DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP AMONG ECE LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF MUNICIPAL COMMITTEES IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

This article will focus on studying early childhood leadership operationalised within municipalities in Finland. The study examined the perceptions of the members of municipal committees and municipal Early Childhood Education (ECE) leaders about the core purpose and leadership of ECE. The data was collected through focus groups and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that ECE leaders and members of the municipal committees have a common understanding of the importance of distributed leadership. The most salient challenges were the differences in the way the core purpose of ECE was understood, uneven distribution of authority and lack of tools to enable the effective distribution of leadership.

Keywords: early childhood education, leadership, distributed leadership, Finland

INTRODUCTION

Municipal administrative structure of ECE in Finland

The power of the municipalities in local government is significant for the administration of ECE in highly decentralised Finland. Self-government exercised by municipal residents is based on the Constitution of Finland (Suomen perustuslaki, 1999). The functioning of municipalities and their responsibilities in relation to ECE services are stipulated mainly by the Finnish Local Government Act (Kuntalaki, 1995) and the Finnish Child Care Act (Laki lasten päivähoidosta, 1973). According to the universal entitlement prescribed by law, all children before comprehensive school starting age of seven years, are entitled to municipal early childhood education and one-year pre-school for six-year olds. In accessing these programs, moderate customer payments might be required.

Elected municipal councils decide on the principles for the organisation of municipal administration (Kuntalaki, 1995). Due to the decentralisation of community services, the municipal organisation varies between municipalities. Even though the establishment of the committees is not obligatory, the implementation of ECE services is usually administrated by the municipal committees set up by municipal council. The members of the committees are residents of the community, and are not necessarily involved in ECE services and are selected to serve for four years. That is, municipal committees represent the residents of their municipality in local

decision-making. ECE leaders are responsible for leading, coordinating and developing the functions of ECE services. ECE leaders are employed in the municipality as professionals eligible as municipal civil servants.

Within the municipalities, ECE leaders and the members of the municipal committees implement internal decision-making within the municipality. Although the municipal committee is required to be involved in decision-making, committee members rarely have the necessary expertise in all those issues on which they must make decisions. Hence those who prepare issues for decision-making have real power within the municipality (Nuorteva, 2008). Currently there is a general division of tasks, where public servants prepare and present issues for the municipal committees, who in turn make the decisions on the basis of these presentations at monthly meetings. The ideal situation is where the chair of the committee and public servants prepare the issues together. According to democratic values, it is essential that the committee members enjoy a strong position in decision-making. Furthermore, when organising municipal structures and organisations, such influence on democratic principles should be taken into account (Korhonen & Merisalo, 2008). According to Mutanen (2008), good cooperation includes mutual respect and a shared understanding of responsibilities and roles. This demands conversations on a regular basis and constant updates on forthcoming issues.

Distributed leadership in ECE

Earlier leadership studies of early childhood leaders investigated leadership mainly as a micro phenomenon and researchers have investigated the leaders themselves (Hayden, 1996; Jorde-Bloom, 1992, 1995; Morgan, 2000; Rodd, 1996, 1997, 2006; VanderVen, 2000). The analysis of leadership was usually combined with that of roles and positions of leaders. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of taking into account the meaning and connections between societal contexts and leadership as reflected in early childhood leadership research conducted by Finnish researchers including Hujala (2002, 2004), Nivala (1999), Karila (2004) and Puroila (2004).

The perspective on studying leadership beyond a single leader was introduced decades ago by Gibb (1954), who was the first to address leadership as a distributed phenomenon. However, discussions of distributed leadership began appearing only recently in the early childhood literature (Aubrey, 2007; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Heikka, Waniganayake & Hujala, in press). In their literature review of distributed leadership, Heikka et al. (in press) suggest that the successful achievement of distributed leadership is determined by the interactive relationships between multiple members in an organisation.

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) based their leadership thinking in the school context on activity theory and theories of distributed cognition. This approach emphasises the meaning of situations and contexts of leadership suggesting that leadership activity is distributed over various facets of the situation, including cultural tools. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond

(2004, p. 11), state that leadership is best understood as a practice distributed over leaders, followers, and the school's situation or contexts. Spillane et al. (2001, p. 25) refer to leaders who work towards a shared goal through "separate, but interdependent work". Leadership involves multiple personnel, consisting of those with either formal leadership positions and/or informal leadership responsibilities (Spillane et al., 2004). Likewise Harris (2009) connects two properties, interdependence and emergence with distributed leadership. Similarly, Hutchins (1995, p. 20) emphasises the meaning of the interaction of the people with each other and with physical structure in the environment. The significance of distributed leadership has been established through the exploration of the capacity to cope with changes and develop leadership for learning. For example, Woods and Gronn (2009) connect distributed leadership to organisational capacity and sustainable change.

When applying distributed leadership views to ECE settings, it is essential to remember the unique characteristics of this sector. In addition to uniqueness of the core purpose of ECE, their structure and governance, incorporate a variety of programs and personnel. As such, the unit of analysis may vary, including leaders on vertical as well as horizontal dimensions of the organisation, and depending on the leadership tasks at hand or the particular focus of the study (Heikka et al., in press). In addition, customership of ECE in Finland is twofold. Firstly, entitlement to services as a part of labour policy serves parents. Secondly, ECE supports children as users of services. According to the Finnish Child Care Act (Laki lasten päivähoidosta, 1973), ECE is required to support the overall development of the child. Likewise, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, 2002) states that ECE aims to enhance children's development and learning. Therefore, when addressing the core purposes from the perspective of a child as a customer, high quality pedagogy is emphasised.

Based on ecological psychology, Nivala (1999, 2001) has developed a contextual leadership theory, which provides a framework to examine leadership within contexts specific to early childhood education. Contextual leadership theory is based on the core purposes of ECE and addresses the interactive influences of micro and macro systems of social interactions (Hujala, 2004; Nivala, 2001). Distributed leadership supplements the contextual perspective by enabling a deeper level of investigation of the interdependencies between stakeholders beginning from parents to the municipal manager.

THE RESEARCH TASK

The aim of this research was to study leadership in ECE within local municipalities. This study investigated how the members of municipal committees and ECE leaders in Finland perceived the core purpose and leadership of ECE.

In Finland, public ECE services dominate the context of leadership. ECE leadership is interwoven and distributed in municipal structures involving a variety of stakeholders. In this

study, leadership was understood as a contextual phenomenon influenced by micro and macro interactions in local communities and as a part of wider society. Traditional research approaches focusing on the centre director's role are insufficient for studying leadership as a contextual phenomenon. This study explored municipal level administration and decision-making impacting on ECE services.

The two key stakeholder groups responsible for decision-making and arranging early childhood services within municipalities are municipal committees and ECE leaders. The members of the committees were often selected by municipalities as trusted residents in local decision-making. The ECE leaders were municipal employees responsible for arranging the early childhood services within the municipality, including ensuring that childcare centres meet the requirements of the national ECE legislation and local policies. The principle research questions addressed in this study were: First, how do the members of municipal committees and municipal ECE leaders perceive the core purpose of ECE as a base for leadership? Second, how do the members of municipal committees and municipal ECE leaders perceive the leadership of ECE?

METHODOLOGY

The data were gathered as part of a more extensive research project by focus group interviews with municipal committee members and ECE leaders. Focus groups are commonly used by educational researchers (Hydén & Bülow, 2003) and consist of a small number of participants meeting to discuss a specific topic under the guidance of a moderator, who is an outsider to the research discussion (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Wibeck, Dahlgren, & Öberg, 2007). In this study, the focus group method was chosen because it can provide an opportunity to understand the research topic from the participants' perspectives. During the focus group discussions, participants can express opinions, formulate points of view and discuss their perceptions of the phenomenon of leadership and its various dimensions (Wibeck et al., 2007).

In this study, the focus group participants were individuals within a local municipality. The two groups of ECE stakeholders included in these focus groups consisted of members of municipal committees responsible for ECE and municipal ECE leaders. These stakeholders were influential in ECE decision-making and administration of their local communities. In general, each ECE leaders' group consisted of the employed municipal ECE managers, a sector leader, and the development, personnel and financial managers selected for the study.

The data was collected in four municipalities in different parts of Finland. Each municipality selected the people who participated in the focus group discussions and coordinated their participation. The goal was to convene a maximum of 10 people in each group; in reality, 2–10 people participated in each focus group. The number of participants remained low in the ECE leaders' groups as small municipalities had few ECE leaders. Overall eight focus groups were

conducted for this study, one group of the members of the municipal committee and one group of ECE leaders in each municipality. The overall number of the members of the municipal committees and ECE leaders participated in the study was 37 and 13, respectively.

The two main themes formulated for the focus group discussions were the core purpose of ECE and leadership of ECE. The data were analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2003). Transcripts of the discussions of each group were analysed separately in order to form categories describing participants' perceptions of the core purpose and leadership as discussed. The perceptions of stakeholders were compared in order to identify similarities and differences in emphasis between them. The perceptions investigated have evolved from and therefore represent collectively formulated picture of lived working situations in local Finnish municipalities where stakeholders are involved. Citations from the original data have been inserted in the results. Before citations, it is indicated whether the citation has been commented by a member of the municipal committee or an ECE leader. The number codes after the stakeholder group, e.g. (3), indicate the municipality.

FINDINGS

The key findings of this research suggest that the core purpose of ECE was perceived differently by members of the municipal committees and municipal ECE leaders. On the one hand, leadership was understood as a shared responsibility for ECE in municipalities. However, stakeholders were not satisfied with the level of cooperation between the stakeholders in decision-making processes. Both types of stakeholders were hoping for a better distribution of leadership within municipalities. The findings are presented according to their perceptions of the core purpose and leadership of ECE within their municipality, respectively. Under the results on leadership, the main issues identified were leadership as cooperation and shared responsibilities and, the findings that one's expertise guided decision-making.

The core purpose as service and education

Perceptions about the core purpose of ECE differed between the ECE leaders and the members of the municipal committees. The ECE leaders saw the core purpose from the perspectives of educating the child and the provision of ECE as a quality service. The members of the municipal committees tended to focus on the provision and maintenance of ECE services for the municipalities' residents and as a way of supporting families. The members of the municipal committees highlighted the importance of adequate accessibility and provision of services. Table 1 lists the main features of perceptions of the core purpose of ECE among municipal committee members and ECE leaders.

Table 1: The core purpose of ECE as perceived by municipal committee members and ECE leaders

Perceptions of Municipal committee members	Perceptions of Municipal ECE leaders
Labour policy	Children and education
Provision of ECE services	Provision of ECE services
Accessibility	Child welfare
Support families	Partnership with families
Continuum from ECE to school	Learning pathway from ECE to school

It seems that the perceptions of the municipal committee members were often guided by personal opinions, emotions and attitudes rather than familiarity with the national ECE legislation or practice. The ECE leaders agreed that ECE continues to have a purpose related to labour policy in that these programmes were necessary to enable mothers to return to paid employment following the birth of their children. Similarly, relationships with families were emphasised and mention was made of neo-helpless families who may receive support from ECE. Cooperation with the welfare authorities and preventive social work were considered important, but at the same time there was concern that ECE might slip over into family work. Both types of stakeholders highlighted the cooperation with families and took the view that families have the main responsibility for bringing up their children.

According to the ECE leaders, quality was produced in partnership with the families. Partnership was seen as important from the point of view of understanding the child and implementing child-based pedagogy. They noted unanimously that the demands from families have increased and that the individual needs of families must be taken into account in ECE. The satisfaction of families was considered important when assessing whether the core purpose had been fulfilled. With decreasing family size, ECE was regarded as an important opportunity for children to have social contacts with their peers. Participants also noted that children have varying needs, hence the importance of providing choices. That is, participants felt that at that point in time there was too little variety in service provision.

In addition to labour policy, some members of the municipal committees mentioned the pedagogical significance of ECE. However, this did not receive unanimous support from the participants. Those who referred to pedagogy considered it as creating a caring environment that supported the child's individual development. Learning social skills was emphasised in the discussions. Some considered ECE to be a bonus in a child's life. However, some committee members felt uncomfortable with the professional, planning-based approaches. It was believed that the children might be subjected to too demanding goals and teaching, meaning that ECE turns into work for children. Overall, the views on early education perceived it a service focusing on care. There was little talk of education and learning. However, childhood was viewed in a positive light, and ECE as an opportunity to care for childhood. There was faith in the opportunities provided by ECE to prevent problems and create a firm base for a child's future.

Both types of stakeholders highlighted the importance of the continuum from ECE via pre-school to school. However, again, when ECE leaders addressed children's learning, the municipal committee members tended to focus on training children in ECE to cope at school. In addition, the committee members felt that there was an attitudinal gap between school and early education. By contrast, the ECE leaders understood the learning continuum as a path ensuring continuity from ECE through to pre-school and to school.

In the discussions of the ECE leaders, the core purpose was described using the concepts of education, teaching, learning and care. The content of the ECE work was defined as supporting the individual growth and development of the child. The goal was seen to be a balanced childhood and happy children. Providing special education for children in need of it was also included in the core purpose. The work methods mentioned by the ECE leaders were planning, assessment and documentation. Participants felt that the national ECE curriculum (STAKES, 2003) steered ECE programmes throughout Finland. The ECE curriculum is seen to have significantly speeded up the clarification of the goals of the core purpose. In this sense, the curriculum served as a tool for leadership. The core purpose priorities are reflected in the following comments by participants:

> A member of the municipal committee (3): We do not have sufficient amount of services and at least we have to take care that there will be enough them and should receive money for them.

> An ECE leader (3): ...should secure the wholeness of care, up-bringing and teaching and enhance right for equal early childhood education for every child.

The ECE leaders and the members of the municipal committees seem to mean different things when speaking about responsibilities for the provision of quality ECE. The committee members mostly spoke of quality through the construction of enabling structures and prerequisites for service. They did not address the qualitative challenges involved in developing ECE practice and the main emphasis was on safety issues. The ECE leaders continuously drew attention to the processes of work performed by early childhood educators.

Leadership as cooperation and shared responsibilities

The findings indicate that leadership was a shared responsibility of various stakeholders including those working daily in ECE, as well as parents, municipal decision-makers and the Parliament of Finland. The ECE leaders considered leadership to include cooperation with parents, schools and decision-makers. They highlighted the importance of discussing early childhood issues with municipal committee members and cooperation with the social services sector. They were concerned about how to develop cooperation and a culture of open discussion within their municipality. Table 2 illustrates leadership and its challenges as perceived by the municipal committee members and ECE leaders who participated in this research.

Table 2: Leadership perceptions of municipal committee members and ECE leaders

Perceptions of Municipal committee members	Perceptions of Municipal ECE leaders
Develop high quality ECE services	Responsibility for quality
Increase cooperation prior to decision-making	Cooperate with diverse professionals
Develop cooperation with the practitioners	Develop service provision
Clarify guidelines for leadership	Manage finances
Clarify roles for leadership	Clarify guidelines for leadership
	Develop distributed leadership

The ECE leaders considered that leadership included responsibility for quality. Similarly, the members of the municipal committees defined their leadership role as consisting of making structural reforms and developing high-quality services. Anticipating future ECE needs of families within municipalities was also identified as an important leadership consideration.

The ECE leaders and the members of the municipal committees agreed on the importance of ECE personnel involvement in the changes. According to the ECE leaders, these personnel must be involved in leadership and joint discussions with leaders. They emphasised centre directors' role in supporting other centre personnel and giving them support, thereby enabling leadership sharing. It was considered crucial for leadership that personnel be encouraged to keep up with developments and be up to date with any changes.

The ECE leaders highlighted the importance of increasing the discussion on funding of services. They felt that the competition for limited resources within municipalities and looking after the economy becomes an increasingly important challenge for early childhood leaders, especially because politicians frequently reply that ECE services should be provided at a lower cost. Although the leaders were aware of the financial constraints, they felt that there was a better understanding of the nature of ECE due to the fact that it has been studied in the broader context of education and teaching.

Expertise guiding decision-making

The findings indicated that expertise was essential in determining power-relations in decision-making between ECE leaders and members of municipal committees. The critical point seemed to be the preparation of matters prior to committee meetings. Municipal committee members felt that matters had already been decided by the time they were presented at committee meetings, or matters were brought to meetings in a great hurry and there was little or no room for criticism. Consider for instance, the following comments:

> A member of the municipal committee (3): I would return to my own role as a municipal committee member, that is, I certainly have to say, that I have frustrated little by little here, as I really feel, that these issues come to the meetings so as they are so prepared by civil servants, that you cannot say yes or no anymore. Sometimes

it is possible to express your opinion, but they are so pre-chewed. And then about, if you express your own opinion, you get the feeling that it was not really...

There was a sense that municipal committee members did not have sufficient knowledge about ECE legislation or the needs of ECE practitioners in their municipalities. The committee members felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge about the backgrounds of decisions, and under these circumstances, the ECE leaders wielded more power, as reflected in the following comments:

A member of the municipal committee (3): I just got it in to my head now, that should we have more cooperation with just, like, to the side of the early childhood education, there just with the centres, so as the staff will contact us more, as we do not get anything from there, they come as a proposal of the civil servant and then you do not always know what is behind it.

An ECE leader (7): The big challenge is certainly that how we as middle-level leaders will get conversation partners from political decision-makers. That is, how the municipal committee plan, make strategy-work, discuss and what about others, in addition to the municipal committee? If we think for example municipal council and others who can influence. So this is, in my opinion, like which we can make strategies, visions and all sorts of things, but it remains easily among civil servants.

The committee members found the relationships between committee members and ECE leaders were confusing. The interactions reflected both functioning as an external control and as a desire for genuine participation with ECE leaders. As one member of the municipal committee (3) described it:

I am getting the feeling now, that each of us could feel enormously confused about their own role, that is what it is now. We have responsibility for big issues, but after all, the basic knowledge about the actual nature of the issues is not what it perhaps should be.

However, ample variation in the leadership discussions was perceived between and within municipalities. It would seem that the satisfaction of ECE leaders was paralleled by the critical attitudes of municipal committee members, and vice versa. In some municipalities, committees still considered the power to rest with the committees, but in the others, the leadership authority was considered to rest with the ECE leaders. Municipal committee members also voiced fairly strong criticism of their own work, and some of them also criticised ECE leaders. Although the ECE leaders were trusted, there was also an underlying suspicion of their purposes and some even wondered whether it was a conscious tactic used by the ECE leaders. At worst, it was suspected that the ECE leaders might form a barrier between the members of the municipal committees and ECE practitioners in the sector.

In some municipalities, municipal committee members were perceived to be well acquainted with the crucial points of implementing daily activities in ECE centres, while in other municipalities there seem to be little flow of information from the practitioners to the municipal committees. The ideal was considered to be one where decision-making was shared more than was the case at that time. More discussion with practitioners was also anticipated. According to some of the committee members, the expertise of the sector was not being used in decision-making within municipalities. The two groups agreed on the desire for leadership distribution, open discussion and more cooperation in decision-making processes. These perspectives are reflected in the following comments made by ECE leaders (7) participating in this research.

> But I certainly feel, that one of the challenges is that how we could share information with the level of political decision-makers so that it won't be too much, but it comes.

> ...so in one way, what is the capacity then, that what they can receive, that it could be quite slow process in one way. One piece at the time, which it will move on, and then it is already time for changing folks and decision-makers.

> Yeh, but if we have those forums and if we have something, I do not know what it is though, some kind of web-place, where we could have different contemporary issues and possibilities for discussion of guidelines. I do not know who will make those, and I do not know how much it would demand work and so on, but it just, that at least it would be possible to receive information. I do not know, it might be a slow process, but on the other hand...

In order to improve cooperation, some committee members proposed a system of informal meetings during which centre directors, other employees and committee members could jointly discuss issues at the beginning of the term of office. Both the ECE leaders and committee members also wanted to see a clarification of ECE leadership guidelines.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that there was a lack of trust between the municipal committee members and ECE leaders. This could be interpreted as an indication of deficiencies in sharing information and lack of opportunity for regular open communication between these two groups of stakeholders. In addition, this research has also shown that major challenges in the implementation of distributed leadership concerned a two-way exertion of influence between municipal committees and practitioners in ECE centres. The municipal committee members seemed to be unfamiliar with the contexts of ECE where daily practice occurs. Therefore we might question whether increased interaction between municipal committee members and ECE leaders would suffice to establish equal positions in relation to expertise. Jalonen (2006, p. 39) suggests more

interaction, not only between decision-makers but also "between the process and its environment" to improve decision-making in complex, changing environments. In relation to ECE matters, this means that in the processes of decision-making, more interaction with the practitioners and customers would be anticipated: listening to the opinions of centre based personnel, parents and children and reflecting on decisions in relation to what is known about the appropriate circumstances for children's learning and well-being. Similarly Jalonen (2006) stated that improvements in the processes of preparation during decision-making were essential in municipal decision-making.

Expertise also seemed to guide perceptions of the core purpose of ECE, the core purpose being understood differently by different stakeholders. Robinson (2008, p. 251) suggests that "if distributed leadership research is to make stronger links with student outcomes, it needs to be informed by a normative theory that is grounded in our knowledge of the conditions that teachers require to improve teaching and learning." Following this perspective one can continue that in ECE, leadership has to be organised in ways which support pedagogical functions and processes. This was based on the belief that in early childhood contexts, knowledge and learning guide leadership practice and distribution of organisational roles (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). When municipal committee members did not know the reality in which teachers practice, they were inhibited from participating in decision-making about developmental proceedings. In this case, when there was also a lack of expertise, the potential for participating in development was even less.

In Finnish municipalities, the ideas about distributed leadership are evolving, but yet underdeveloped in practise. Distributed leadership is a gradually developing process and needs efforts from leaders in developing distributed leadership through different developmental phases (MacBeath, 2005). At the early stages of development, the significance of planning, leaders active monitoring and supervision of leadership is emphasised. However, distributed leadership does not demand a change in prevailing leadership structures. Persons holding leadership positions can adopt the role of being the monitors of distributed leadership (Harris, 2008). As such, Spillane et al. (2001, p. 25) refer to leaders who work towards a shared goal through "separate, but interdependent work".

Understanding leadership as a contextual phenomenon should be emphasised when considering recommendations for leadership practise. In Finnish municipalities, the development of distributed leadership through vertical set of stakeholders, who are functioning geographically dispersed from each other, demands greater amount of self initiation, guidance and development than between leaders operating in one setting. Traditional practises and history of Finnish municipal decision-making makes the development of distributed leadership even more challenging.

CONCLUSION

This research showed that the development of distributed leadership between ECE leaders and the members of the municipal committees needs first, interaction between stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the core purposes of ECE. Second, tools to assist knowledge sharing and interaction in decision-making are required. Finally, there was a need for better development of practises, which allow for interdepencies between stakeholders within municipalities.

Leadership actually functions on two levels to be efficient. Firstly, on core purpose of leadership, which consist of key leadership responsibilities e.g. maintaining and improving services and secondly, on development of leadership functions, which contribute on achieving those purposes. These functions include e.g development of distributed leadership. The following recommendations focus on development of leadership functions.

Distributed leadership is a process to be developed. One of the most important leadership challenges in Finnish ECE was the enhancement of interactions between micro and macro level systems. What is crucial, is bottom-up channels to exert influence so that the daily development challenges in the practice of ECE regulate higher-level decision-making. Negotiating the core values and purposes of ECE between the members of the municipal committees, municipal personnel as well as centre based personnel, children and families as equals, could serve as a pathway to developing a better understanding of the core purpose of ECE and sharing of expertise prior to decision-making. All this requires the development of a quality strategy, which can form the basis for distributed decision-making, communication and the systematic development of ECE. At the moment, this is a marginal part of ECE leadership in municipalities.

The initiation for developing distributed leadership within Finnish municipalities is missing and also needs to be clarified. Currently, the real power for decision-making appears to be held by municipal ECE leaders. Although they seem to anticipate higher level of expertise on behalf of the members of the municipal committees, ECE leaders rarely make any real efforts to develop a shared understanding or enhance relationships thus maintaining the prevailing power-imbalance between the stakeholders. On the other hand, the members of municipal committees change every four years. Therefore, if the initiation for development rests with the chair of the municipal committee, there may be difficulties in terms of contributing to long-term development plans. In the Finnish municipalities, the municipal councils determine the principles of local government decision-making. The enhanced interactions between stakeholders and responsibility for development of leadership could also be advised by municipality councils. After all, systematic, research based, long-term evaluation and development is recommended for its efficiency in making decisions concerned with ECE within municipalities.

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