by the use of the semi structured interviews and the how the focus group dialogues protocol reflected data collection in the placed based dialogue.

Qualitative studies generate a wealth of detailed information about a small number of people and cases, resulting in an increased depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied, but with reduced generalizability (Patton, 2002). Within the highly localized nature of ECEC, this trade-off is purposeful, as generalizability was not a pursuit of this research. Instead, gathering the perspectives and experiences from the study's participants are likely to contribute to the local discourse around pedagogical leadership as practiced in these specific places. Qualitative methods

enable a consideration of the context and identify unexpected phenomena that may create new, grounded theories related to those phenomena (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). In other words, the researcher can begin with general questions and narrow them down so that, during or after data collection, concepts and theories can evolve (Bryman, 2008; Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research methods permit the researcher to interpret the data in personally significant ways and situate the researcher amongst the complex system of human interactions in a living environment (Creswell, 2008; Briggs et al., 2012). Qualitative data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews (one on one somewhat structured conversations), dialogues about artifacts, focus group dialogues and follow up questionnaires are consistent with the understanding of how individuals co-construct meaning and act on interpretations (Creswell, 2008; Briggs et al., 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Using these forms of data collection highlighted the importance that I, acting as the researcher, place on the participants' voices and experiences relative to research questions (Coleman in Briggs et al., 2012). Qualitative methods were significantly suited to the research context because my research endeavored to construct conceptions of pedagogical leadership in Alberta, which included exploring pedagogical practices the pedagogical leaders use within the ecology of ECEC centers (Creswell, 2008).

As an overview, this study was interpretive and used a qualitative methodology. There were two data collection phases over eight weeks. The first phase consisted of individual interviews (place-based dialogue or PBD) with 12 ECEC leader participants. Phase Two of the research consisted of seven of the 12 first phase

participants assembled for a focus group dialogue (FGD) and completed a follow-up questionnaire (FQ). All dialogues (placed-based and focus group) were audio-recorded, with permission, then transcribed. These transcriptions, as well as data from the, follow -up questionnaires, were then coded and clustered in thematic ways.

Setting

This study focused on pedagogical leadership within accredited full-day child care centers in the metro Edmonton region. As described above, in Alberta, child care accreditation was a voluntary process through which licensed child care programs demonstrated met accreditation standards of excellence over and above provincial licensing regulations. The Alberta Accreditation standards reflected leading practices characteristic of high-quality child care for children and their families (Alberta Ministry of Human Services, 2013a). Effective April 1, 2020, the Government of Alberta no longer supports a child care accreditation system. Effective April 1, 2020. Previously, the Alberta government sponsored some select centers in a recent pilot project, *Early Learning and Child Care Pilot (2015).* This project funded 122 full-day child care centers now recognized as Alberta's *ELCC Centers*. At ELCC Centers families pay $25/day child care (in contrast to approximately $70/day in many Alberta centers), and each ELCC Center receives additional funding for two features relevant to this study: 1. an assigned pedagogical partner (a member of a provincial team who provides once-monthly pedagogical support but does not work within the center); and 2. supplemental funding for other innovative practices. All these factors created a *most likely* context in which pedagogical leadership is practiced. Patton (2002) describes this approach as purposive sampling:

Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about

issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term

purposeful sampling (p.169).

Participants

Study participants were limited to those who self-identify as pedagogical

leaders in accredited, non-profit ECEC centers in the greater Edmonton region. The

research goal was to have six to eight participants for this qualitative study, allowing

for enough variety while focusing on depth. The initial plan was to send an invitation

letter to center leaders of the almost 50 non-profit and accredited centers that met the

site criteria described above within the greater Edmonton region. The invitations letter

requested participation from center leaders who work closely with educators to

observe, document and interpret what is happening in the play environment and then

work with educators to reflect, plan and project responsive learning experiences

for/with children (Appendix C: Initial Email Contact)**.** Uncertain about the rate of

response and based on recommendations from my committee, I sent 15 invitation

letters first, and then within a week and depending on the number of positive

responses from the initial call for participation, 15 additional invitation letters were to

be sent, and so on until the desired number of potential participants was met. The

initial 15 center leaders were at the top of the distribution list because of the center

leader or ECEC center profile (EC center profile, community context, and potential

participants' educational credentials), which created the potential for pedagogical

leadership practice. This idea presupposes the idea that the ability to communicate an

understanding of the practices related to leading within an ECEC context demands a

leader who is well versed in the local context and has a knowledge of EC theories. The first 15 invitation letters were sent to leaders whose centers represent a range of community contexts. I had previously visited 10 of the 15 potential participants ECEC centers but had never visited five of the centers.

Within 24 hours after the initial call for participation, 12 of the 15 center leaders expressed interest in participating in the research study. With such a favorable response in such a short timeframe, the criteria outlined vetted potential participants. Excluded respondents did not meet all the established criteria and were not added to the participant pool. All 12 initial respondents met the outlined criteria and were included in the study.

Once all the place-based dialogues (first phase of the data collection) were completed, I invited all 12 participants to take part in the second phase of the research (focus group and follow up questionnaire). Seven of the twelve first phase participants expressed interest in participating in Phase Two of the research: focus group and follow up questionnaire.

Participants' years of experience with formal leadership ranged from less than one year to over 20 years; participants also held a range of educational credentials. Although these two demographic variables were not a sampling technique the data, reported in Tables 3 and 4, shows how participant years of experience and educational credentials distributed across the two phases of data collection. The data shown in the tables add an extra dimension to the participant profile.

Table 3

Participant profile: Number of participants and experience as a formal leader

Experience as a formal leader (Years)	Total number of participants (N=12)	Number of participants in Phase Two (n=7)
One or less	3	2
2-5*	2	1
6-10	3	2
10+	4	2

*Note. Included more than one year

Table 3

Participant profile: Number of participants and educational qualifications

Educational qualifications	Total number of participants (N =12)	*Number of participants in Phase Two (n=7)*
2-year diploma in ECEC	5	3
Bachelor's Degree *	6	3
Graduate Degree	1	1

*Note. Completed or in progress

Role of the Researcher

In my role as Associate Professor in ECEC at McEwan University, I approached this research as both a member of the ECEC community and as an onlooker to the current practice in the local ECEC community. As a co-author of *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* (2014), there was a potential that I would be perceived by some members of the ECEC community to hold expert knowledge around curriculum meaning-making and the practices around using the *Flight* (2014) framework.

In contrast, there was potential that participants could perceive me as an *ivory tower academic*, removed from the practice community; a professor responsible for evaluating the professional practice of preservice educators; or as an out of touch critic who has not kept up with the shifts in current practices within the ECEC community.

Qualitative studies recognize that the researcher is a social actor and an instrument for studying the social aspects of other human beings (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). I was not an anonymous researcher without prior connection to or knowledge of the study's phenomena. I acknowledged my own biases, previous professional roles I have held, along with my professional reputation, as these served to situate my understanding within the research. My professional position potentially influenced my access to prospective participants, yet, my experiences and expertise helped me to become attuned to the participants' experiences and explanations because of my knowledge of the ECEC context. My insider knowledge may have supported me to better engage with their meaning-making, to elicit deeper reflection based on our shared engagement in the field. Within each data collection event, I offered explanations to participants about my role as a researcher and the intentions of the research in an attempt to mitigate the potential adverse effects of unacknowledged preconceptions. Adherence to qualitative research standards and practices for bracketing endeavored to reduce personal bias and the over-interpretation of the data. Overall, my positionality informed my analysis, recognizing the limitations and overall research findings. Merriam (2009) suggests that researchers should consider observation and participant observation research on a continuum that describes the

role between the observer and the observed. The author delineates the division of the

continuum.

Table 5

Continuum of roles for the observer and the observed

Complete observer	Observer as participant	Participant as observer	Collaborative partner (research role not concealed)	Complete Participant (research role concealed)

Note: Adapted from Merriam, 2009

Using the above continuum as a reference, I situated my participation in this research

as participant as observer, acknowledging my previous and current roles (former EC

educator; co-author of *Flight* (2014); frequent presenter at professional learning

opportunities; former pedagogical mentor, a post-secondary educator).

Research protocols. Establishing protocols for data collection was intended to

ensure credibility as the data collection methods would be transparent. Similarly, the

data was analyzed in ways that were ethically sound, rigorous and tested data for all

possible explanations (Patton, 2010). Madriz in Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describes

how notions of power and oppression can contaminate results and it is essential that

participants know that their responses are safe and will not be used in ways that

perpetuate the power differential. As previously stated, an interview done in person

provided the opportunity to collect data from participants who may have been initially

hesitant to share their opinions and experiences with others in the focus group

(Coleman, in Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012). Member checking was used as a

way for participants to ensure that the data I have collected accurately represented

their ideas and perspectives. The reliability of data was established through triangulating the data–comparing responses from the three parallel data collection occasions.

Positionality. Under qualitative research standards, I worked conscientiously to maintain a professional stance in each research relationship to ensure that I collected, interpreted and reported each participant's ideas and perspectives as respectfully and accurately as possible. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, identifying the positionality of the researcher (identifying and naming potential biases) is paramount to build researcher credibility and to ensure that data is not misused to simply confirm the researcher's desired outcomes (Patton, 2002). The researcher should seek to triangulate the data to show that the themes identified come from multiple (3 or more) data sources, looking for events to achieve confirmability and transferability (Merriam, 2009). Looking for disconfirming data in interviews, focus groups transcripts and fieldnotes also support credibility and validity (Patton, 2002). By intentionally seeking disconfirming data, I remained open to alternate interpretations and required continuous awareness of my stance. Exploring the notion of "analyst triangulation," outside readers conducted an initial review of the findings to test the credibility and gain alternate perspectives (Patton, 2002). The research data and data codes were cross-verified by an outside reader.

Bracketing. It was important to acknowledge and accept that my perceived status potentially could have affected the research in ways I could not control. As the researcher in this study, my position was as both "insider" and "outsider." Since a

subset of participants (7) were engaged on three separate occasions, (1. place-based dialogue, 2. focus group dialogues and 3. Follow up questionnaire), considerable work was required to address the perception of power, as I am also identified by some members of the local ECEC community as operating outside the practice field and occupying a space in the theoretical/academic community. My active engagement in the local ECEC community for the past 25 years, and my gender as a woman, situate me as an insider or having an *emic* perspective, meaning from within the group (Merriam, 2009). However, my current position as a curriculum framework developer, researcher and university professor potentially could have raised issues of power imbalance that simultaneously created an outsider perspective or an *etic perspective*, meaning from outside the group (Merriam, 2009). The relational dimension of the semi-structured interview process, helped to acknowledge both the emic and etic perspective, and all recognizes all aspects of researcher's role (Coleman,. in Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012).

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of twelve place-based dialogues (including co-selected artifacts), one focus group and one follow up questionnaire. The data was collected over eight weeks and resulted in a data corpus of over 100 000 transcribed words. Given the research purpose, seeking an individual's experiences and perspective requires research methods that can capture the nuances of the data. Interviews were an ideal method to obtain in-depth insights into participants' experiences. The place-based dialogues focus group dialogues and follow up

questionnaires were used to invite participant answers to predetermined questions, while remaining reasonably open-ended. These methods served the exploratory nature of this study.

First, I developed data-gathering instruments designed to elicit detailed information about pedagogical leadership in ECE contexts, rather than broad information about leadership or ECEC practices in general. The questions were informed by the relevant literature on ECEC leadership and pedagogy. Second, the data-gathering strategy offered the flexibility to elaborate on questions, (drawing on my own professional and literature-based knowledge) and ask follow-up and probing questions in real-time, which was vital to ensuring a shared understanding of the interview questions. Understanding participants' experiences and beliefs were critically important. The flexibility afforded by using interviewing was essential to the data collection process.

Recursive approach to data gathering and analysis. Recursivity refers to the recurrent nature of qualitative research, with all the processes repeating within a cycle until meeting a specified condition. Using a holistic stance, the researcher approaches the data by moving from an inductive mode of inquiry to a deductive mode of inquiry and then back to an inductive mode of inquiry. Establishing protocols for data collection seek to ensure credibility as the data collection methods will be transparent, and the data was analyzed in ways that are ethically sound, rigorous, and test the data for all possible explanations (Patton, 2002).

To support the recursive approach to data gathering and analysis, each interview protocol, which included the interview questions focused on the three main themes: pathways to becoming (and being) a pedagogical leader (RQ 1); pedagogical practices leaders described using to support EC educator curriculum meaning-making, and these practices develop (RQ 2); and ways pedagogical leaders describe the ways their work could be enriched/enlivened through additional supports (RQ #3). All data collection methods were designed to reflect the research purpose and questions, literature review and research framework. All interviews were audio-recorded (with expressed consent), and corresponding field notes/researcher notes were created to ensure a comprehensive collection of data (Patton, 2002).

Data collection schedule. This study had a defined data collection schedule (8 weeks) supporting the notion of credibility in data collection and within a natural setting. As well, eight weeks afforded me sufficient time to review and revisit data over time while still collecting data, contributing to the credibility of the study. Eleven of 12 participants chose to be interviewed in their ECEC center, with only one participant asking to meet outside of her workplace. The questions explored specific aspects of the research questions. Critical questions focused on the descriptions of participants' experiences in their role as a pedagogical leader, as well as questions that attempted to capture personal experiences as well as their perceived leadership joys and challenges.

Placed-based Dialogues. The first phase of semi-structured interviews was conducted in a process called a *place-based dialogue*. The intention of engaging

participants in the form of a walkabout, was to ask questions as the participant walked

me through the center, pointing out (sometimes literally) various aspects of their

program (Appendix F: Place-Based Dialogue Protocol). The place-based dialogue

acknowledged the localized and highly contextualized nature of ECEC and drew on

the central notions of Reggio Emilia philosophies. These ideas reconceptualize place

and space (Environment as Third Teacher) as a central discourse in recognizing the

interactions between the classroom environment and emergent curriculum meaning-

making in ECEC (Rinaldi, 2006; Fraser, 2011). While looking and discussing *artifacts*

such as playroom provocations (play set-ups that educators have created), displays of

documentation and planning processes, the traces of the pedagogical process became

more visible. The examples of pedagogical documentation offered me the chance to

make connections between the EC educator's practice as a pedagogical leader and how

this was reflected in their practice and, ultimately, in the center environment. The

word *traces* highlight the often invisible or not easily recognizable nature of this

pedagogical work and served to illuminate its generative nature. The term *traces*

seemed to be a more fitting term than the ubiquitous term of *outcomes*, which adopts a

modernist view of ECEC and presupposes that all pedagogical leadership practices

have tangible and easily observable results (Dahlberg et al., 1999). With a focus on

asking the participants to show me the traces of the process that they have co-created

with EC educators, the tacit nature of this pedagogical work was foregrounded.

Co-selected artifacts. Embedded in the place-based dialogues was a process

of selecting artifacts (maximum of three pieces) that some participants and I co-

identified as symbolic of their pedagogical work. These artifacts served to articulate the pedagogical investigations enacted by each participant, and as well, these artifacts are conceptualized as traces of the pedagogical process. Artifacts were co-selected and used in the form of a pedagogical show-n-tell at the focus group dialogues. The dialogue around the co-selection, as well as the dialogues generated while sharing the artifacts during focus group discussions with other participants, were helped to illustrate the process nature of the pedagogical work and were included in the data. These artifacts were intended to illuminate the often-hidden nature of curriculum, meaning-making/decision-making process. Capturing the dialogue while co-selecting and then sharing these artifacts, participants' verbal responses were used to triangulate data collected throughout place-based and the focus group dialogues. As well, these artifacts were intended to create opportunities for dialogue and to lead to other dimensions that might not otherwise be articulated in the dialogues/focus group data (had the artifacts not been present). The artifacts led to participant analysis that added another perspective that was not articulated in the data collected through place-based dialogues, focus group dialogues and follow up questionnaires.

Phase Two Data Collection

  Focus group dialogues. Seven participants attended a focus group dialogue and were asked to bring the co-selected artifacts just described to be used as a provocation or a spark for discussion during the focus group. Krueger and Casey (2009) have defined the focus group as a "carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-

threatening environment" (p.5). The focus group process focused on the pedagogical practices and curriculum tools leaders describe using to support EC educator curriculum decision making, a process that was also explored one-on-one in the place-based dialogues. (Appendix I: Focus Group Interview Protocol). It was intended that the co-selected artifacts would provoke and foster the discussion amongst participants (RQ# 2). The goal of the focus group activities was to create an opportunity for participants to brainstorm together. Then they participated in a concept development process (Taba,1971), as each participant shared their written words and then grouped with their written words with other's words and labelled the category. The focus group activities resulted in detailed information about both personal and group feelings, experiences, perceptions and opinions.

Follow-up questionnaire. After the focus group dialogues, participants completed an electronic follow-up questionnaire using the Qualtrics platform. As stated previously, open-ended questions invited participants to contribute beyond the questions asked by the researcher and sought to yield dynamic data, using these rigorous methods (Patton, 2002). The questionnaire focused on the practices that shape their work as a pedagogical leader; and the joys and challenges they experienced; and their perceptions of pedagogical leadership in Alberta. The intention behind the follow-up questionnaire also adheres to the recursive aspect by also inviting participants to share reflections on the group experience individually.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) reminds us that qualitative design is emergent, and within this emergent nature, the research cannot forecast each participant's actions during data collection; therefore, data analysis may employ researcher hunches, best guesses and wonderings. The process of data analysis was as follows. Each dialogue (PBD, FGD) was transcribed from the audio recording, and I as reviewed each transcription for accuracy, I referred to my field jot notes and memos, and other physical data such as sticky notes and short answer sheets from the focus group dialogues. Data from the follow up questionnaires was reviewed thoroughly as well. Initial codes were developed based on the nature of the interview questions and reviewed literature (Saldaña, 2009). With inductive analysis, larger themes were identified, defined and re-defined from the findings, the analysis begins with the details and moves toward the more general or big picture. For the research purpose of defining what was not well understood (actual enactments of a theorized practice), I used a constant comparative approach which began identifying commonalities in the data. Once themes had been established, I identified data that provided a contrast. Data was coded from the beginning of data collection rather than waiting until the end of the data collection process (Saldaña, 2009). This process described the participants' responses in pursuit of developing themes to ensure that transparency in coding/analysis as well as member checking to ensure the analysis of the stories and documents gathered accurately represented the participants' experiences and understandings. According to Saldaña (2009), analysis of the research data should be an ongoing process. The analysis

process began during data collection in an achieve more focused data and to avoid

repetitive data. Merriam (2009) states:

Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming

in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that has been

analyzed while being collected is both parsimonious and illuminating (p. 171).

This rigorous process begins with the idea that the data be organized and then coded

using the researcher identified descriptions, themes and categories, which remain

consistent, even as smaller descriptions are incorporated within broader themes and

categories throughout the process of analysis.

Inductive and deductive data analysis. Using a recursive approach requires

the researcher to collect and analyze the data in a concurrent manner (Bryman &

Teevan, 2005). Bryman and Teevan (2005) explain that this undulating process moves

from inductive to deductive reasoning, and then back to inductive reasoning and

invites and encourages the researcher to be open to unanticipated results. Analysis of

the data was carried out both deductively using a priori concepts brought to the

research (e.g. leadership, pedagogical leadership, social learning theory constructs

such as brokering, the community of practice and boundary objects), and inductively

that identified themes or new constructs. This research required this kind of reciprocal

process because of the undetermined nature of pedagogical leadership in ECEC and

the complex nature of this work.

Bryman (2008) states that the inductive approach to analysis is concerned with

generating theory from research data analyzed, therefore the goal of the analysis was

to contribute to the theoretical knowledge around pedagogical leadership in Alberta.

As stated earlier, all consenting interviews/dialogues were audiotaped and then

transcribed. Priori codes were identified, and the data were clustered into themes and

patterns (Saldaña, 2009). These were further analyzed and refined by new codes

(Appendix K: Codes), which were identified through systematic inductive analysis and

overlapping co-occurring codes were identified. Transcripts were viewed as an

iterative process rather than a discrete event and were shared with and commented on

by participants for verification purposes, or member checking (Saldaña, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

I will address three areas regarding ethical considerations: informed consent,

confidentiality, bracketing. Participants were made explicitly aware of the potential

risks, harm, and benefits because they participated in the study. This study adhered to

all guidelines required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As well, ethics

approval was granted by two University's research ethics approval boards, as I was

required to gain approval from the university where I am employed as a faculty

member. With MacEwan University's ethics approval, the study was granted

permission to invite educators from the on-site University child care center to

participate in the study.

Informed consent. I ensured informed consent was given from all participants

by first describing the purpose and the nature of the research, including possible risks

and benefits of participation. At the center of informed consent is the notion that all

participants are made explicitly aware that their participation is voluntary, and they, as

participants can withdraw from the research study at any point, without exception.

Potential participants were informed around the potential time commitments and

anticipated level of participation required. This information was described

concurrently with the call for participants so that each potential participant could make

an informed decision about their possible participation and was achieved by a letter

which accompanied the call for participation in the research study.

Confidentiality. Participants were made aware of potential issues of

confidentiality (challenges with anonymity inherent in focus group interviews) and

were informed of who might have access to the research interviews and notes. I asked

that participants' consent to my right to publish all or parts of their interviews, but not

before I shared my interpretations with them for clarification and further discussion. I

provided participants with the option to choose their pseudonyms. Although time-

consuming, place-based dialogues provided important insights into participants'

perspectives, contributed to participant anonymity, and insight into how/why the

participant acts in their role as a pedagogical leader. Ultimately, for the data to reveal

the nature of the pedagogical leadership experience, building trust between the

researcher and the participant is crucial. Building trust with participants takes time.

Therefore, a confidential place-based dialogue was conducted with each participant

and served to create comfort and confidence in participants' responses and

perspectives, may be interpreted and shared in ethically responsible ways.

Summary

   This chapter discussed the research design of this study and identified the methodology employed to explore pedagogical leadership phenomena in the ECEC contexts in Alberta. The purpose of this research was to explore how pedagogical leadership is enacted, and the pedagogical practices that leaders use to support EC educators in curriculum decision making. Adopting an interpretive inductive approach, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus group dialogues, and a follow-up questionnaire was deemed to be best matched for the nature of this study and for their ability to reveal the complex details of diverse phenomena, such as participants experiences and perceptions. The results of this analysis will be reported in Chapter Four, with subsequent discussion in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how ECEC leaders described their journey to becoming a pedagogical leader, and the pedagogical practices used to engage with EC educators in curriculum meaning making. This study aimed to contribute to the emerging research on pedagogical leadership by investigating Canadian ECEC contexts and explored whether the findings parallel the constructs of pedagogical leadership reflected in the research literature. This chapter presents the results of this study in response to the principle questions that guided the research. The findings reflect the commonalities and contrasts in participants' leadership role descriptions and how they engaged with educators in the curriculum meaning making process. Each research question findings are systemically reported and drew on data collected from the collections events: place-based dialogues (PBD), focus group dialogues (FGD), and follow-up questionnaire (FQ).

Research Question #1

How do ECEC center leaders describe entering in to and developing in their pedagogical leadership role? What experiences have informed the progression of their pedagogical leadership practices?

Findings for Research Question #1

The findings discussed in this section are a result of participants' responses from the place-based dialogues, and the focus group dialogues, including the group activities. To better understand how formal leaders, enter into pedagogical leadership

(RQ1), participants were asked to describe their pathway to becoming a formal leader, and the experiences that shaped their pedagogical leadership abilities.

Developing into Leadership

In overview, findings showed that most participants (ten of 12) began their EC careers as practicing EC educators before they transitioned into a formal leadership role. In contrast, two participants entered into formal leadership with limited first-hand experiential knowledge of working with children. Nine of the 12 participants described their hesitancy around taking on a formal leadership role and voiced initial feelings ranging from self-doubt and reluctance. With time and support from a mentor (within or outside the organization), all 12 participants reported feeling less tentative about their new role/responsibilities when they felt supported by a peer leader. Participants described that upon accepting a formal leadership role, they slowly developed leadership skills and pedagogical strategies.

Findings from participants' descriptions identified their leadership progression, as participants shared personal experiences that they credit with shaping their current approaches. These included: building connections within localized ECEC communities and beyond, co-constructing intentional plans for change and growth; and professional learning experiences (formal and informal).

Becoming a leader. Ten of the 12 participants reported that their pathway to pedagogical leadership began in the playroom as an EC educator, as a recent graduate of a post-secondary Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) diploma program. When describing this pattern, these participants remembered having acted first as a novice

educator in the playroom with children, then they progressed, with time and experience to more senior roles within the playroom (e.g. team lead; room supervisor). As an illustration, Elizabeth explained that she acted as a leader within her playroom team, before taking a more formal leadership role:

My leadership journey started in the playroom being [pause] or taking on leadership roles, like supporting educators, maybe taking the lead when it came to planning, and family events…things like that. Even I think I was just modelling certain interactions with children". (Elizabeth, PBD)

Elizabeth's description reflects how most other participants described their progression towards leadership: For Pilar, she was a member of a playroom team, who developed their leadership capacities as a team. Unlike Elizabeth's experience, Pilar described how her team shared the leadership role by mentoring one another:

I started working towards that end [leadership], but it wasn't just me, but it was like a team thing. We became a strong team, which kind of turned into a leading team".

(Pilar, PBD)

Pilar experiences with a collaborative style of leadership helped to strengthen the team's practice as a group and allowed Pilar herself to *try on* a leadership role before accepting a formal leadership role. Pilar's early leadership experiences were not uncommon to what other participants described; however, the circumstances or context of Pilar's experiences were unique to her. This forefronts the finding there was no universal roadmap to formal leadership in ECEC for all participants. Instead, the participant's center context shaped their personal experiences.

Two of the 12 participants reported that they did not have prior experiences working directly with children in an ECEC center, before taking on the first formal leadership role. Olive reported that she went directly into a leadership role immediately after earning a post-secondary diploma early learning. She recounted her first experiences as a novice leader, without extensive first-hand educator practice experience:

[…] right out of school, I took on a director position at a for-profit daycare and I really hated it. I was actually only there… for six or eight weeks. I went into it with that intention to be able to mentor staff […] to really build a culture, a strong healthy culture from the beginning. And really…there wasn't time for really anything….so being able to have those kind of reflective dialogues was pretty impossible [while we tried to just] get through the day. (Olive, PBD)

Olive described that she left her formal leadership position and the ECEC center and re-entered as an EC educator:

And then when I came here [current ECEC center], I was offered an assistant director position and I turned it down. I was like, "I do not want that position", because I attributed that position with a lot of stress…and I didn't want to take it on again. I started as an educator here. And then inside my first year I moved into kind of a team lead position, and really took a lead in curriculum. And then at the end of my first year here, I was offered to come off the floor to be a pedagogical specialist. (Olive, PBD)

Olive explained that in her next job, she was recruited to play a formal leadership role, but instead, she chose an educator position. While Olive initially went straight into a leadership role as a new graduate, her re-entry began in a playroom, as an educator. Nine participants, then, described how their formal leadership journey included time as a practicing educator, and eventually, Olive experienced this, too.

Like Olive, Kate described having never worked in an ECEC center before first accepting a formal leadership role. Kate's description of her initial reaction to leadership in an EC center was negative and similar to Olive's initial experiences:

When I first started [in a formal leadership role], I don't think I knew nearly anything about a child care setting. Like I knew about it because I had done practicums…but never did I really want to work in childcare, because I hadn't seen the most positive examples. When I walked in the door…it was the first time I actually had seen [the ECEC] program and it, kind of scared me so much that I almost wanted to go away. (Kate, PBD)

While Olive resigned from her inaugural leadership role and accepted a new position as a practicing educator in a playroom, Kate remained in her leadership role despite the challenges and carved out her leadership path. She described that her initial focus was on managing the EC center:

[…] initially my focus was more on policies and things that needed to get done. But I think that's not really been my strong suit, like the policies and procedures, necessarily. I've always been intrigued by the people side of it. And so naturally, I think I spent more time in the classrooms trying to figure out how do I get the work

performance that I was hoping for, to shift that kind of way of being from the

negative (of how I looked at child care) to what I hoped it could be. (Kate, PBD)

Kate described how she began to build a vision for the center by finding her place in

the playroom. Although Kate's experience was the reverse of the other participants'

experiences, she explained how her first-hand experiences with children and educators

while acting as a formal leader was an important starting point in her leadership

journey. In the end, both Kate's and Olive's progression to formal leadership was

initiated by experiential experiences with children and educators, which echoed the

journey to leadership described by the other 10 participants. This substantive finding

linked experiential learning as a skilled educator, with future formal ECEC leadership

opportunities.

Recognized potential. Participants described being recruited for formal

leadership when another colleague noticed their leadership potential. Half of the

participants reported that their practice as an educator was endorsed by others

resulting in opportunities to lead others in their practice. Jehan asserted that her

preparation for leadership began in the playroom as a skillful educator:

Like a lot of people in our field, I started out as a leader because I was really good at

my job, so I was a good frontline educator. I valued children, I did good

programming and they just said, "you're our next leader" (Jehan, PBD).

As Jehan's practice strengths were recognized by others, and eventually herself, it

became evident to everyone, as she described it, that formal leadership was her logical

next step. Eve reflected that she, too, was recruited for formal leadership because the

center leader endorsed her leadership with other educators. Contrary to the unanimous support Jehan experienced, Eve worried that the other educators would not acknowledge her competence as a leader of practice. She wondered if her extensive experience as an educator would translate into trust from her peers—was her experience with children enough? Would the trust she developed with her peers inside the playroom, transfer once she was acting in a pedagogical leadership role? Eve explained:

I took on a leadership role because I was told that I was ready for it [but I wondered:] 'How do you build relationships with people [educators] that don't trust you in that sense yet?' I struggled with feeling a lack of credibility. [I wondered] I don't know if they know that I know what I'm talking about because… I had worked frontline with them. (Eve, PBD)

Throughout Eve's place-based interview, she underscored the importance she placed on building and nurturing a trusting relationship with team members. Perhaps Eve's initial trepidation around leadership led her to focus on core values like building trust in collaborative relationships. It is also possible that other educators did perceive Eve as capable and were confident in her, but instead, it was Eve who was unaware of her leadership abilities. In any event, Eve's feelings around lack of creditability demonstrated, that preparation for a formal leadership role required more than practice with children. Nevertheless, Eve accepted the position and focused on building relationships with her team.

Like Eve, Melanie described being initially unaware of her leadership potential. However, when pointed out to her, she was able to recognize herself as an emerging leader:

I didn't see my [own] leadership qualities actually. I just did what I did. I did what I thought was best by children and families. I did what I thought was best by my team and the center. I did what I thought was in alignment with what I believed in…I always had this innate ability to [challenge others' thinking about curriculum] that wasn't demeaning or hurtful in any way….when I started doing that, [my center director] started pointing it out to me…And then I started to be like, "Oh yeah! Okay…Yeah! (Melanie, PBD)

Melanie described her eagerness to become a pedagogical leader as she felt ready to take on the role. Melanie described how her leadership abilities had surfaced while in practice with peers in the playroom (Melanie, PBD). In other words, Melanie's leadership abilities became more established in the doing of her work. Melanie's work as a noteworthy educator led to formal leadership opportunities. By doing the work of an educator (and doing it well), she was becoming and being a leader, while still evolving in her role as an educator, almost simultaneously.

As well, Melanie stated that she believed that her leadership abilities were "innate," suggesting that she ascribed leadership abilities to personality. Melanie subsequently described her notion of developing a "pedagogical personality" during the place-based dialogue. Melanie's concept of *developing a pedagogical personality* is explored later in this chapter.

Data showed that when others endorsed their demonstrated leadership capacities with others, participants became more aware and increasingly more attentive to their leadership abilities, demonstrating that once, what was latent (to the participant) became more overt.

Leadership Hesitancy. Unlike Jehan and Melanie, not all participants reported a smooth transition from educator to pedagogical leader. Echoing Eve's experiences with doubt, reluctance often overshadowed participants' willingness to embrace first formal leadership opportunities. Participants shared their initial feelings around formal leadership and reported having feelings ranging from nervous anticipation to terror. Commonly, participants described their initial leadership experiences as negative and stress-inducing, and used statements like, "it was stressful," "It was terrifying," "it was nerve-wracking," and "I felt that I was jumping into the deep end." These reported feelings led to wariness around their performance as a formal leader.

The reluctant leader. Without a clear sense of the leadership responsibilities, over half of the participants reported reluctancy in accepting a formal leadership role. Marie recounted her feelings about becoming a formal leader: "I felt like a fraud, an imposter!" (Marie, PBD). Her use of the word 'fraud" suggests that Marie held a particular image of a true pedagogical leader and believed that she did not measure up:

  I first started out as a very resistant leader. The concept, the word, the word *leader*

  meant something that made me very uncomfortable. Like you need to be the knower

  of all, have all the answers, lead everybody. [....] right from my very first day in the

field, I knew I will never be a leader. I'm not…it's not comfortable for me. (Marie,

PBD).

Marie's feelings of inadequacy and uneasy thoughts around the word: *leader*,

illustrated her association between formal leadership and acting autocratic. She

described that she felt unsuitable for leadership. Marie described that, with time, she

developed a leadership style that reflected the value she placed on reciprocal

relationships within the ECEC center community. Marie said, "And now my definition

has completely changed the way I currently visualize leadership, [which] is walking

along beside people or, and in many cases walking behind them, putting them up to

the front (Marie, PBD).

Marie's personal view of leadership contributed to her initial reluctance. In

other cases, participants who had reported feeling inadequately prepared to meet the

challenge of formal leadership described not initially welcoming the leadership

opportunity. Jehan remembered that she had not sought formal leadership

opportunities within her ECEC center and declined (politely) opportunities to play a

formal leadership role:

…we expanded our program and (my senior administrator) said, "You're going to go

run that program." My initial response was, "No, thank you." I said, "No, thank

you…like that was really nice of you. Thank you for thinking of me. But I really

enjoy my work with children, and I want to continue that work with children." I had

only been a graduate for maybe 1 or 2 years, and I felt like I had more work to do

with children before taking on a leadership role. (Jehan, PBD).

This comment contrasted with what Jehan had stated earlier, "I was really good at my job, so I was a good frontline educator" (PBD). While she acknowledged her competency as an educator, she did not think that she had enough experience with children. Jehan perceived crossing a threshold of practice experiences resulted in *readiness* for formal leadership.

    Leadership by default. As previously established by participants' comments, becoming a pedagogical leadership was due to prior practice as an exemplary educator. However, two participants reported that their longevity at the center was their principle qualifier for formal leadership. They described being the only educator suitable to take on the formal leadership role, "[If] you stay in a place for long enough, and you look around you and there's nobody else [to take on the leadership role]" (Marie, PBD).

    Marie's comments (partially in jest) described that she was the 'last one standing,' and she felt obliged to step into a leadership role. Eve followed up this idea when she described that she was called on to take a leadership role because "there was slim picking." She comments suggested there was no one else available or willing to take on the leadership role (Eve, PBD). Both participants attributed their career endurance as the main qualifier for their first formal leadership role.

    In contrast, Louise described how she was the most novice member of the team but was recruited for a leadership role, considered by others as the most *qualified* educator at the center because she had completed post-secondary training. Louise

recounted a time in Alberta when very few center staff had any type of formal training

or professional learning:

> The director seemed to acknowledge the fact that I had a one-year certificate in early
>
> childhood, which was more than all the other staff had. So, she did…engage me in,
>
> questions around how this might look. I would say my leadership began very early,
>
> even though I was very green. The second position I found myself in, as well, I was
>
> the only person who had a two-year diploma. So again, I found people looking to me
>
> for leadership. (Louise, PBD).

In Louise's case, it was determined by the center leader that Louise's formal training

in ECEC meant that she held expert knowledge, and therefore prepared for formal

leadership. Louise recounted that she was still perplexed (decades later) that her

perceived theoretical knowledge eclipsed the practical knowledge held by those who

had many years of practice experience and deep connections to the context of the

ECEC center, but not academically prepared. Louise's one-year certificate held much

more *weight*, suggesting that leadership aptitude was often associated with academic

credentialing.

      Leading and Learning. Once participants had accepted offers to formal

leadership roles, they described their process of coming to understand their pedagogic

role by coming to know *what to do* and *how to do it*. Acknowledging the potential

challenge of articulating their leadership development, participants were asked about

the initial questions they had around their new leadership role. As participants

responded, they also described how they pursued answers to their questions. The data

showed that participants' early leadership questions led them to: build connections with others within the ECEC center, seek support and inspiration (inside and outside the ECEC center), and create a pedagogic vision.

Building connections within the ECEC center. The findings demonstrated that the co-creation of the curriculum with educators was clearly connected to the formal leader's abilities to develop and nurture a relational approach to curriculum decision making. Throughout the data, all participants emphasized how the quality of their relationships with educators, children and families was foundational in how they defined their role as pedagogical leaders. They described pedagogical engagement with educators as bound to their ability to develop meaningful and collaborative relationships within the ECEC center. As they developed into their pedagogical leadership roles, the nature of the relationships evolved. To describe how her development began with making connections and trust-building with the educators, Pilar used the metaphor of a journey (an idea that Marie and Lucy also shared during their PBD). Pilar described how she endeavored to engage with educators as they walked alongside each other, in the curriculum decision-making process:

 I wanted to learn with [EC educators]. "Can you and I, can we join together? Can we

 go on this journey together beside each other, and not me following you, or you

 behind me?' So, that's how I approached my new role…I approached it from that

 place of "Can we walk together? [.] and maybe sometimes I might lead and maybe

 sometimes you might lead, but we're moving forward together. I'm not dragging you

along. You're not dragging me. We both want to be in this together and learn from

each other. (Pilar, PBD)

For Pilar, her role was dependent on the quality of the relational connections, nurtured

by focused engagement with educators in a collaborative pedagogical process. She

expressed her desire to learn *from* and *alongside* educators, as partners in the process.

Because Pilar viewed the educators as guides in her development—the team provided

her guidance as she guided the educators.

     Seeking support from center peers. Olive also described the relationships she

developed with the team, but specifically, she described how mentoring from her

center director provided valuable guidance. This contrasted with her earlier

experiences:

  …probably the first year I would say was a very steep learning curve. And I really

  didn't feel like I knew what I was doing. […] the most significant difference between

  my experience at my first center [left due to lack of support] and this center, was that

  I had a strong boss…. A strong executive director who was really willing to mentor

  the skills that I was missing. (Olive, PBD)

Olive continued and recalled how the center director guided her by asking her to draw

parallels between the relationships she had developed with children to inform how she

would develop pedagogical relationships with educators:

  One thing that she [center director] did that was quite distinct was had me look at

  parallel practice and be able to apply what I knew about working with kids to

working with adults. And as that happened, I gained a lot more confidence. (Olive,

PBD)

Guided by the center director, Olive held up the relationships that she developed with

children as a mirror for the development of pedagogical relationships with the

educators. Lucy also described the support she received from both her center leader, as

well as other team leads within the center:

She [center leader] supported my doubts and reflections and questions really

effectively. But also, I felt supported by the other team leads that I was working

alongside within the other playrooms. (Lucy, PBD)

These two examples indicated that collaborative team relationships in the form of

support from other leaders in the center was influential on Olive's and Lucy's

pedagogical leadership development.

Seeking inspiration. Participants universally described the importance of

building strong relationships with others within the ECEC center, to build trust and

nurture a spirit of collaboration. Moreover, the findings also showed that reaching out

to others beyond the ECEC center to build peer collaborations were reported as

equally beneficial. Participants described how they accessed various forms of support

and inspiration: membership in local ECEC leaders' groups, self-organized leadership

learning circles, and visits to other centers.

Membership in local ECEC leaders' groups. Marie described that membership

in a community of ECEC leaders was invaluable in her early leadership days. Along

with other peer leaders from similar ECEC contexts, Marie had a support system to

share her initial leadership questions, issues and concerns:

It was really hard to find people to go to. So, when I think of [name of group

removed], a small group of not for profit directors, and once I started to build a little

bit of trust with a few of them, I could really talk authentically about how I was

feeling. And the biggest relief was, many of them said, "Oh, I feel that every day"

[….] openly discussing about what's happening or our concerns and then also that

kind of shared like, "Oh, we experienced that too. Yes." And that there's nothing in

the human experience like being normalized… feeling like you're not alone. (Marie,

PBD)

Participation within a community of leaders allowed Marie to "run things by" another

leader and to gain from other's experiences and perspectives on common issues. She

described that when she spoke to other ECEC leaders about their challenges, this

"normalized her own experiences as a leader" (Marie, PBD).

Kate described that as she created a pedagogical team to support educators in

the curriculum decision-making process, the local peer leaders' group offered a place

to make sense of emerging curriculum practices. As her team established pedagogical

roles and responsibilities, she asked other leaders to share their experiences with these

shifting roles, "I connected with a few other centers within [the leadership group] and

to said, if you're doing some kind of version of this, let's figure out a way to connect"

(Kate, PBD).

Interconnected support. Both Marie and Kate joined a peer leaders' group for guidance, support and collaboration. Marie felt reassured when other leaders shared similar challenges. Over time, Marie felt increased support and fellowship from other peer leaders and lead to increased confidence in her leadership capabilities.

Similarly, Olive also acknowledged the power of collaborating with others in pedagogic roles and described her involvement in the creation of a space for professional dialogue and shared meaning making focused on pedagogical processes. Olive recognized that mentorship from her center director had been a powerful influence on her pedagogical practice, and she wanted to create a space for others to connect and explore the pedagogic role with educators. Olive described her desire to co-create a small practice circle with others with similar roles and curriculum intentions:

> I'm privileged to have a mentor, as in our executive director, who spends a lot of time mentoring me over the years and I think that this is unique. This is not what I hear of a lot of other centers in our field. And so, I know I'm quite privileged that way. So, I started a community of learners cohort for coaches, mentors, pedagogical leaders from a few different centers throughout Edmonton. And we're really in the beginning phases of that. Our idea was to have communities of learners come together because there is a distinct need for conversation between people in mentorship roles, supervisory roles. (Olive, PBD)

Olive explained the goals of the network and how she valued the interconnected nature of the group. In her view, the learning community encouraged the exchanging of

diverse opinions to further discussions, dialogues, and reflections around pedagogy in

ECEC. She described the benefits of belonging to the self-organized community:

 Being able to come together and have conversations about what's happening in

 different programs. So, we're still building our own community and relationships with

 one another, and even in understanding each other's context, like whether your

 program's part time, full time, whether you have children who are three-week old

 babies up to 12 years old…like this all impacts the type of actions you would take.

 (Olive, PBD)

A practice circle was, as described by Olive, a space that offered the opportunity for

members to impart and expand their pedagogical knowledge in a shared experience

with others. Olive concluded:

 But what I can see happening over time is coming together and really brainstorming.

 You know, if you're bumping up against a problem in your own center, it is helpful to

 have people that don't have the same context as you. And to ask, "How would they

 solve that?" That's what I could see over time. And I'd say it's not quite where we are

 today. (Olive, PBD)

Olive's vision for a professional forum for pedagogical dialogue motivated her, along

with others, to co-create a space. As an assembly of professionals, they self-organized

by forming a community, and as members, they essentially said: "Let's share our

experiences and let's talk about it. Let's be professionals, on our own." By claiming

professional networking spaces, as described by Marie, Kate and Olive, pedagogical

practices were allowed to surface outside ECEC centers and resulted in making once

concealed leadership practices more visible to themselves and one another. This kind of ground-up leadership showed commitment to their work, by gathering together, to make sense of their roles and practice, in the shape of self-initiated professional learning opportunities.

Places as Pedagogical Provocations. In addition to participating in local professional networks, visits to ECEC centers in Washington state, Colorado, and even New Zealand, provided five of the participants rich, albeit remote pedagogical practice examples. Marie described how they had visited ECEC centers that were widely recognized for their innovative pedagogical leadership practices yet still faced similar challenges.

I went to New Zealand on the study tour. They're having a lot of the same struggles and their system isn't perfect either. But I did I bring some documents back…they have written documents and plans that support leadership. […] all the early learning is under the Ministry of Education, so as an early learning leader would have the same professional development supports that a school principal would have, but they also view leadership through their entire education system in a similar way that we view leadership [in ECEC], kind of shared. (Marie, PBD)

Marie was able to experience an ECEC system with dedicated ECEC leadership support. She compared and contrasted the two contexts, with the and identified professional learning opportunities that are available to ECEC leaders in New Zealand. Marie reflected on her impressions of her international experiences and how she was made impacted:

I go back to 'You don't know what you don't know!' When you don't even see that something is a possibility, and then all of a sudden it becomes a possibility. So we need that as leaders. I came back with a much more affirmed and much more, more strength [commitment to the] advocacy role. I think I have a little seed of, 'I know what we need. Do we know where to get it?' (Marie, PBD)

For Marie, the study tour was an opportunity to imagine what is possible in her context and encouraged her to become more of an advocate for these possibilities.

Eva also participated in a study tour to New Zealand and described that her center visits and how the exchanges with other leaders served to affirm her practice:

[….] it was actually a huge eyeopener because it actually gave me an opportunity to have dialogue with other leaders and I realized that we were doing good things and our mentoring with educators was still evolving but is was good […While in NZ,] we talked about pedagogical leadership, it was kind of new at the time. […] but it's been interesting to reflect back to that time because it acknowledged that we're doing good work in our centers. (Eva, PBD)

By holding a mirror to her leadership practice, Eva felt affirmed. The experiences acted as encouragement for both Marie and Eva –in a sense, permitting them to think: "Oh! If that's what we're supposed to be doing, then we're doing that! We can do more, but we're on the right path".

Similarly, Olive described that ongoing visits to an American ECEC program, recognized for innovative pedagogical practice, continued to inspire her team to engage rich dialogues:

[…] we've visited several times, probably four or five times. And they've been in a

values-based conversation for so many years. And so we've gone there for inspiration

and guidance and really looked at how some of their intentions, not necessarily their

actions, and their actions are great-- to be clear, but about how their intentions could

look in our setting, what would our actions be that would be a match for our

intention? (Olive, PBD)

Olive's comments described the inspirational power of practice examples, which

continued to stimulate dialogue focused on the alignment of intentions and actions.

Imaging possibilities. Opportunities to participate in dialogues focused on

pedagogy, while catching a glimpse of practice in faraway ECEC centers was

impactful and new possibilities were imagined. While visiting other contexts, they

were invited to participate in pedagogical practices alongside other pedagogical

leaders. This mediated participation encouraged participants to think outside and

beyond their center, to gain a more profound understanding of their own practices.

Creating pedagogic vision. Melanie described how, in the early days of her

leadership, she chose to focus on the work of the educators rather than feeling bogged

down by administrative tasks. She explained that she recognized the power of

recognition, and how this acknowledgment had the potentiality to propel educators'

thinking and practice forward. She began with what she called a 'dream project" to

focus her attention on inspiring shifts in educators' practice. She prioritized her focus,

even when management tasks had the potential to divert all her attention and energy:

All of this [management tasks] is what I'm not in control of and this is my *dream project*. And so how am I going to make time for all of that? Dream projects are like…something that I am passionate about. How am I going to support them ([EC educators] and showcasing the work that they're doing? How are we going to move the queue, [as a result] of the work [of EC educators]? I just don't think we're at a point yet where we're really showcasing how in depth this work is, to an audience who is appreciating it yet. And so that's a dream project'. (Melanie, PBD)

Melanie's dream project was the birth of her leadership vision, and a way of moving forward, towards more inspired practices. Her notion of *moving the queue* described the forward momentum or the growth she intentionally focused on shifting practice. Creating a dream project helped to build vision by providing a pedagogical focus for Melanie, moving forward her leadership practices.

Marie remembered that in her early days of leadership, and as she developed a pedagogic vision, she initiated small changes that eventually led to significant shifts in practice. She described how the subtle changes changed the focus of staff meetings and shifted and reshaped center wide pedagogical practices. As Marie reimagined staff meetings and educators responded favorably to the change, she experienced increased confidence in her leadership:

Right out of the gate, I made changes to our traditional staff meetings. [Previously] it was, the director standing and talking or two hours about who is doing laundry on Tuesday and […] we've now decided that the children must wear socks with their sandals. That type of thing. That didn't make me comfortable. We made small shifts

so that there was more of a shared participation in the meetings so that educators

would have a chance to talk, share opinions, co-create policies. When I first saw the

seed of that be successful, that's when I kind of knew… I was okay. (Marie, PBD)

Marie reflected on the one small pedagogical decision that she credited with initiating

significant shifts within the center's culture. These procedural shifts set the tone for

Marie's vision by placing focus on collaboration and shared decision making, rather

than on policies. By opening the floor, Marie invited her team to co-create a vision

through reflective dialogue, shared meaning-making and collaborative engagement.

Shifting from procedures to practices. Marie's intention to create a culture

of shared decision making began by shifting the function of staff meetings from

unilateral organizational information shared by the meeting leader towards a process

that was more shared by all team members and in turn, shifted the nature of the

meetings. Her pedagogic vision included the creation of a shared professional learning

environment. When the focus shifted from following procedures towards enhancing

pedagogic practice, greater focus was placed on building collaborative relationships.

Marie stated, "We made small shifts so that there was more of a shared participation in

the meetings so that educators would have a chance to talk, share opinions, co-create

policies" (Marie, PBD). By making a change to the meeting's procedural structure,

Marie created an opportunity for shared participation amongst the team. Other

participants also described how they encouraged a climate that centered on the

pedagogic vision of working collaboratively, to embody a practice of relationships,

with complex and dynamic connections amongst team members.

Louise described her belief that all leadership decisions should reflect and, as she described, to "illuminate" the center's pedagogic vision. She described how her commitment to creating the organizational structures necessary to create a pedagogical support team was rooted in family-centered practice, a key tenet for Louise's ECEC center.

And if we say that we value families, then creating these roles only supports that. By putting resources to [this initiative] and actually illuminating how much we value family, and how important this work is. We just shifted, and rethought how we were going to this, we were structuring our staff and our rooms; how our room environments were. So, the pedagogical leader then has the ability to rethink the organizational structures; understanding the values and the commitment to family centered practice; how curriculum supports that; and what reflective practice does to support all of those things…all of those things. So, I, as a leader, as a pedagogical leader, I do believe that you have to be very clear and very grounded in your sense of how we can better serve children and families. (Louise, PBD)

Louise described how her pedagogic vision focused on family-centered practice, curriculum and reflective practice aligned with her leadership enactments. By placing family-centered practice at the core of the pedagogical vision, all decisions reflected the importance placed on families.

Participants recounted their journeys to formal leadership, as well as and how they have grown in their leadership roles. As diverse as their experiences were, there was one consistent theme throughout all the descriptions: participant experiences

illustrated that becoming a leader as a result of doing the work, first with children, and then as a leader of practice. Participants described how self-reflection and engagement with others allowed them to understand their role better. The findings participants shared diverse leadership pathways, and informative leadership supports, participants credited similar activities, experiences, collaborations and resources as being influential on becoming and developing as a pedagogical leader.

The next section will explore how participants described the role of a pedagogical leader and the pedagogical practices they use to engage with educators in curriculum decision making.

Research Question #2

How do pedagogical leaders describe their role and the pedagogical practices used when engaging in curriculum decision making with EC educators?

Findings for Question #2

The overall findings reflected the data from the three collection events: place-based dialogues, focus group dialogues (including the results of the small group work), and the follow-up questionnaire. Results showed that participants used a wide range of both nouns and verbs to describe the pedagogical leadership role. The most common terms included: *reflective practitioner*; *mentoring*; *collaborator*; *guiding*, *facilitating*, *provocateur.* Melanie declared that pedagogical leadership is "an action rather than a position" (Melanie, PBD). At first glance, this assertion may seem apparent, yet the following analyses demonstrate the complex and often dichotomous nature of pedagogical leadership—leading while following; listening at the same time

as articulating and being intentional yet remaining uncertain. Participants described a variety of pedagogical practices, including the curriculum tools that they use in curriculum processes. Participants reported the use of practices that focused on engagement with educators to look attentively at *what* they do each day; discover and discuss the *why* of their practice and reflect on the curriculum decisions and practices that nurture children's learning and development.

As an entry point into the substantial amount of data that connected to this research question, the presentation of the results begins with data from the focus group dialogues and was primarily centered on participants' conceptions of pedagogical leadership.

Conceptions of pedagogical leadership

During the focus group dialogues (FGD), the seven participants were divided into two smaller groups. Each participant was asked to brainstorm all the words (on sticky notes) that they associated with the term *pedagogical leadership.* Once the brainstorming was over, they participated in a concept development process (Taba, 1971) where they were asked to each share their written words, and then to group words with other's words, and then label each category.

"In pedagogical leadership…" The groups combined the brainstormed words and were asked to complete the following stem sentence; "In pedagogical leadership…". This resulted in the following two sentences:

In pedagogical leadership, the groundwork starts with observing and listening which feeds conversations to produce actions for decision making, while reflecting on structural elements. (Group Blue, FGD)

In pedagogical leadership, learning happens through positive teaming with engaged leaders. (Group Green, FGB)

Although these two sentences appeared quite different, there were some striking similarities too. While one sentence focused on the pedagogical leadership process (Group Blue, FGB), the other sentence focused on the outcomes of pedagogical leadership (Group Green, FBD). Nevertheless, both sentences highlighted the reciprocal nature of pedagogic processes, with one group using the term "positive teaming" (Group Green, FGD), while the other group used the idea of "feeding conversations to produce actions for decision making" (Group Blue, FGD). In this regard, both sentences represented the pedagogical leader as nurturing, evocative, and able to promote collaboration with educators.

"A Pedagogical Leader…" Next, the groups were asked to engage in the same brainstorming process previously described but subsequently asked to brainstorm all the words they associated with the term 'pedagogical leader.' Once all group members had shared and words were grouped in similar piles, there were tasked with responding to the following stem sentence: 'A Pedagogical Leader…'.

As Pedagogical Leaders, we know that engaging with our ELCC [ECEC] community, Flight Framework and other resources supports the documentation and planning process. (Group Green, FGD).

A pedagogical mentor is someone who trains, coaches and supports the foundation
through the combination of educators' past experiences, common knowledge, and
practical materials. (Group Blue, FGD)

Between these two sentences, one focused on the resources that support pedagogical practices (Group Green), while the other focused on the actions pedagogical leaders take (Group Blue). Both groups chose to change the stem sentence slightly, with Group Blue changing the term 'pedagogical leader' to 'pedagogical mentor'. When asked if this change in wording was intentional, one Group Blue member stated: "We meant leader and mentor" (Group Blue #3). One sentence read, "As pedagogical leaders, we know…" (Group Green, FGD). This revealed that the group regarded knowledge attributed to pedagogical leadership as shared among those who are playing the role. All four sentences offered insights into how participants conceptualize notions of pedagogical leadership and the role of the leader by describing it with actions and principles.

As a follow-up, participants were asked to anonymously write definitions of pedagogical leadership and their descriptions of pedagogical leaders' roles. The written responses were conducted as individual and anonymous responses to gather definitions and descriptions that were not influenced by groupthink and encouraged participants to offer alternative viewpoints that may not have been represented in the small group discussions. The responses included the following definitions (FGD). An EC childhood leader is:

- Someone who is engaged in the learning of others/documents learning

- A co-learner; co-researcher; and a co-imaginer of possibilities

- A provoker of thought; self-reflective; a decision-maker; resourceful

- Works from their values; strengths-based practice

- Someone who calls importance to the profession

- Engaged in rich observation, reflections and thinking during curriculum

  meaning-making (FGD)

Pedagogical leadership in EC is…

- Bi-directional

- Begins with listening and observing

- Reciprocal

- Needs the support of other pedagogical leaders

- Demonstrates the value placed on the work of the educator

- Supports through creating the infrastructure for learning for all

- Considers time, space and materials for learning

These comments helped to draw a circle around participants' conceptions of the

professional features of pedagogical leaders (noun) and the enactments and strategies

that define pedagogical leadership (verb). The following section explores these

conceptions in greater detail.

The succeeding findings represented data collected in place-based dialogues,

focus groups dialogues and the follow-up questionnaire.

Exploring pedagogic roles. Participants' offered examples from practice to

illustrate how curricular decisions were made within the ECEC context, as a means to

define the role of the pedagogical leader. Delores described how her feelings informed her practice:

It's so hard to explain [pedagogical leadership]. I think even for me on different days [and depending on} what I'm feeling in the [play]rooms, I need to shift based on how I think things are going in the rooms. I feel differently about what that role is all the time." (Delores, PBD)

Delores described how her emotions influenced her ability to navigate the pedagogical process with others, and she struggled to create an operational definition of her process. Much like trying to operationalize notions like *having a hunch* or *following a gut feeling* and Delores' struggle illustrated her view of the dynamic nature of pedagogical leadership. Additional comments from participants such as: "it is difficult to explain" and "tough to describe" represented the challenge to articulate and then operationalize central pedagogic enactments.

What's in a name? In the first phase of this study, one significant finding revealed that despite the commonalities in how participants described their roles, there was not a consensus on the title of the role. Data showed a range of the professional titles used to describe each participant's formal leadership position. The list consisted of 9 different job titles across 12 participants: Executive Director; Curriculum Facilitator; Curriculum Mentor; Program Director; Senior Manager; Curriculum Coach; Curriculum Specialist; Centre Director; and Assistant Director. Noticeably absent from the list is the title of *Pedagogical Leader*, even though it was the term (along with a role description) used in the call for study participants. This finding

demonstrated: (a) the term *pedagogical leader* was not used amongst participants; (b) notions of pedagogical leadership in ECEC remain unformed.

What's in a role description? Participants related their role to others' roles within the ECEC centre. Although each participant's description varied, in general, teams comprised of the executive director (head administrator/senior manager); and those who were responsible for focused, daily curriculum decision making (such as assistant director/program director; pedagogical/curriculum mentor/facilitator/coach). Participants' descriptions of roles and relationships within their team, illustrated organizational structures and the pedagogical leader's positionality within the team.

All 12 participants reported that they had daily interactions with educators, children and families. However, eight participants described their primary role as centered on leading others in curriculum processes, rather than being a full-time educator in the playroom. These participants described having a positional supervisor or center director who they reported to. Therefore, they played a formal pedagogic role with educators; however, they were not solely responsible for all operational aspects of the ECEC organization.

The remaining four participants described their role as the most senior member of the ECEC center team, with a primary focus on the operational functions involved with overseeing the ECEC center. These participants described playing a lead role on a pedagogic team, but the magnitude of their role on the team was mostly dependent on the center's size and structures. Of the four senior leader participants, those with administrative support and less than 15 educators described regular (but not

daily) engagement in the pedagogical process with educators in addition to other administrative responsibilities within the center. Participants who led large centers (more than 16 staff and multiple playrooms/sites) reported assigning others to take the lead pedagogic roles because the scope of their leadership responsibilities did not permit focused daily interactions with educators in a pedagogical process. These participants described how they had created the organizational structures (pedagogic team), and they acquired the resources needed to support this pedagogical support structure in the form of a pedagogic team. The necessary resources for the creation and the sustainment of the teams were identified as: time, finances; workspace; and learning materials (such tools for documentation).

In summary, two-thirds of participants described playing a formal leadership role with a primary focus on daily engagement with educators in pedagogical processes, yet they did not hold the center's most senior leadership role. The remaining one-third of participants described being the most senior leader and a member of the pedagogic team but not engaged in daily pedagogical decision making with educators. They described their role as creating the organizational structures to support and oversee a pedagogical team. In this way, all participants described playing a role in the co-creation of a collaborative environment for curriculum decision making, but the degree to which they played this role, varied. These findings suggest that, depending on the size and scope of the ECEC center and the leaders' roles, pedagogical support was organized in leadership layers.

Layers of leadership. One leadership layer would be responsible for focused and ongoing pedagogical engagement with educators, while a more senior leadership layer focused on facilitating a collaborative pedagogical approach on a largescale level. Louise described these layers (levels) to the positionality of her leadership role:

There are different levels of pedagogical leadership. Those facilitating knowledge building and the application of the curriculum framework concepts and goals in ECE working directly with young children, and those supporting the creation of responsive structural elements in the environment that support this work of the educator…these responsibilities could be held by the same position or held by different positions. I support facilitators in their work with educators. (Louise, FQ)

Pedagogical position or pedagogical mindset? In contrast, Olive asserted that the ability to play a pedagogical role was not dependent on one's positional role within the organization. Instead, Olive described that the foundational nature of observation and relationship-building to a shared pedagogical process, rather than a job title. She reflected this idea in the follow-up questionnaire:

I believe that the actions one will take vary depending on your role, but that the cycle of pedagogical mentorship is a way of engaging with people; regardless of your role-- relationship building and observation are the foundation. (Olive, FQ)

Olive's definition of pedagogical leadership was less about the job title and more about the value placed on engaging with others in the co-inquiry process. Olive comment suggests that playing a pedagogical role is about adopting a pedagogical mindset.

Melanie described a mindset, or as she called it a "pedagogical approach" to her style of center leadership. Although she reported that she did not engage in daily curriculum decision-making with educators, she described how all of her decisions were rooted in her pedagogical philosophy. She explained:

So, if a parent comes to me and they don't understand why their child can't take their stuffie [stuffed toy] on a field visit [field trip]. I have to think about why the parent is upset, then, I ask them [educators in the room]: 'Can you tell me about this [decision to restrict personal items from home]? Can you tell me about why this is happening?' The educators might explain their reasoning because of the chaos of [allowing every child to bring toys from home]. This is when my pedagogical side kicks in, because I might ask, 'So what message do you think we're relaying to this child by not allowing them to bring their stuffy with them?' and 'What can we do to support them [children and families] to enable them to come up with a solution for their stuffies rather than saying, No!' And that's a pedagogical approach because now they're [the educators] thinking of the child in a completely different way, […] yet you're still managing the fact that you've got an upset family. So, it's so linked, but yet I find it so separate […] I'm going to manage this problem, but in order to find a solution, we're going to take a pedagogical approach to it. (Melanie, PBD)

Melanie's problem-solving example illustrated the pedagogical alignment between practice and policies. She used a pedagogic lens to view, analyze and co-create

solutions to problems. Melanie later raised the notion of developing a pedagogic personality. She described it as:

> […] you need to develop a pedagogical personality, if you will. What I do is offer provocations for them [educators] to seek because they've identified where they want to go […] I'm going to provide provocations to support their growth and that takes a ton of time. (Melanie, PBD)

Making pedagogical leaders' work visible. Melanie described how pedagogy shape practice, and as the leader, and as a strategy to support educators' development, she offered educators invitations, in the form of provocations. She later described how the center focused on documenting the pedagogical process to make the process more visible. This led to a richer understanding of the iterative nature of curriculum development. However, Melanie identified that documentation of the leader's pedagogical role is also needed.

There is a background piece that isn't being documented, leadership in ECE. There are many moving parts and I wonder how we can show this process. Who is documenting that process of the leaders? Someone needs to be recording or documenting program directors who manage and take pedagogical approaches to leadership within their centre. To show others that management and leadership in ECE can and should live together within one position even though the management and leadership skill sets require different attentions. So how we show this process? How do I capture it? When I was an educator there was a big focus on showing all that educators do. I think now in addition to highlighting educators' work, we need to

focus on what leadership in early learning looks like. And so how do we do that? You

know how we do it? You document your process too. It takes a director who is still

doing everything else in the background that all you other directors are doing and still

supporting their educators to get that work done. I believe to manage you need to

ensure all the paperwork, time sheets, budget, staffing, etcetera are in place and

moving smoothly. But you also need to lead your educators to explore creatively and

in depth with ideas and materials. It is not an easy task. I don't know how to get it all

done, but I am trying. I am trying really hard to figure it out. It's hard to find other

directors to explore this with. A conversation might start out with the excitement

about pedagogical leadership, but eventually the conversation goes sideways, and I

can tell it is just talk. We need more action. It's my goal to be the action. (Melanie,

PBD)

Melanie's comments highlighted the importance of making the work of pedagogical

leaders more visible and described her ideas around "creating a pedagogical

personality." However, she identified the challenge of being unaware of the process.

Her use of the term *background* situates the pedagogic work of the leader as a

supporting facilitator, although Melanie's comments suggest that she perceived her

role is more than just supportive. She acknowledges the duality of the role, and how

making the work visible will help to illuminate the complexity of the formal leaders

role.

Beyond coaching and mentoring. The findings showed that participants

believed that pedagogical leadership was analogous to pedagogical, as the data shows

that the terms were used interchangeably by all participants. However, the findings showed that participants described mentoring as being different than coaching. During the place-based dialogues, participants were asked to describe their understanding of mentoring and coaching. The mentor-educator relationship was depicted as a sharing of experience and expertise with educators to support the development of practice. In contrast, coaching was depicted as skill-based instruction offered from a more knowledgeable other to a less experienced educator. More than half of the participants described coaching as a differentiated leadership practice and served to move practice forward rather than create shared meaning. Marie described the various roles in this way:

Coaching to me is you are specifically, it's a different role [than pedagogical mentoring/leading]. You're teaching a skill. You're saying, "I know this is something that I know you need to know and I'm going to show you how to do it and then you're going to practice it" For example: how to manage groups of children. Okay. So coaching is different than mentoring, because mentoring is much bigger to me. Mentoring is…, that's where the word pedagogical fits for me. That you're really, you're really interested in supporting another person in how they are going to support someone else's learning. (Marie, PBD)

Marie articulated how coaching and mentoring are different for her. She described coaching as learning how to carry out a process or procedure and could be modelled, and subsequent performance could be observed, checked and evaluated. According to Marie, mentoring was described as "supporting another person in how they are going

to support" --so the mentor doesn't have the answer or the process, as they do in coaching (Marie, PBD).

The data did not expose a clear delineation between coaching and mentoring because most participant pedagogical leadership descriptions included aspects of both coaching and mentoring as it is reflected in the literature on coaching and mentoring in Chapter Two.

Leading learning through change. Leading change is about encouraging transformation through learning and developing Louise focused on the importance of shared meaning-making within a practice community. She described her experiences as part of the center's engagement with Flight's (2014) pilot process. As a pedagogical leader, Louise's described her desire for sustained change in pedagogical practices as a catalyst for strategic planning. These strategic changes required her to ask questions to gather diverse perspectives; observe and document practice to make changes in practice more visible—all actions associated with acting as co-researchers. Louise described the importance of aligning pedagogic values and leadership practices. She shared her reflection on leading change:

 [If we weren't able to] the focus on curriculum and planning, the shift might not have

 happened. But if I didn't believe it…I didn't place that value on this critical piece of

 the work that we do…if we don't provide the [educators} with the opportunity, what

 are we doing, right? If we don't provide them with the opportunity to think about their

 work, well, then the work becomes mindless, then it becomes custodial. (Louise,

 PBD)

Louise explained that without opportunities to engage in the collaborative process of curriculum decision making, EC educators practice lacks focus on learning; for both the children and the educators.

The presented findings highlight how participants described how the pedagogic role with notions of positionality, and the philosophies that inform pedagogical leadership constructs and enactments. The following section will further explore how participants defined pedagogical enactments.

Pedagogical Practices: Learning as Experience

Since it was challenging to describe the role of pedagogical leader, it could be assumed that participants would also struggle to describe how they acquired the pedagogical strategies used in their work. The findings showed that participants were less challenged to articulate the role is *how* rather than the role is *what*.

Parallel practice. As previously reported in research question #1, most participants described how their work as an educator with children created a pathway to formal leadership. Similarly, participants described the pedagogical process with educators paralleled the practices they used in prior experiences with children. The idea of parallel practice was raised by Olive in her description of how her director asked her to draw on her experiences with children to engage in the pedagogical process with educators: "she had me look at parallel practice and be able to apply what I knew about working with kids to working with adults" (Olive, PBD). Like Olive, participants described using the same process to co-create curriculum meaning with educators as they once used to co-construct EC curriculum with children. As reported

by Kate and Eva, their previous experiences as educators with children mirrored their pedagogical process with educators. Kate described the process her team used. She explained:

Just like the experiences within a classroom […] we follow those just like we would with children. I guess rather than giving answers, which is something that I would want to do naturally, I think I've learned that it'll help the educators more if I ask more questions and get them to kind of work through those just like we would problem solving with children. And so, I find it hard to kind of match that practice with an educator because it goes against what I've learned about what is the right way to be a manager. But I feel like when I start to see that it work, I realize […] I now feel proud of what we're learning along with the children, because I feel like it has more value, and I think more people need to know that if we know this for children and we can do this with adults and we can be that successful, then it's a pretty big deal that people just don't give credit. (Kate, PBD)

Kate's comments highlighted her belief that learners (both children and adults) engaged in discovery learning, leads to more meaningful understandings. Eva also described a similar process of learning together when she said:

I think as you become more knowledgeable about how people learn which is very congruent to when you were an educator in the classroom. So, that's the parallel that you need to show to the educators, but ultimately not like considering them children. Right? You consider them [the educators] the experts of children, but then I'm the expert of how they work together. So that's been something, cause I used to think that

I could maybe make the shift in a classroom or shift with the work, but I have to

realize that all the educators have to be on board with me or have to have some type

ownership, to realize what the problem is. Whether it be like an environment change

that I think might benefit the children or families or even the educators, they have to

realize what's going on. (Eva, PBD)

Eva's described the role of the educator as "the expert on children" while describing

her role as "the expert" of how the team works together, illustrated the shared

responsibility to the team process. Eva recognized that if she wanted to enhance

practice in playrooms, educators needed play a part in identifying the problem and co-

imagine ways to explore the problem.

Both Eva and Kate described the pedagogical process used with educators as

alike with the pedagogical process used with children. This suggested that there was a

common process that spans across all pedagogical relationships and stems from the

philosophy that places the learner at the heart of the learning process. In other words,

making curriculum decisions with adults is the same process used with children, both

position learners (children and educators) as central in the learning process.

Mutual engagement as co-learners. Kate described a pedagogical leader as a

learner with and alongside EC educators, children and families. Kate's comment

reflected this idea, with the following description:

I would describe it as being a learner. To me it is someone that learns alongside

others or that kind of reflective person [.] I kind of see it as a process, the same

process that we'd go through with children as a co-learner, we would do the same

with educators. (Kate, PBD).

Jehan's image of the pedagogical leader as a co-learner echoes Kate's:

So, a pedagogical leader from me would be somebody who has some experience with

and expertise in the subject of early childhood pedagogy, working with other

educators and they work alongside them to motivate them and to guide their practice.

(Jehan, PBD)

Kate's and Jehan's quotes reflected the notion of the parallels between the pedagogical

practices used with educators and the practice they refined through firsthand

experiences, working children in the playroom.

Pedagogical Strategies in Curriculum Decision Making

Participants described various ways of ways collaboratively with educators to

plan and realize a curriculum that engaged children in inspired learning experiences.

When asked to elaborate on how curriculum decisions were made, participants

described several pedagogical strategies. The next section explores the pedagogical

practices and strategies described when engaging with educators in curriculum

decision-making processes.

A model of co-inquiry. *Flight Framework* (2014) offers a model of co-inquiry

for co-constructing curriculum. To organize findings, the stages of the co-inquiry

cycle help to describe the many ways that the cycle of co-inquiry frames and supports

the pedagogical process which begins with observing and documenting; progresses to

reflecting and interpreting; followed by planning and taking action.

Observing and Documenting. With a focus on co-inquiry, participants described the process of curriculum decision-making. This complex and ever evolving dialogue between pedagogical leaders and educators, framed by exchanging theoretical and practice questions. The process of curriculum decision-making begins with asking initial questions in the shape of observations and pedagogical documentation, leading to further reflection and richer understanding.

Leading with sustained curiosity and wonder. As participants described their engagement in the pedagogical process with educators, they mentioned actions like: "asking thoughtful questions, "seeking many different answers,"; "wondering aloud,"; "inquiring again and again to see something different than before." At the heart of these inquisitive actions rests the pedagogical leader's ability to generate provoking questions, and to seek diverse answers – this is the personification of sustained curiosity. As Marie described her definition of a pedagogical leader and the ever-evolving nature of the role, she focused on the importance she placed on remaining curious:

I have different definitions all the time. My current definition is I feel it's my role to be curious about how people-- how we teach and how we learn. How people teach and how people learn and being curious is big, but we're curious about that. The way I see it is in multiple levels. So, we're curious about how children learn and how we teach children, but we're also very curious about how we learn as individuals. That's how I see it. (Marie, PBD)

Representing a pedagogical leader as someone who is curious, was reported by others.

Participants offered examples of how curiosity was expressed through the posing of

questions during curriculum conversation with educators. "What do you think this

might mean? What does it mean for you as an educator? What does it mean for the

child? That's being a co-learner" (Pilar, PBD). Eva's definition included engagement

with families. She stated, "a pedagogical leader is someone who is willing to listen,

support questions and walk alongside the educators, the children and the families too

and wonder about all things related" (Eva, PBD). The pedagogical leader's ability to

remain curious was seminal in the co-inquiry process alongside educators and

modeled a spirit of wonder.

Creating reverberations. Elizabeth described a recursive process that she used

to document curriculum conversations and decisions. Through the use of her reflective

notes, she encouraged the educators to return to past observations of children's play

and connections to past curriculum questions, as well as ongoing decisions. She

described it in this way:

When I am with educators, I take notes all the time. The notes are my reflections, and

I add what I am reading or thinking about. These notes help to reverberate how and

why planning decisions are made. I use them to help us to reflect on the process as

we continue to plan (Elizabeth, PBD).

Elizabeth described how the detailed notes acted as a tool for educator reflection. The

use of the term *reverberates* explained the reflective process by using the pedagogical

strategy of documenting the educators' experiences by taking notes. When notes were

referred to later, previous curriculum conversations and planning decisions could be echoed back to educators and strengthen reflective practice.

Reflecting and Interpreting. Reflecting and interpreting focuses on the process of making sense of educators' observations to create pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation is centered around educators' reflections and curriculum interpretations, and views educators as co-researchers in the curriculum planning. Participants described the ways in which they engage in curriculum conversations during the planning process and how curriculum plans are reflected in play environments.

Learning with and learning from. Reflective questions posed within the planning process to challenge practice conventions and curriculum assumptions. All participants described the importance of asking educators thoughtful questions that provoked further curricular inquiry. Participants described questions as being informed by observations, evidenced in pedagogical documentation and reflected the pedagogical leader, educator, and child as co-researchers in curriculum meaning making. Olive described pedagogic role in the curriculum planning process as:

…Someone that will engage in a planning cycle with you [to make] curricular decisions. And so, I think it's someone that will observe firsthand in the classroom and reflect on their own observations and your own and the educators' observations. And you know, provoke thinking sometimes, right? So, whether that's in conversation, asking questions and [offering] feedback…someone that will further your own thinking. (Olive, PBD).

Olive's description highlighted the importance of provoking thinking by asking questions that are informed by observations. Elizabeth commented on the evolving and dynamic nature of questioning during the curriculum planning process:

Often times, pedagogical conversations are bi-directional in that learning happens for both participants. Often as a pedagogical leader, I ask questions to provoke further thinking; however, educators often come up with ideas or theories that I hadn't thought of. It's not about knowing everything but learning together. (Elizabeth, PBD)

Central to reflective practice is the ability to identify possible meanings. Elizabeth highlighted the power of questioning to provoke deeper thinking, which led to a more dynamic exploration of curriculum decisions. She described that when educators' reflections were unanticipated, the roles between the EC educator and the pedagogical leader were exchanged, like the concept of *serve and return*. This back and forth process fostered shared meaning-making while co-constructing curriculum. Elizabeth's comment further illustrated her recognition that she did not hold all the answers. Instead, she learned with educators through a process of reflection.

Exchanging perspectives. Learning alongside educators was a dominant theme in the findings. Eve's comment illustrated the importance she placed on learning from educators. She described her role in this way:

I think that it takes two forms. It's more than being a leader. It's being a learner. You can't just look at it [pedagogical leadership] as, 'I'm going to teach you [the educator] everything you need to know' and then 'to make sense of what's happening next.' I'm going to learn so much from the educators because that will help me share what's

important, [in order] to fill in the gaps and holes. Everybody has rich knowledge.

They don't know how to articulate it all the time. (Eve, PBD)

Eve described being both a leader and a learner, simultaneously. The complexity of role sharing illustrated the dynamic nature of the pedagogical relationship and challenge traditional notions of the pedagogical leader as an expert of theory and practice. Eve comments also suggested the negotiating nature of making curriculum decisions with educators, as she also described the need to "fill gaps and holes" while articulating understanding and making practice decisions. It is unclear whether Eve is referring to an educator's "gaps and holes" or her own, nevertheless, her comment highlighted the reciprocity of pedagogical strategies in the curriculum meaning making and planning processes. This further illustrated that, as partners in the pedagogical process, educators and pedagogical leaders exchange perspectives, producing deeper theoretical understandings and enriched practice knowledge.

Planning and Taking Action. Planning and taking action draw on observations of children at play and curriculum interpretations to co-imagine planning possibilities and enact curriculum plans to realize play and learning experiences. Participants described the ways in which they engage in curriculum conversations during the planning process and how curriculum plans are reflected in play environments.

Capturing curriculum planning processes. To gather data on how participants, describe the curriculum planning process and their use of curriculum tools, participants were asked to identify curriculum artifacts or traces that help to tell

the story of curriculum planning. This protocol idea was borne out of an anticipation that it may be challenging to describe the planning process, which is rarely sequential; therefore, participants were asked to show physical objects to best capture the planning process.

Curriculum objects as pedagogical traces. Place-based dialogues took place in each participant's ECEC center (with one exception) and included a center walkabout (center tour), to gain planning process data. Participants were asked to point-out important objects that helped to tell the center's curriculum planning story or helped to identify remaining pedagogical traces from the planning process. Participants pointed out a wide range of curriculum-related objects and described how the objects were co-constructed during curriculum planning. In addition to data collected during the walkabout (PBD), data collected from the focus group dialogues and the follow-up questionnaire was used. The findings below lists participant identified objects:

- *The Thinking Lens* (Carter and Curtis, 2007)

- *Flight Framework* (Makovichuk et al., 2014)

- Learning Stories/play narratives

- The cycle of curiosity

- Planning notes-pedagogical conversations

- Living walls/living curriculum walls

- The Co-inquiry Cycle

- Planning/communication binders

- Constellations of play and possibilities

- Concept webs/planning maps/ flowcharts

- Observations and educator notes

- Documentation panels

- Photos and video

- Curriculum questions

- Talking the documentation

- Curriculum cross-checking

During most placed based dialogues, participants and I co-selected one or two objects that particularly represented the center's curriculum planning story. Participants were invited to bring their co-selected objects to the focus group dialogues, to illustrate their planning processes and provoke focus group discussion. Five out of seven participants reported that they had brought some items to share with other participants, although not all five participants shared. The participants that did share described how the material(s) were used with educators in curriculum decision making. Other participants asked questions about the materials or reported that they used a similar tool or strategy.

Holding curriculum conversations. Curriculum conversations create opportunities to communicate diverse theory and practice perspectives. Pilar described a planning process that placed curriculum conversations directly in the playroom amongst the children:

We're trying out something new this year called 'team collaborations.' It is two hours

a month-- I go directly into the playroom, and we discuss what the educators and

children want to discuss, and we're working on something called 'the living wall', which is a new way to write down what's happening in the rooms kind like a flow chart. But it's a little bit different. It's in the moment. So, I come in, and I observe the children. And the educators have an hour to work on the living wall directly in the room. Our goal is to have the children become more and more involved in the planning process. Because we were finding that educators are here, the children are there, and they weren't active participants in what they wanted to do. (Pilar, PBD)

Pilar described a process of curriculum planning into the playroom. She explained that the catalyst for this innovated process was both pedagogical and practical:

The important question is: do we want it [curriculum planning] to happen in the playrooms? Like you don't have to carry a big sheet of paper, you don't have to carry all these things. It's there. It's all there. And you know, as you're doing it, children might come up to you and ask you 'what's that?' And this question might lead to a deeper understanding of what the meaning of this space is to the child. Children are seeing the educators making curriculum decisions and creating a space for children to potentially become part of the curriculum questioning. And with the children, we are taking a deeper look into what curriculum is and can be. (Pilar, PBD)

This innovative practice realized the concept of a co-creating curriculum by placing children at the center of the curriculum planning process.

Eva described how her team had created a space for curriculum conversations by installing a large chalkboard wall in the center. This interactive space was offered

to children and families, encouraging them to engage in the curriculum planning process alongside educators. Eva described the space:

Half of our blackboard wall is like a large piece [is for children]. It's not like we said, 'here's a small piece of the wall.' It was a big portion of the wall, and it was a big step for us. Some of the educators were leery about that as well. But I said, 'if you have it, everyone wants their own space, so I think children can make big decisions in that space too.' The first experiences [children's] were running across it with chalk, back and forth and back and forth. And so, we didn't place limits or anything--it was the perfect way to see how running back and forth is a valuable dizzy play component. And educators were, okay with it. (Eva, PBD)

Children were not having actual curriculum as the educators did. Instead the educators looked at how the children made marks with chalk and how they moved along the wall as the children's expression of curricular interests. This example illustrated how children's unexpected expressions lead to curriculum conversations and further encourages subsequent planning for inspired play possibilities. For Eva, children's unexpected participation with the chalkboard invited dialogue around the nature of children's play.

Responses to a practice vignette. During the focus group dialogues, participants read a vignette (Appendix I: Focus Group Protocols) of an educator and pedagogical leader, observing children at play, with a wagon. The educator documents the play, by taking photos and notes. Later, the educator and the pedagogical leader discuss their impressions of the play.

Participants were asked to provide written responses to a series of questions focused on their impressions of the vignette and describe possible pedagogical enactments for the pedagogical leader (Appendix I: Focus Group Protocol). Once participants had finished responding to the written questions individually, the vignette was read aloud, and participants discussed their answers with one another.

Participants offered a variety of responses. Some of the responses focused on safety and procedures, but responses focused on viewing the educator as a co-learner, and co-researcher. Participants listed many possible next steps for the educator, such as: "create a provocation"; "write a learning story about the event"; "engage with families"; and "connect with other educators" (FGD). However, when participants were asked to describe the possible next steps for the pedagogical leader, the list was much shorter and less detailed. Participants offered possible next steps for the pedagogical leader educator, such as: "encourage the educator"; "hint at curricular concepts"; "wonder about the play" and "write a learning story about the educator". These responses are less concrete than the responses focused on the educator's next steps. One participant responded: "the pedagogical leader could provide resources to encourage her as a co-learner and co-researcher" (FGD). When asked to suggest what the pedagogical leader should not do, responses included: "don't focus on the wagon to much"; "don't give the answers"; "avoid leading the play by stepping in"; and "shouldn't limit the educators reflection".

Overall, participants responses suggested they viewed the pedagogical leader's role was to provide the educator with resources but not obstruct the educator's process

or learning. These findings offered a portrayal of the pedagogic role that contrasted with other research findings. Responses did not include many of the pedagogical enactments previously described as part of their pedagogical practice. Participant responses portrayed the pedagogical leader as a supporter and encourager, rather than a partner in the pedagogical process or a co-constructor of curriculum.

Pedagogic and Leadership Challenges

To discover how participants perceived their level of she with their pedagogical leadership role, they described what they identified as hardships. Our earlier conversations had shown that limited time was a significant barrier to pedagogical leadership. Participants were asked: "What are other significant barriers or challenges you have experienced while supporting educators in the curriculum meaning-making process?"

"Reflective practice takes time." During first-cycle coding, time was extensively reported as a significant challenge by participants. Whether it was time management, or the time needed for holding rich curriculum conversations, findings showed that without adequate time, the pedagogical process lacked meaning or became one dimensional. Kate stated, "Reflective practice takes time," illustrating the time-intensive pedagogical process even though commonly EC educators have no to very little time out of the playroom.

Creating momentum. Conversely, too much time was also reported as a challenge. Uninspired curriculum decisions were made because educators had become ambivalent about the long process and lacked a sense of urgency. One participant

described it as the Goldilocks approach to balancing the amount of time needed for curriculum decision making: Not too long and not too short; the time needed to be *just right* (Eve, PBD).

Additional challenges. To distinguish time from other adversities, participants were asked to report challenges, beyond the previously identified challenge of time. Five of the seven respondents still reported that time was a significant challenge. Other challenges reported included: money, curriculum resources; trained educators; more pedagogical support.

Participants articulated their successes and dilemmas, and in doing so, they also reported their hopes and intentions for future pedagogic work and expressed what supports they perceived needing to achieve their pedagogic goals. The last research question explored what leaders described as desired supports, aimed at enhancing their pedagogic work.

Research question #3

What experiences do pedagogical leaders describe as potentially enriching and enlivening their work?

Findings for Research Question #3

To capture the ways that participants described their goals in the development as a pedagogical leader, they were asked to imagine how their practice could be further animated. Participants shared their desired future professional learning opportunities, as well as past learning experiences that they perceived as fruitful. Analysis of the place-based dialogues and follow-up questionnaire identified two

major themes. Participants described a desire for (1) additional professional learning opportunities (formal); and (2) increased engagement with other pedagogical leaders (formal and informal). Limited resources (time and finances) were identified as potential barriers to professional learning/development opportunities for pedagogical leaders.

Formal Professional Learning Opportunities

During the focus group dialogues, one group articulated that they did not have any access to professional learning opportunities that focused on the specialized practice knowledge in ECEC leadership and pedagogy. Formal professional learning opportunities were defined as structured training events, such as post-diploma courses, seminars, conferences, and webinars. Data from the place-based dialogue highlighted specialized skill development in areas such as managing and sustaining change (Jehan, PBD), effective motivation strategies (Jehan, PBD), providing performance feedback (Elizabeth, PBD), and effective hiring practices (Delores, PBD; Jehan, PBD).

However, specific examples of desired formalized learning opportunities that extended beyond the scope of organizational leadership skill development were not extensively articulated in the data. This suggested that describing potential formal learning opportunities focused on the pedagogical nature of their work was challenging to articulate. Although no one was directly quoted as saying, "I need to know how to be a more effective pedagogical leader," some participants' comments leaned towards the notion that formal professional learning specific to the pedagogical process in ECEC, would result in evolving their practice. Jehan stated:

I think, as a pedagogical coordinator, I will never be in the "secure" state because there is always the opportunity to learn new ways. I think once we say we are secure, we run the risk of becoming stagnant (Jehan, FQ)

This comment demonstrates Jehan's desire for her practice to remain current. Still, the data showed that many participants had not participated in many formal professional learning around pedagogical leadership. Some participants cited the challenge of time and said that they wanted professional learning opportunities specific to the field, not just courses for business leaders. Jehan wondered if suitable learning resources were indeed out there and available to pedagogical leaders, but was not widely known nor accessed (Jehan, FQ).

Informal Professional Learning Opportunities

The data more clearly articulated the value that participants placed on informal professional learning opportunities as a means to inspire and further develop innovative pedagogical practices. Informal professional learning opportunities were defined as learning events that were more organic. These might include participation within professional learning communities; opportunities to form mentoring relationships; and engagement in professional dialogues with other pedagogical leaders.

Assemblage of peer leaders. The follow-up questionnaire asked participants to name the kinds of supports that enrich their work as pedagogical leaders. Most respondents (5 of 6 total respondents for this question) described how they would benefit from opportunities to engage with other pedagogical leaders. Olive

summarized her desire to assemble with others who also play a pedagogic role when she stated: "Further opportunities to reflect and discuss the role of a pedagogical mentor [leader] with other mentors [leaders]." (Olive, FQ)

The desire to create an assembly of pedagogical leaders was reflected in responses from Lucy and Kate. Lucy stated, "further conversations with others in the field that are doing this work" (Lucy, FQ). Kate said, "more discussions with others [pedagogical leaders] (Kate, FQ). Comments such as these suggest that the creation of communities of pedagogical leaders would result in pedagogical leaders interacting with one another, and potentially impacting future ECEC practices. Olive previously shared that her desire to participate with other pedagogical leaders led her and others to form a small group comprising of pedagogical leaders. The creation of practice groups may become a trend, as leaders look for supports in their development of pedagogical practices.

Peer conversations in the shape of shared dialogues. Five participants drew parallels between the value they placed on peer leader conversations, and their own experience as a participant in the study's place-based and focus group dialogues. These participants reported that upon reflection, their participation in the place-based and focus dialogues modelled the type of assemblage that would afford open discussion regarding leadership experiences, wonderings and challenges with others who play a pedagogic role. Although the place-based dialogues were conducted individually, participants reported that the act of sharing their experiences with another person (me, acting as the research) was perceived as valuable, personally. One

participant stated, "It was a great opportunity to have a conversation about my work with someone that understands what and why I do [what I do…] (Olive, FQ). This quote highlighted the contextualized nature of the pedagogic work. Olive described that sharing her experiences with someone that she felt understood the specialized nature of her experiences, she felt understood and perhaps even validated. Marie also expressed how she believed that she benefitted from the sustained conversations that were generated during the place-based dialogues.

Participants were asked: "How likely is it that your practice will move in some new directions based on the place-based dialogue and/or the focus group discussions? (FQ #15) Five of seven respondents reported changes were "already underway," while the remaining two respondents reported: "likely in the near future." These responses further articulated the perceived value of the coming together with other pedagogical leaders. Based on the support that Jehan experienced in the place-based and focus group dialogues, she anticipated that her work would be enriched by future dialogues with peer leaders. She stated, "…support such as we had with our round table [focus group] discussions. Support for me as a pedagogical leader seems to be lacking" (Jehan, FQ #7). Jehan elaborated on this point:

When I am presented with opportunities to have meaningful conversations with others in similar roles to mine, I feel encouraged and motivated to continue my work with children and families. While the intention for you [researcher] was not PD [professional development] for us, it felt like there were so many takeaways for me

that I can implement into my programs. I hope there are more opportunities for groups like this to form in the future […] (Jehan, FQ #17).

Delores imagined how future opportunities to engage with other leaders would positively impact the development of her leadership practices. She wrote: [experiences like the place-based and focus group dialogues] deepen my learning and expose me to new ways of looking at aspects regarding my decision making (Delores, FQ).

Mentoring pedagogical leaders. Participants widely described the importance of mentoring in their continued development as a pedagogical leader. Olive, Lucy, Pilar, Eve and Melanie shared how having a mentor had been extremely beneficial to their development as a pedagogical leader. In all cases, the participants had received mentoring from within the ECEC center. However, for others, *mentorship from within* had not occurred. Jehan wondered about the potential of creating "pedagogical leaders for pedagogical leaders" (Jehan, FQ). This idea is borne from the idea that pedagogical leaders, as well as EC educators, benefit from a pedagogical mentor/partner, external to the ECEC center. This *peripheral mentor* would act as alongside the pedagogical leader, offering opportunities to think otherwise and perhaps provoke new understandings of the pedagogical process. Some participants reported that they had previously worked with a pedagogical partner during a pilot project connected to the launch of *Flight Framework* (2014*)*. When asked about the benefits and challenges of working with an external pedagogical leadership mentor, most participants stated their perceived challenges first. Some expressed concerns that the vantage point of the external mentor may obscure their understanding of the ECEC center's context.

Louise shared her concerns when she said, "I don't like the idea of parachuting in

support, though. That's one of the challenges [with this model]. Olive wondered:

Can you just go somewhere, mentor for a day or two and leave and, and make a

profound impact? I'm not sure about that. [...] I know that that relationship building

is the foundation. And so, I am not clear how having pedagogical mentors [from]

outside of center would work [...]. (Olive, PBD)

Some participants described how obtaining adequate resources (time, money,

adequate staffing levels) to support the mentoring process was a challenge. As

reported earlier, Kate stated, "[...] we're trying to be more efficient and more effective

with our time, but at the same time, reflective practice takes time. And if you want to

actually be quality, you have to give it time" (Kate, PBD)

The potential benefits of pedagogical leadership mentoring were

acknowledged by participants. Some described how outside mentoring could enhance

pedagogical practice. Marie described how some pedagogical leaders might feel

underinformed while navigating their emerging role. The idea of having someone to

provoke new understandings and identify blind spots was perceived as valuable. Marie

said, "I don't even know what I don't know. What I don't know, I don't know" (Marie

PBD). This quote suggested that pedagogical leaders cannot operate in a vacuum.

Earlier, Louise highlighted the importance of building a sustainable leadership

development model. She explained, "I do think, with the pedagogical support, we need

to build capacity [...]. There needs to be another layer of leadership within this field"

(Louise, PBD). This suggested that the field of ECEC requires another layer of

leadership support and engagement and supported the notion that the pedagogical process may be more complex than previously understood. As the role of the pedagogical leader becomes more in focus, there is a growing need for organizational structures that formalize the role of the pedagogical leader and further build capacity.

Scholarship in Pedagogical Leadership. ECEC Leadership Development was highlighted as an important next step for pedagogical leaders. Six of the 12 participants held post-secondary bachelor's degrees, with one participant holding a master's degree. Although none of the participants held degrees focused on pedagogy or leadership in ECEC, all participants reported that they recognized how post-secondary coursework that focused on pedagogical leadership would support their development as pedagogical leaders.

Jehan expressed her desire for more formal leadership knowledge contrast her earlier comments that described how her practice in the playroom led to her becoming a pedagogical leader. Once she was in a formal leadership role, she returned to University to study leadership in human services contexts. Jehan recognized that her practice experience did not completely prepare her for leadership. She wanted to marry her practice with children to her theoretical knowledge in working with educators.

 I went back to school and got an education, like a formal education on how to be a

 leader. And that helped me because I feel like if I didn't have that education, if I

 didn't have those skills formally taught to me, I wouldn't know how to be a leader

 without them. (Jehan, PBD)

Melanie and Lucy also described a desire for theoretical leadership knowledge in the shape of a bachelor's degree.

My degree has helped me, hugely. It still helps me. I draw on concepts from it every day knowingly or not. I know it is there. For example I took a class on creating vision, mission, values. I immediately went to our centres vision mission and values and wondered, do these really represent who we are? (Melanie, PBD)

Lucy stated:

I took the degree in human service administration and for a lot of the coursework, I really connected to here [the ECEC center], but throughout that learning [course work], I actually found that I always knew this. (Lucy, PBD)

These findings identify two key ideas: 1. Participants described wanting formal education specific to leadership in ECEC. 2. Participants explained that, although their degrees were not focused specifically on leadership in ECEC, they identified how their practice how been improved and enhanced because of their post-diploma coursework.

As a way to understand how participants feel about their work and their motivations for continuing in their leadership role, participants were asked to describe the joys of their work (FQ). The findings showed that all descriptions revealed two ideas: 1. Engagement with others in learning relationships 2. Participating in a community of learners: children, families, and educators. Below are the comments and sentiments shared by participants.

The Joys of Pedagogical Leadership

To place an exclamation point to research question #3, participants were asked about the joys of their work. There was one dominant theme that respondents articulated when described they their joys: experiencing fulfilment when they observed educators' experiencing 'A-ha' moments. Five of the seven respondents reported professional gratification when educators' experienced sudden practice insights. Here are some examples:

When they [educators] see/feel 'success' in their learning-- witnessing those ah-ha moments for them. (Lucy, FQ)

I love when educators discover where and why they have limited curriculum in the classroom; it is always associated with their personal history and when they discover where they have put limits in, they gain freedom (both personally and professionally)! This is so exciting and a gift as a mentor. (Olive, FQ)

Shared A-ha moments. Both Lucy and Olive described the feelings that experienced when witnessing educators in the meaning-making process. This is further evidenced by Delores' comment:

The "A-ha" moments. […] When we reflect together and find out more about ourselves in the process, allowing us to feel more comfortable sharing our ideas and encouraging each other as equals, rather than one being superior based on the job title. I am learning a tremendous amount as I participate through the process, in the classrooms, when time allows and seeing staff happy, engaged in meaning-making, and the process-this excites me. (Delores, FQ)

Elizabeth elaborated further:

Witnessing 'A-ha' moments. The feeling of an educator trusting me and coming to me with professional issues or wonderings. Seeing professional and personal growth among educators. (Elizabeth, FQ)

Honouring positive professional relationships. Participants' comments above are illustrative of the professional fulfilment participants reported and are connected to their descriptions of what pedagogical leaders are and do. As well, participants' comments expressed the significance they placed on the ECEC curriculum, and subsequently, curriculum decision making with educators. These small moments helped to create forward momentum in the pedagogical process. Three participants described that while the pedagogical process sometimes felt slow, *Eureka!* moments, like participants described, sparked energy, fueled innovation curriculum decisions and further supported collaborations.

Throughout participants descriptions of their initial intentions for their work as pedagogical leaders, there was a desire for *more:* more time (Jehan, PBD); more resources (Delores, PBD); more mentoring (Kate, PBD); and more of focus on how and why pedagogical leadership is essential to the field (Eva, PBD). Without the recognition of the work done in ECEC centers, the fear was that pedagogical practice will languish. All participants described the positive impact the pedagogical leader can have on educators' image of themselves and their work. Louise described the following:

I do believe that given just given the way that this field is structured, regulated and, to some degree how early childhood educators' agency has been removed, and

sometimes maybe not even developed. Actually, yeah, absolutely. So, I saw that to

some degree when I began here. […] even prior to working with the curriculum

framework, I saw that there were moments where I would say to myself, "Well,

hmmm, I think you're [educator] capable of doing that…you can make that happen.

You can take that somewhere." So, really giving them [educators] opportunities to

grow. (Louise, PBD)

The participants reported desire for additional supports and Louise's example of

expecting more from the educators demonstrated their commitment to their work, as

well as how they described that they felt under-resourced most of the time.

Summary

This chapter reported the individual and collective experiences of study

participants. The findings convey the experiences and viewpoints which offer

opportunities to develop further understanding of the process of becoming and being a

pedagogical leader in ECEC as well as the pedagogical practices used to support their

work. A discussion of these findings is found in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how practicing ECEC leaders explained: their journey to becoming a leader; the pedagogical practices they described using to support and engage EC educators in curriculum meaning making. ECEC is positioned at the intersection of education and the provision of care, with distinct ontological and epistemological perspectives. ECEC discourses are moving out of the theoretical spaces, reshaping ECEC practices, and in turn, practice informs theory. Exploring ECEC leaders' descriptions of their understandings of leadership and pedagogy offers unique insights into their leadership perceptions and pedagogical enactments. The key findings of this study focused on ECEC leadership in three areas: 1) pathways to entering and developing in a formal pedagogic role; 2) descriptions of pedagogical enactments and curricular engagements; 3) identifying the supports for continued leadership development.

This chapter draws together the various themes of the findings and includes limitations, implications for practice and possibilities for further research. Each research question will be discussed in sequential order and independently of the other research questions. However, this does not suggest that the findings are discreet and remain tied to each research question. Instead, discussion of the overall conclusions strived to strengthen the discourse of pedagogical leadership in Alberta.

Principle questions that guided the research are:

1. How do ECEC center leaders describe entering in to and developing in a pedagogical leadership role? What experiences have informed their pedagogical leadership practices?

2. How do pedagogical leaders describe their role as well as the pedagogical practices for curriculum engagement with EC educators?

3. What experiences do pedagogical leaders describe as potentially enriching and enlivening their work?

Significance of the Findings

By exploring how pedagogical leadership is conceptualized in ECEC in Alberta, Canada, this study contributed to new knowledge of ECEC leadership practice, which is distinct from traditional educational leadership assumptions. Through general qualitative approaches of inquiry, reflection, and dialogue, pedagogical leaders described the pathway to becoming and developing as a pedagogical leader; and how they engage with others in curriculum decision making. Synthesis of the participants' descriptions resulted in a richer understanding of the pedagogical role of formal leaders and their accompanying pedagogical practices within ECEC contexts. The results of this study endeavoured to influence ECEC leadership development and practice at local, provincial and national levels.

Developing into Leadership

Participants recognized and expressed the importance of robust leadership in ECEC contexts. Many recalled inspirational leaders that helped to shape their development as emerging leaders. Participants also identified that dedicated curriculum support enriched focused engagement in reflective curriculum

conversations with educators. Both findings underscored participants'

acknowledgement of the significance of the leader's role in the learning process,

together with pedagogical engagement in the curriculum process. Results, however,

did not consistently identify the title for the position of supporting and leading

learning in curriculum collaborations.

Positional leadership locates leadership within the practices defined by a

specific position, such as Director, Team Lead, or Pedagogical Leader. As stated in

Chapter One, positional leadership in ECEC has conventionally been associated with

practices of center-based management. This notion of leadership is structured around

and relies on power relationships in positional hierarchies. By contrast, a relational

notion of leadership interprets leadership enactments as distributed (Heikka et al.,

2012) and networked (Thomas & Nuttall, 2014), and moves away from placing focus

on one dominant leader with many followers, towards a more shared or distributed

leadership style. Participants described their roles in ways that were more relationship-

focused rather than procedurally directed. By placing focus on the interconnected

nature of the pedagogical process within the ECEC center, participants consistently

described their work in relation to the work of educators, pedagogical support team

members, including other formal leaders.

Findings showed there was no universal roadmap to formal leadership in

ECEC. The journey to becoming a formal leader in ECEC was unique to each

participant. Each participant's particular organizational context informed their

personal experiences with leadership. Nevertheless, participants described their

progression towards formal leadership, and the results showed that participants

described two principal paths to leadership in ECEC. One pathway depicted a sequence from an educator in the playroom to a formal leadership role. The other path described entering into a formal leadership role without first-hand practice experience with children.

Becoming a leader. The first pathway described a sequence from practicing educator, which led to promotion within the playroom to become a team lead, and eventually into a formal leadership role. The majority of participants credited their previous practice experience with children as a vitally important informant of their current pedagogic role. Participants linked being an educator with children with being a leader with educators, making equations between these two roles.

The second pathway described entering into formal leadership without prior practice experiences. Participants who went directly into a leadership role described their experiences as "lonely' and "stressful" because they lacked the support and previous relationships with the centers' EC educators and children. For both participants, the heavy focus on administrative duties proved to be overwhelming. One participant exited the formal leadership role in favor of becoming a frontline educator at another center. In contrast, the other participant described discovering her way through the maze of ECEC leadership by forming connections with other ECEC leaders and spending dedicated time in playrooms with children and EC educators, building relationships through engagement within the ecology of the center.

Neither pathway to formal leadership was effortless for all participants. For a majority of participants who moved from the playroom into formal leadership, they described how they relied on their experiences with children to orientate them to their

new leadership role. This assumption is similar to a teacher knowing how to teach because they were once a student. Pedagogical practice is predominately informed by firsthand experiences with children, but the literature shows that is more to know and different skills to acquire (Rodd, 2013; Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2017; Waniganayake, Morda, & Kapsalakis, 2000).

Participants described the distinct parallels between co-constructing curriculum with children and their pedagogical process with EC educators when asked to elaborate on the power of their practice experience as an educator had on pedagogical leadership practices. This substantive finding linked experiential learning as a skilled educator, with future formal ECEC leadership opportunities. However, with limited academic opportunities specific to EC pedagogy within leadership domains, the dominant pathway is fixed. Until recently, formal opportunities for EC educators to advance their theoretical knowledge of pedagogy specific to ECEC did not exist. Therefore, participants' descriptions of their pedagogical understanding that primarily draw on practice knowledge should be expected.

Leading and Learning. All participants reported working within a pedagogical team. The participants described that the makeup of the team might include curriculum mentors, curriculum facilitators, curriculum specialists, and EC educators to engage in and guided pedagogic practices, depending on the size and resources of the ECEC. Participants described a center-specific process of examining and re-defining leadership, which resulted in gradual changes to the organizational structure. These changes created a new layer of pedagogical support through the creation, redefinition and reimagination of formal leadership roles. Within these layers

of leadership, some participants described how they performed specific leadership tasks, while other participants reported they did not perform these same tasks (i.e. conducting educator performance evaluations). In all cases, participants were not acting as a full-time educator in the playroom, although they reported that they did regularly participate with children, families and educators. This newly configured pedagogical layer situated the participants amongst educators, children, families and other center leaders. This finding suggested that pedagogical leadership is less about organizational positionality and more about the interrelated nature between members of the ECEC center community. All study participants reported working in centers that had established organizational structures for formal pedagogical engagement and support. However, it cannot be assumed that this is the norm in Alberta's ECEC centers (Langford, 2009). Instead, pedagogical support and formal leadership remains under established in the majority of Alberta's ECEC centres.

Conceptions of pedagogical leadership

Participants' job titles were wide ranging, from curriculum specialist and facilitator, to assistant and executive director. Noticeably missing from all participants' job titles were the terms: pedagogy and leader. Participants did not use the term *pedagogical leader* in their role descriptions, which leads to questioning the relevance of the term to participants' roles or practices. As participant role descriptions did not use the term *pedagogical leader*, could it be assumed that the term pedagogical leader was not representative of the participants' role or work? To conclude the titling and role definitions, further measured analysis is required, as notions of the pedagogical role, evidenced by the analysis of data, were generally

reported in participants' descriptions of a pedagogical leader's role as described by the literature. However, there were still many pedagogical processes that remained under described in the data.

Exploring Pedagogic Roles. All participants' descriptions did not expansively detail the specific pedagogical process and strategies as a pedagogical leader. This finding may reflect the idea that pedagogical leadership is not about pedagogical protocols within a defined course of action. Instead, the emerging role of the pedagogical leader reflects the changing role of the EC educator. Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kocher, Sanchez and Chan, (2009) state:

  [W]e must abandon our idea of a static, knowable educator and move on to a view of an educator in a state of constant change and becoming. The role of the educator shifts from a communicator of knowledge to a listener, provocateur, documenter, and negotiator of meaning. (p. 103)

In the above quote, the authors offer a reconceptualization of the EC educator's role, described as an active co-constructor in the learning process. Perhaps this evolving role/image of the educator also reflects the shift in thinking required to (re)conceptualize the pedagogical leader's role as listener, provocateur, documenter and negotiator of meaning (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2009). The complex and iterative nature of joining with others in co-constructing curriculum meaning-making results in a process that is challenging to define and articulate, especially when removed from the pedagogical moment. However, to suggest that leadership of learning absent in local ECEC communities because participants' descriptions were without more scholarly terms, reduces leadership and curriculum practices to the most

straightforward and tangible archetypes. Therefore, the idea of a comprehensive list of leadership role responsibilities related to curriculum planning, based on theoretical principles of leading and pedagogy, only further divide the theory and practice spheres.

Pedagogical leadership resides in-*between* both spheres: center administrative leadership; and educator practice. This middle position enables the pedagogical leader to engage within both spheres, with one foot in the space that focuses on supporting the learning of enhanced pedagogical practices with EC educators, and the other foot in the space is focused on the center's overarching pedagogic goals and principles. In addition, time was identified as a significant barrier for all participants. As stated by Kate, "Reflective practice takes time" (PBD). Dedicated time is needed for pedagogical leaders to engage directly with educators in the curriculum meaning making process, but participants also described needing time to act as a co-researcher by reflecting on their practice, accessing additional curriculum resources, and observing and documenting children and educators.

Middle leadership. Rönnerman, Grootenboer, and Edwards-Groves' (2017) research explored how the term *middle leader* reflected the space that teacher leaders occupy within educational contexts. This qualitative study used the theory of "practice architectures" to examine and understand the enabling, and constraining forces have on the practices of middle leaders in their work. Practice Architecture is the interrelated pedagogical practices defined as the *sayings, doings* and *relatings* that are influenced by an overall frame that brings form to middle leaders' practice (Rönnerman et al., 2017). They explained further:

teachers who lead others in the enhancement of practice sitting in the

middle positionally (i.e. between the principal and staff), philosophically and

practically. (Rönnerman et al., 2017, p.2)

Others have studied the notion of middle leaders (Hargreaves and Ainscome, 2015 as

cited in Rönnerman et al., 2017) and compared the term *middle leader* to the more

conventional educational leader, who concentrates on extensive educational changes

and reform, akin to classroom consulting. Instead, Rönnerman et al. (2017) describe

the role of the middle leaders in Swedish preschools as "the coordinators who play a

central role in the sustainable development of the implementation of the new

curriculum through systematic quality work" (p.19). They describe the importance of

conceptualizing middle leaders as the *brokers of practices* between different practice

groups and stakeholders (Wenger, 1998, emphasis mine).

The middle leaders in the study were recruited into middle leadership by a

principal, yet their practices developed from being amongst a group of middle leaders.

The findings reported how the focus on how collegial learning (peer practice circles)

served to strengthen knowledge and practice with others and helped to build trusting

learning relationships. Rönnerman et al. (2017) described that "the theory of practice

architecture" used for illuminating what enabled and constrained the leading practices

of middle leaders" (p.13). The study's key findings included the notion that practice

architecture was a positive influence on the pedagogical enactment of middle leaders:

middle leading practices were influenced by practice architectures that

distinctly and distinctively shaped the language and discourses, the activities

and physical set-ups and the social relationships required for creating (or not)

development and sustainable change in Swedish preschools (p.19).

Participants reported that their understanding of the pedagogical process was

validated and even enriched through engagement with other center leaders. The term

middle leader accurately reflects how participants described the organizational layers

and how pedagogical leadership situates within the layers. Rönnerman et al., (2017)

study's findings align with the findings reported in Chapter Four and reflect that, in

some cases, center leaders engaged in a macro pedagogical process by reaching out

and connecting with other peer leaders in a network of ECEC leaders.

Pedagogical Practices: Learning as Experience

Using Wenger's (1998) notion of a boundary encounter within a community of

practice, the place-based and focus group dialogues served as spaces to negotiate

meaning between the study participant(s) and the researcher. As a joint enterprise, the

notions of curriculum decision making belongs to those who have negotiated its

meaning to become a shared practice. The shared practice is not easily described to

those who have not negotiated meaning around the practice. As a brokering practice of

the community, attempting to define the role of the pedagogical leader using the

established role criteria formed outside the community, results in a struggle to define

the enterprise.

> It is difficult to establish criteria for what is valuable at the fringes of
>
> established practices, and the burgeoning of promising new practices is not
>
> always easy to recognize because they do fit well within existing regimes of
>
> accountability. (Wenger, 1998, p. 115)

The challenge of defining the leader's role may be less about their understanding of the practices and more about the reification of the leader's role. The role of the leader cannot be translated outside the community because it continues to shape within the community of practice. Whether participants' descriptions of their roles mirror more formed descriptions reduces this pedagogic role into a list of characteristics and de-complexifies the nature of the work. The fluidity of the role descriptions further underscores the highly contextual nature of the pedagogic role.

In another context, I have described the non-linear and sometimes disorganized nature of emergent curriculum planning as trying to pick up a puddle in your arms. Picking an entire puddle up is an impossible task; however, over time, using a vessel, the puddle can be moved, little by little, to a new location. The relocated puddle is still, by definition, a puddle. However, it is not the same puddle as it was in the original site. This example demonstrates that relocating practice from inside to outside the community is, in fact, possible. However, once the practice is outside, it is not understood in the same ways as practice community members understand it.

The implications for practice focus on determining ways to capture the currently nuanced role of the pedagogical leader effectively. As a result, there is a richer understandings of the role and greater acknowledgement of the theoretical knowledge and practice-based skills and strategies needed to strengthen pedagogical leadership.

Pedagogical Strategies in Curriculum Decision Making

The findings showed that participants described past pedagogic enactments, as well as envisioned potential pedagogical strategies with educators. This finding

illustrated that pedagogic work dwells in possibilities rather than absolutes. Each

participant's descriptions of their pedagogical understandings and leadership

experiences bridges the known with the not yet uncovered. However, the challenge

remains. The role of the pedagogical leader in ECEC cannot remain concealed outside

of the community of practice. Richer understandings within and amongst communities

of practice created by the discovery of the entry points into pedagogic roles in ECEC.

The findings from the vignette exercise explored with participants during the

focus group dialogues showed: 1) participants offered several possible enactments for

the educator, yet fewer for the pedagogical leader; and 2) responses related to the ways

the pedagogical leader might proceed were loosely defined and more relational in

nature. These findings support earlier findings: experiential knowledge as an educator

informed their leadership practice; pedagogical leadership enactments are contextually

responsive, and pedagogical leadership practice in ECEC remains

underacknowledged. Participant discussion focused on the need for deeper

understanding of the vignette's context (history of children's play; curriculum decision

making; playroom environment), and further underscores that the pedagogical process

is not a one size fits all approach to curriculum development.

Formal and Informal Professional Learning Opportunities

The findings describe that participants credited their practice with children as

the primary informant to their formal leadership role. However, in a field that lacks

professionals learning opportunities that go beyond procedural training, experiential

practice is the dominant source of professional learning for pedagogical leadership.

Not to suggest that practice experience with children is inferior to formalized

education; however, honouring the complexity of the role as described by participants requires practice experience as well as theoretical knowledge—there is a need for both. Without theoretical knowledge, there is a fear that the practice becomes irrelevant and no longer dynamic. As Marie stated, "You don't know what you don't know" (PBD). Marie's quote highlighted how limited opportunities to examine and strengthen practice and expand theoretical understanding, creates an increased potential for theoretical and practice blind spots.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice focus on determining ways to capture the currently nuanced role of the pedagogical leader effectively. As a result, richer understandings of the role and acknowledgement of the theoretical knowledge and practice-based skills and strategies needed to strengthen pedagogical leadership as an emerging field of study.

Leadership Development. The implications for practice focus on the development of formal ECEC leadership credentials. The majority of participants described having extensive educator experience before progressing into formal leadership roles. As labor trends shift, new generations of EC educators may not commit to 10 years as an educator before entering into formal leadership. With comprehensive theoretical understanding, it is plausible that future suitable leadership candidates might have less practice experience. Instead, with an intermediate knowledge of the pedagogical strategies, the role of the pedagogical leader will become more formalized. As sustainable pedagogical support team structures are created in ECEC, additional levels of academic qualification that go beyond a two-

year diploma in early childhood education will be necessary. Participants described the pedagogical practices they used with others, and how curriculum decisions were made in concert with others.

Leadership Conceptions. The implications for practice focus on defining the role of the pedagogical leader that extends beyond understanding practice experience with children. Understanding the pedagogical experience as an educator is vitally important to the pedagogical leader's role. However, to cultivate an inquiry-based approach to curriculum planning, the pedagogical leaders needs to frame her practice as reflective thinking rather than reflective teaching (Pelo & Carter, 2018).

Pedagogical Leadership Practices. The implications for practice focus on the strategies and skills that define pedagogical leadership as it is currently practiced in Alberta. As pedagogical leadership becomes more widely understood within the practice community and beyond, and as pedagogical leaders articulate the how, the what, and the why of pedagogical practices, practice is more defined and discernable. While there are similar pedagogical beliefs around co-constructing with others, pedagogical leaders require specific pedagogical strategies that focus on co-creating curriculum with educators. With well-defined pedagogical practice knowledge, the pedagogical leadership roles and practices will continue to perpetuate.

Formal Professional Learning. The implications for practice focus on the development of formal ECEC leadership credentials. Participants described wanting future academic opportunities, in the shape of post-secondary degrees, specifically on pedagogy and leadership in ECEC. Advanced scholarship in pedagogy and leadership would prepare future leaders with theoretical understanding, and once in practice,

pathways to formal leadership may become differentiated beyond practice experience. Development of degrees specific to leadership and pedagogy may result in the creation of new pathways to leadership. Scholarship, specific to pedagogical leadership, will illuminate the theoretical and practice knowledge of the role.

Informal Professional Learning. The implications for practice focus on the self-organized pedagogical leadership practice gatherings in the shape of forums, practice circles, learning communities, and other peer initiatives. Wenger (1998) describes the three dimensions of a community as joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire. Using these three dimensions to describe the creation of these shared experiences (or joint enterprise) for mutual engagement will deepen practice through the formation of and participating in communities of practice. Creating shared repertories would include discourses in practice (Wenger, 1998).

The recent decision (April 1, 2020) by the Alberta Government to no longer administer a provincial child care accreditation system presents new challenges for ECEC leaders and educators. The notion of pedagogical leadership is built on the supporting EC educators' professional growth in pedagogical processes. The role of the pedagogical leader remains vulnerable, especially when practice standards are weakened or even removed. When standards are relaxed, ECEC professionals are challenged to strive more vehemently for excellence in practice, without a standard of practice to refer to. Along with the uncertainty of altered provincial expectations (either increased or decreased), a still emerging focus on pedagogy and curriculum seems never more challenged. There is increased urgency for creating professional standards that continue to move the practice community forward and articulate context

specific EC pedagogical practices. Now, more than ever, Alberta's ECEC community is encouraged to establish standards focused on EC pedagogy, child-centered curriculum design and supporting children's early learning, rather than custodial care protocols and regulations based on minimum standards.

Limitations of the study

The study was limited to the perceptions of those who self-identify as formal leaders with a pedagogic role in accredited, non-profit ECEC centers in the greater Edmonton region. However, since the role profile of pedagogical leaders is still emerging, a description of potential pedagogical practices that pedagogical leaders may enact was used to invite potential participants. I sought ECEC center leaders who worked closely with educators to observe, document, and interpret what is happening in the play environment, and work with educators to reflect, plan and project responsive learning experiences for/with children**.** Potential research participants were required to meet all of the following criteria**:**

- Self-identified as a center leader (director; assistant director; pedagogical mentor, or other.)

- Held an Early Learning and Child Care diploma (minimum, and holds an Alberta Child Development Supervisor certificate: CDS)

- Acted in a leadership role providing pedagogical supports to a team of EC educators (minimum five EC educators) within a non-profit and accredited, full-day child care center within a metro area in Alberta.

- Familiar with *Flight Framework* (2014) and may have previously used the framework with EC educators

The qualitative method afforded research opportunities to explore participants' professional experiences with leadership in ECEC. However, this study was not without limitations.

Place-based dialogues. Arranging twelve face to face interviews caused some scheduling challenges. I intended to hold each dialogue in the participants' ECEC center in the early evening, so children and educators were not present. Almost half of the participants expressed a preference for a daytime interview. I accommodated these requests, but in hindsight, the meeting time influenced the participant's ability within the center. While the daytime dialogues were rich with examples and offered great insight, there was limited opportunity to walk through the ECEC center and freely discuss the documentation and other artifacts of their pedagogical process. When we were able to walk through the center, often, participants stopped to engage with an educator, a parent or a group of children. These detours in our walkabouts were interesting and demonstrated the participants' commitment to collegiality; the flow of the dialogue was interrupted, resulting in general chit chat with others.

In most cases, the interviews took place in the center's main office, which was conducive for optimal audio-recording. However, some interviews were briefly interrupted because others needed the participant. I had anticipated that there would be more opportunities to discuss their processes while we were in the playroom, as a way to illustrate the curriculum that was in process.

Focus group dialogues. Coming together as a group of phase two participants created an opportunity for the seven participants to discuss the experiences and impressions. Regarding participation, it is unknown why some first phase participants

did not attend the focus group. It may have been scheduling issues, or perhaps they self-selected out of the study.

While the conversations amongst the participants produced rich dialogue, the transcriptions were challenging to interpret, with lots of cross-talking. With so much dialogue, I struggled with managing the time and was not able to have the time needed for some planned activities. In the end, the sharing of the co-selected artifacts (identified during the place-based dialogue) brought by some participants was rushed and not given adequate time for group discussion. The time restraints influenced the data I collected and the depth of my focus group data analysis.

Follow-up questionnaire. Using an electronic questionnaire was an efficient way to collect data as a follow up to the focus group. Completed by all phase two study participants, the questionnaire's short-answer questions mostly elicited brief statements or phrases. The opportunity to ask the participants to elaborate and gain a more comprehensive understanding and enhanced the follow-up questionnaire data analysis.

As the researcher, I acknowledged that my previous professional relationships with all participants influenced my positionality. Of the 12 participants, five were former students of mine, and all participants knew of my role in the development of Flight *Framework* (2014). While this afforded me a level of ease and familiarity, I had to work diligently to create some distance with previous shared experiences. With data collection event, I was explicit about my intention to gather data around their experiences. At various points in data collection, I wondered if participants' descriptions of their practices were influenced by 1) a belief that I already had of the

practice. Therefore a detailed description was not needed 2) a concern that their described practice was not expertly performed.

Delimitations

Although highly illustrative, this study did not observe participants' leadership practices. As well, the study did not seek to explore how pedagogical leadership was expressed and enacted within other early years contexts (such as school-based early childhood programs; Head Start programs; rural Alberta or other urban centers within the province; corporate run/for-profit daycares; or preschools). While the excluded potential sites/contexts offer rich opportunities for understanding pedagogical leadership within these contexts, this research focused on understanding the pedagogical leadership phenomenon within the criteria mentioned above (listed in the limitations section). Data was not gathered from the EC educators, children at the centers or other stakeholders such as families, policymakers, and government representatives (such as accreditation validators). The research did not set expectations on participants' years of practice/leadership experience, but in hindsight, exploring the possible interplay between years of leadership experience and pedagogical practices would have been an interesting aspect to explore further. To fully understand the shapes that pedagogical leadership can take, participants' years of experience as a center leader was not a determining factor in the selection process. In an attempt to explore the scope of personal experiences as a pedagogical leader, participant years of experiences ranged from less than two years to over 25 years.

Additional Research Opportunities

There is need for thorough examinations of the pedagogical practices that pedagogical leaders use to engage with educators in a learning process for curriculum practice enhancement. The literature did suggest that pedagogical leadership is a reflective and iterative process requiring resources, time and structures and should be explored and researched further within ECEC contexts. To fully explore how relationships are built within the learning community, practices within and outside the playroom require up close and sustained study. As a result of this scholarship, much of what remains invisible to outsiders may be better understood through case study and focused observational methods. This increased awareness would create opportunities for the research to see patterns in the pedagogical process.

Additional contemporary research in ECEC may reveal the emergence of pedagogical practices and the professional knowledge of EC educators and how this has been cultivated through engagement with pedagogical leaders. Further research will continue to reflect the importance of the reflective processes to create an in-depth understanding of the complex work done in ECEC (Dalli, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003). It was unknown if the study's findings are representative of pedagogical leadership in ECEC centers throughout Alberta. However, the results revealed the tensions between leading learning and practice, and reflected how concepts of managing, mentoring and leading practice remain contested. As well, there is room for further discussion on the emerging organizational structures in ECEC and how pedagogy and leadership situate within these structures.

Summary

The chapter's discussions linked the findings reported in Chapter Four and establish how it relates the existing research on pedagogical leadership in ECEC. This research explored how pedagogical leaders described the following: (a) personal accounts of their pathways to leadership and the development of their pedagogical practices (b) descriptions of pedagogical practices and processes (c) ways that leadership practices could be more richly envisioned. Pedagogical leaders play a vital role in creating transformative shifts in EC practice. This research examined the not yet well-defined and sometimes understood the role of the pedagogical leader in ECEC in Alberta by exploring participants' perspectives on leading practice within ECEC teams. Learning from those acting as pedagogical leaders inform understanding of how pedagogical leaders become and develop and support the construction of the various roles and the practices that articulate curriculum decision making with EC educators. As leadership roles and pedagogical responsibilities are reconsidered, the co-creation of transformative change will influence how leadership practices situate within an evolving ECEC landscape.

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Appendices

A. Ethics approval memo: University of Portland

B. Ethics approval letter: MacEwan University

C. Initial invitation to participate email

D. Follow up email to set up interviews

E. Placed-based Dialogue Consent Form

F. Place-based Dialogue Protocol

G. Invitation to participate in Phase Two

H. Phase Two Consent Form

I. Focus Group Protocol

J. Follow Up Questionnaire questions

K. List of data codes

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Memo: University of Portland

University
of Portland

Memorandum

To: **Nancy Thomas**
From: **John Orr, Ph.D.**
Date: **9/12/2019**
RE: **IRB Notification of University of Portland Project #2019117**

Dear Nancy Thomas:

On behalf of the University of Portland's federally registered Institutional Review Board (IRB00006544), a member of the committee has reviewed your research proposal, titled "Exploring Pedagogical Leadership in Alberta's Early Childhood Education and Care." The IRB concludes that the project satisfies all IRB-related issues involving human subjects research under the "Expedited" classification. A printout of this memorandum should serve as written authorization from IRB to proceed with your research.

The expiration date for this approval is 9/11/2020. If the study is expected to go beyond that date, you must submit a Continued Review Form (located on the IRB website) for continuing review. I recommend that this form be submitted to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the expiration date.

Please note that you are required to abide by all requirements as outlined by the IRB Committee.

A copy of this memorandum, along with your Request for Review and its documentation, will be stored in the IRB Committee files for three years from the completion of your project, as mandated by federal law. If you have any questions, please contact me at irb@up.edu.

Respectfully,

John C. Orr, Ph.D.
Assistant Provost
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of English

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Memo MacEwan University

October 01, 2019 Ms. Nancy

Thomas
Faculty of Health and Community Studies
MacEwan University

File No: 101697
Approval Date: October 01, 2019
Expiry Date: September 30, 2020 Dear

Nancy Thomas,

The Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application titled 'Exploring Pedagogical Leadership in Alberta's Early Childhood Education and Care'. Your application has been approved. This REB approval expires on **September 29, 2020**. To continue your research past this date, you must submit a Renewal Form. When your research is complete, please submit a Closure Form to close out REB approval monitoring efforts.

Note that any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to MacEwan's REB for approval prior to implementation, and you are reminded of your obligation to advise the REB of any unanticipated issues or events that occur during the approval period (as per C5052: 4.6.1).

If your project activities involve acquiring information through an institution, organization or other group, you should be aware that these bodies may have their own ethics or operational requirements, beyond REB review, for allowing access to their sites and to the use of their resources. It is your responsibility to formally collaborate with the relevant body to seek permission to proceed with the project.

If you have any questions about the REB review & approval process, please contact the REB at (780) 497-4280 or REB@macewan.ca. **Do not reply to this message.**

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Striemer Chair,
Research Ethics Board
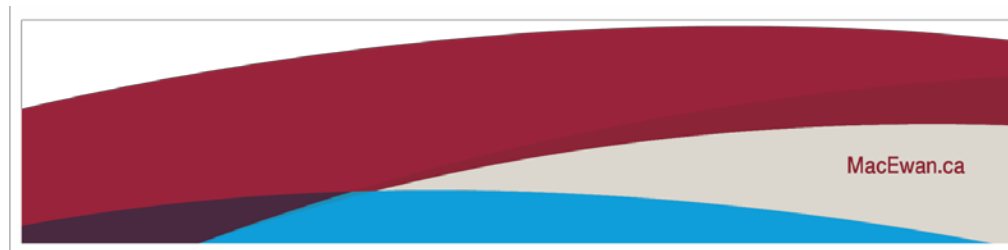
Appendix C: Initial Contact Email

Hello:

My name is Nancy Thomas, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Portland studying leadership in early childhood education and care (ECEC). You were identified to receive this email because you are a center leader in a non-profit, accredited child care center in the metro Edmonton area. I am seeking center leaders to participate in a research study conducted by Nancy Thomas as part of the University of Portland School of Education doctoral program.

I am seeking center leaders who work closely with educators to observe, document, and interpret what is happening in the play environment, and then work with educators to reflect, plan and project responsive learning experiences for/with children.

To better understand the role of the center leader in the curriculum planning process, your expertise is vitally important to this research. I am seeking participants who:

- Self-identify as a center leader (director; assistant director; pedagogical mentor, pedagogical leader, etc.)
- Preferably hold an Early Learning and Child Care diploma (minimum, and holds an Alberta Child Development Supervisor certificate)
- Act in a leadership role providing pedagogical supports to a team of EC educators (minimum five EC educators) within a non-profit and accredited, full-day child care center in the metro Edmonton area
- Are familiar with *Flight* framework (2014) and may use it with EC educators

If you decide to participate, there will be a one on one interview that will take place in your EC center (outside of operating hours, without children and others present) and will be in the form of a *walkabout*, with the researcher asking questions about the process of how curriculum decisions are made in your center. The questions while walking through the center and conversations will potentially be audio recorded (with your consent). This will take approx. 1-1.5 hours. All data collected (interview notes and interview audio recordings) will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in any aspect of the research findings.

Have questions or wish to participate? Please contact Nancy Thomas, by emailing ******@ up.edu or calling (***) ***-9901. If I do not hear from you by September 30, I will send out a reminder email on October 1, 2019-If you don't wish to participate, simply ignore this email. Thank you for your time!

Best,
Nancy Thomas

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate: Place-based Dialogue

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. Below you will find a link to a calendar with possible meeting dates. I tried to have a mix of times and dates. I had originally thought that the interviews would take place when your center was closed, but I realize that this is challenging for many of you or there is opportunity during the work day that we could sit down and talk, as well as look around your center for some "artifacts" of curriculum decision making. If an evening appointment works better for you, there are a number of evening interview dates available. I am available during the day, as well.

I am hoping to keep the interviews and walkabouts to about 60 minutes, but I have scheduled the meeting times for 80-90 minutes to allow for some extra time.

The link below takes you to an app that allows you to see potential meeting times, but it is "live," so other participants may choose a date/time that you were considering. Once you have chosen a date and time that works for you (you just need to choose one date and time), it won't that date and time won't be available for other participants- some morning, some afternoon and some evening times. I can always add more dates and times to accommodate your schedule.

When we meet, I will fully explain the consent process and how I will honor confidentiality. https://calendly.com/*****

Once again, thank you and I am really looking forward to our chat.

Best,

Nancy Thomas

Appendix E: Consent for Place-Based Dialogue

October 1, 2019

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Nancy Thomas, as part of the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND School of Education doctoral program. I hope to learn pedagogical tools and practices EC leaders use to support others in curriculum decision making. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a center leader in a non-profit, accredited child care center in the metro Edmonton area, as well meeting the other outlined criteria in the invitation email.

If you decide to participate, there will be a one on one interview (aka place-based dialogue) that will take place in your EC center (outside of operating hours, without children and others present) and will be in the form of a walkabout, with the researcher asking questions about the process of how curriculum decisions are made in your center. The questions while walking through the center and conversations will potentially be audiotaped (with your consent). All data collected (interview notes and interview audio tapings) will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in any aspect of the research findings.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. I ask that you consent to my right to publish all or parts of their interviews, but not before I share my interpretations with you for clarification and further discussion. You will be provided the option to choose your own pseudonyms. Only the researcher will know the link between an individual's name and their pseudonym; this record will be kept in a separate file on the

researcher's home computer. Audio-recorded files will be named using the pseudonym before they are sent to a transcription service outside of Alberta, to ensure that individuals will be unlikely to be recognized by their voice. The researcher will instruct the transcription service to replace specific names of persons and places with generic information such as Center Name, Colleague Name, etc. The researcher will confirm that these generic labels have been inserted and will review each transcript to replace any other potentially identifying information with generic descriptors. Audio-recordings will be deleted after the transcriptions have been checked by the researcher for accuracy.

No questions will be asked about sensitive aspects of a participant's behavior. The data will be stored in a password protected laptop and a password protected folder. At the end of the study (April 2020), all links between the data and the participants will be destroyed. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research nor will you receive payment for your participation.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not change your relationship with Nancy Thomas; University of Portland; or any university where Nancy Thomas may have been your instructor.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Nancy Thomas *****@up.edu or my faculty advisor Dr. Julie Kalnin *** @up.edu. If you

have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

I, _____, understand the implications of this research project and agree / do not agree (circle one) to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Place-Based Dialogue Protocol

Appendix I: Place-Based Dialogue Protocol

Orienting statements:

I'm looking forward to talking to you today…
This visit is going to have 3 parts.

1. First, I am going to ask you about your role

2. Then we are going to walk around, and you can show me some aspects of your work

3. And then we will together identify some materials or artifacts that we will look more closely.

If at any point if you want to show me something, please do so.
Consent process will take place.
Ask the participants about whether s/he prefers to choose their own pseudonyms, or I should assign them a pseudonym.
Seek the participant's consent to audio tape our dialogue, as well as to take notes.
Ask if the participant has questions before we get started

1. Tell me about how you first started out as a pedagogical leader? When did you know you were acting as a pedagogical leader? (What are some of your earliest memories of starting out?) Did you have questions about the role? If so, what were your initial questions? If not, why do you think that was the case?

2. If someone were to come into your center and asked you what a pedagogical leader does, how would you describe the role?

3. Let's go for a walk around your center. As we walk, stop at any point to show out to me something that you think would help me to better understand your role as a pedagogical leader? Tell me more about what you are stopping at?

(When was this created? Who was involved? Did you use a process when you were engaging with these materials/ideas/ memories? What tools do you use to support this process? What image of the child do you think this item represents? Do these items represent any other images?

4. Is there anything else you would like to show me that helps me to understand how meaning is made around curriculum?

5. At the beginning of our time together, you told me about how you started out in this role…. How have you changed since those "early days in the role"? if yes, how? If no, why do you think that is?

6. What have you found to be useful to you in your development as a pedagogical leader?

7. Do you follow a process when working with EC educators? If so, can you describe it for me?

8. If you were to choose one or two artifacts from the things that we looked at during our talk that seems to tell a story of how curriculum meaning is made, what would you choose and why? Tell me about these about these….

9. Have I missed anything?

Appendix G: Invitation to Participation: Phase Two

Invitation to Participation: Phase Two

Hello Again,

Thank you very much for your participation in the first phase of my research on pedagogical leadership in ECEC in Alberta. Your participation was very beneficial to my evolving understanding of what pedagogical leadership looks like in various EC settings in Alberta.

You are invited to further participate in Phase Two of the research study conducted by me (Nancy Thomas), as part of the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND School of Education doctoral program. I hope to continue to learn about the pedagogical tools and practices EC leaders use to support others in curriculum decision making. **You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you participated in the place-based dialogue and you met the criteria outlined in the first phase of this research project.**

Phase Two of the research project consists of:

-participation in **one focus group discussion** with other research participants (approximately 1.5 hours)

-answering a series of questions about your participation in the research and your practice experiences in the form of a **follow-up electronic questionnaire** (which will take approx. 30 minutes to complete).

The focus group conversation with other research participants will be held on

Tuesday November 19, 2019 6**:00-7:45 PM** (Dinner will be provided)

Idylwylde Public Library (Bonnie Doon)

8310-88 Avenue, Edmonton

Located on the north end of the Bonnie Doon Shopping Center and beside the AHS

Bonnie Doon Public Health Center. **PARKING IS FREE IN THE FRONT**

PARKING LOT. The focus group will be held in the multipurpose room at the back

of the library.

You and I discussed some artifacts or objects (documentation, planning documents, learning stories, etc.) that help to tell the story of how curriculum decisions are made in your center. You are invited to bring some of these artifacts to the focus group discussion. These items will remain the property of your center and no photos will be taken of these objects. I trust that you will seek any necessary permission from families, children, educators, etc. If you are unable to bring objects, there will be plenty of opportunity to describe your role and your center's process in curriculum meaning making. Please come and join the discussion! There will be a small honorarium ($20.00 CDN gift card) given to each focus group participant. The follow-up email questionnaire will be sent out within 10 days of the focus group. You will be asked to sign a consent form for Phase Two. I am attaching the consent form for your review, but I will have hard copies to sign on Nov 19-**there is no need to print and bring it on Nov 19th.** If you have questions, please contact Nancy Thomas, by emailing ********@up.edu or calling (***) ***-****.

Please let me know if you plan on attending, so I can plan for dinner numbers on November 19th. Time outside of your normal workday is precious, so I understand if you are unable to attend the focus group.

Best,

Nancy Thomas

Appendix H: Research Consent Form: Phase Two

Appendix H : Research Consent Form: Phase Two

Phase Two of the research project consists of: **one focus group discussion** with other research participants (approximately 1.5 hours). There will be a **follow-up electronic questionnaire** that will ask you to answer a series of questions about your participation in the research and your practice experiences. The questionnaire will take approx. 30 minutes to complete. There will be a small honorarium ($20.00 CDN gift card) given to each focus group participant. The follow-up questionnaire will be sent out within 10 days of the focus group event.

All data collected (interview notes and interview audio tapings) will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in any aspect of the research findings. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.
I ask that you consent to my right to publish all or parts of their interviews, but not before I share my interpretations with you for clarification and further discussion. Only the researcher will know the link between an individual's name and their pseudonym; this record will be kept in a separate file on the researcher's home computer. Audio-recorded files will be named using the pseudonym before they are sent to a transcription service outside of Alberta, to ensure that individuals will be unlikely to be recognized by their voice. The researcher will instruct the transcription service to replace specific names of persons and places with generic information such as Center Name, Colleague Name, etc. The researcher will confirm that these generic labels have been inserted and will review each transcript to replace any other potentially identifying information with generic descriptors. Audio-recordings will be deleted after the transcriptions have been checked by the researcher for accuracy. No questions will be asked about sensitive aspects of a participant's behavior. The data will be stored in a password protected laptop and a password protected folder. At the end of the study (April 2020), all links between the data and the participants will be destroyed.

For the focus group event, if you chose to bring artifacts or objects (documentation, planning documents, learning stories, etc.) that help to tell the story of how curriculum decisions are made in your center. These items will remain the property of your center and no photos will be taken of these objects. I trust that you have sought any necessary permission from families, children, educators, etc.

There will be a small honorarium ($20.00 CDN gift card) given to each focus group participant. The follow-up questionnaire will be sent out within 10 days of the focus group.

I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research. Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect

your relationship with Nancy Thomas; MacEwan University; any institution that Nancy Thomas has worked for; or the University of Portland. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Nancy Thomas *****@up.edu or my faculty advisor Dr. Julie Kalnin ****@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form for your records. Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

I, _____, understand the implications of this research project and agree / do not agree (circle one) to participate in this study.

Signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____Date: _____

Appendix I: Focus Group Protocol

Welcome and re-introduce myself. The focus on tonight's dialogues will be on your role as a pedagogical leader. The results will be used to create a picture of what pedagogical leadership looks like in Alberta contexts.

CONSENT PROCESS
Some general reminders

1. My role will be to guide the discussion. No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view. You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen as others share their views. Purpose (how this conversation relates to the previous individual discussions)

2. Norms (a focus group isn't a normal conversation. In this context, voicing different perspectives, if held, is essential.

3. We are trying to understand the full range of viewpoints/experiences people have had. **I want to offer some sentence starters for people if you think they are going to hesitate to disagree… I appreciate that, but my experience has been different.**

4. **That's an important point, and I'd like to add, I hear what you're saying and I'd add** (or contrast or offer an alternative)

5. In this context, it is also important to be vocal about agreement-
- mmmhmm, I agree, etc. although you know these people so might be easier for you to capture nonverbals.

6. hand signals for agreeing or wanting to question or say an alternative

7. Confidentiality agreement (what is said here stays here)

8. transcribing the data Are they comfortable with attributing the comments to them by pseudonym or not?)

9. D. Questions? O.k. to proceed? (ask each person to acknowledge that they are o.k. with   being taped).

 I ask that your turn off your cellphones.

Process for Focus Group Small Group Work

1. Using the stickie notes provided, please brainstorm all of the actions (verbs) or *pedagogical practices* that you engage in when supporting (promote/influence) educators in the curriculum decision making? You can always edit your sticky notes afterwards. So what are the actions you do when you're engaging with others in curriculum meaning-making?

2. Using the stickie notes provided, please brainstorm all of the **curricular tools** (nouns) that you engage with when supporting (promoting/influencing) educators in the curriculum decision making? Can you write the sentence using those category titles? the sentence might start one or two sentences in pedagogical leadership.

3. Process of making sentences using the piles of stickies

4. Share as a large group

Worksheet: As pedagogical leaders, … Pedagogical Leadership is….

5. What do you think are the theories or principles that might guide or inform you when you're supporting educators?

6. I'll write them down. think of the theories or principles that might guide or inform you when supporting educators in the curriculum decision making process. I'll give you an example

7. I am going to hand out and then read a vignette (Appendix I). Once I am finished reading the vignette out loud, we will take a few minutes for you to pause and reflect and then respond the questions below (What are the initial questions you have about this vignette? If you were Simone, what might you do next and why? What would you not do and why not?   What do you might the educator do next?)

8. Describe the artifact (s) that you brought with you. What is the story that relates to these artifacts? If you didn't bring an artifact, please share a description of a trace that demonstrates the pedagogical process that you take when supporting educators in meaning-making?

9. Additional comments or questions

10. Thank you and remind them about a gift card

Focus Group vignette

The children's laughter is what caught Simone's attention as she was passing by an open window into the outdoor play environment. She stopped to watch and saw 2 preschool-age children pulled a wagon, with three other preschoolers in it. As the two children pulled the heavy wagon the wagon's passengers, were tossed from side to side, as the wagon's wheels bumped up and over three planks the wood laying on the ground. "Again! Again!", the passengers would chant. Janice, an EC educator watched intently, and Simone noticed that the three planks of wood created a rough terrain for the wagon and required that the two children pulling the wagon needed to pull with great force to get the wagon's tires over the planks. As each tire bumped over the wood, the children were tossed to and forth. Simone and Janice exchanged glances and smiles, signally to one another that this playful exploration may represented opportunities for further exploration.

Simone, the EC center's pedagogical leader, later met with Janice, and they shared their observations of the wagon hauling play they observed earlier. Janice had taken some photos of the play episode, enabling Simone to re-engage with the play from Janice's vantage point as the photographer. Both Simone and Janice quickly moved the dialogue beyond *what* had happened in the play to their understanding of *why* the play might have emerged in the ways it did.

Appendix J: Follow- Up Questionnaire

Pedagogical Leadership in Alberta: Phase Two Follow-up Questions

Start of Block: Please answer these questions to the best of your ability.

Q1 Please state your first name. This platform keeps your submission anonymous, but I would benefit from knowing who is responding.

_____

Q2 Often after a focus group participants will reflect on ideas with which they strongly agreed or disagreed. What idea(s) have you continued to think about?

_____

_____

_____

Q3 The next three questions will be asking your experience with using the pedagogical leadership practices that emerged from the brainstorming in the focus group.
To help you understand the ratings:
Emerging means you are starting to use this practice
Strengthening means you are growing in your use of this practice
Secure means that you are experienced and comfortable in your use of this practice

Q4 My pedagogical leadership practice includes:

Have not tried this	emerging			strengthening		secure
0	2	4	6	8		10

working closely with educators to observe and document children's play and learning

working closely with educators to interpret observations and documentation

Q5 My pedagogical leadership practice includes:

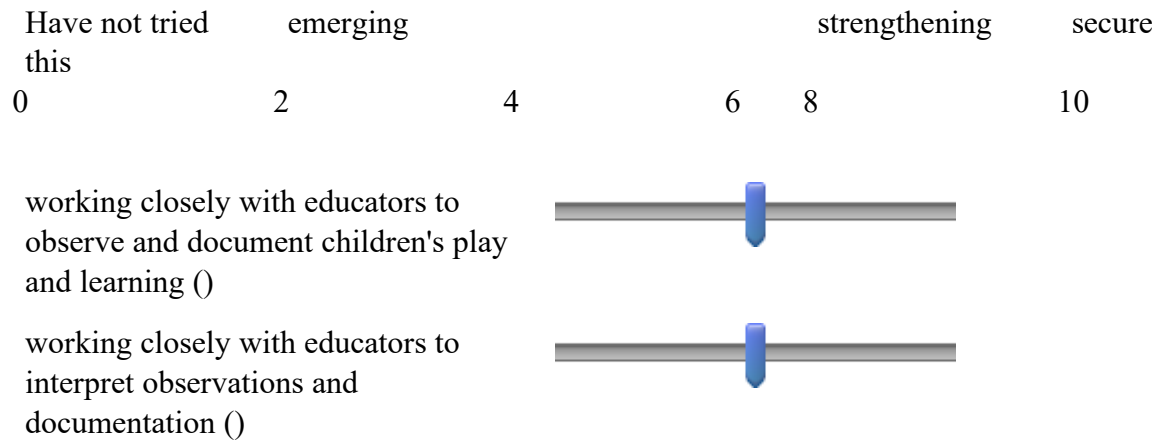| Have not tried this	emerging				strengthening	secure
0	2	4	6	8		10

working closely with educators to observe and document children's play and learning ()

working closely with educators to interpret observations and documentation ()

Q6 My pedagogical leadership practice includes:

Have not tried this	emerging			strengthening	secure
0	2	4	6	8	10

working closely with educators to frame questions around children's play

working closely with educators to re-frame initial questions around children's play, to provoke deeper reflection

Q7 My pedagogical leadership practice includes:

Have not tried this	emerging		strengthening		secure
0	2	4	6	8	10

working closely with educators to make curriculum decisions based on observations of children's play ()

working closely with educators to imagine future curriculum possibilities ()

Q8 How likely is it that your practice will move in a some new directions based on the place-based dialogue and/or the focus group discussions?

> not likely at this time (1)

> likely with time (2)

> likely in the near future (3)

> already underway (4)

Skip To: Q16 If How likely is it that your practice will move in a some new directions based on the place-based d. != not likely at this time

Q9 What new steps might you take as a pedagogical leader?

_____

_____

Q10What kinds of supports would enrich your work as pedagogical leader? How might you benefit from these?

_____

_____

Q11 Our earlier conversations have shown that limited time is a major barrier to pedagogical leadership. What are other significant barriers or challenges you have experienced while supporting educators in the curriculum meaning making process?

_____

_____

_____

Q12 What are the joys you have experienced while supporting educators in the curriculum meaning making process?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q13 Do you have any additional comments?

_____

_____

Appendix K: List of Codes

Pathway To Leadership	**Transition Formal Leadership**
Practice Experiences	"Steep Learning Curve"
With Children	"No One To Ask"
Team Lead	
Leadership Team	**Leadership Mentoring**
Practice Excellence	Within The Organization
Role By Default	By Senior Leader
Longevity	Leadership Peer
Educational Qualification	**Extremal To The**
No Prior Experiences	**Organization**
Unsupported	ECEC Leader
Found Own Way	Reaching Out
Administrative Role	Joined A Group
Recognized Potential	Normalization
External Endorsement	Comradery
Internal Endorsement	Initial Questions About
Leadership Reluctancy	Leading/ **Leadership**
Role Uncertainty	"Did Not Know What I Did Not
Feelings	Know."
Doubt /Trepidation	Time Management
Overwhelmed	Finding Balance
Excitement	Starting Points
Future-Focused	Being A Leader

Developing as A Leader

    Access Resources

    ECEC -Related

    Business Related

    Other Discipline

    Training

    Developing Connections

    Within ECEC Center

    Wider ECEC Community

Belonging to A Professional

Community

    Professional Learning

    Visits to Other ECEC Centers

    Scholarship in Leadership

    Human Services

    Child/Youth Care

    Family Studies

    Managing Change

    Vision

    Leadership enactments

    Advocacy

    Leadership Traces

    Planning Tools

Co-Inquiry Process

    Living Wall

    The Thinking Lens

    Pedagogical Documentation

    Learning Stories

    Documentation Panels

    Curriculum Supports

    Flight (2014)

    Conceptions Ped Leadership

    Positional Titles &Roles

    Definition of Ped Leadership

Describing the Role

    Mentors

    Organizational Roles

    Creating Structures for Pedagogical

    Practice

    Coach/Coaching

    Parallel Practice

    Pedagogical Leader

        Co-Learner

        Co-Researcher

        Co-Imaginer of Possibility

Connections Practice Children

Observation

`Co-Inquiry Process

Curriculum Inquiry

Co-Creation of Curriculum

Dispositions

Curiosity

Collaborative

Pedagogic Personality

Not Having All The Answers

Questioning

The Memory Place Holder

Joys

A-Ha Moments With Educators

Collaborations Within

Community

Children And Families

Challenges

Resources

Time

Financial

Team

Managing Expectations

Future Supports

Professional Learning

Informal

Peer Conversations

Practice Circles

Mentoring

Formal

Pedagogical Partners

Leadership Training

Academic Coursework