

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Roponen, Hannele Marjaana; Fonsén, Elina; Ukkonen-Mikkola, Tuulikki; Ahtiainen, Raisa

Title: Enhancing understanding of broad-based pedagogical leadership in Finnish early childhood education through cultural artifacts

Year: 2024

Version: Published version

Copyright: © The Author(s) 2024

Rights: CC BY 4.0

Rights url: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Please cite the original version:

Roponen, H. M., Fonsén, E., Ukkonen-Mikkola, T., & Ahtiainen, R. (2024). Enhancing understanding of broad-based pedagogical leadership in Finnish early childhood education through cultural artifacts. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, Early online. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432241285413>

Enhancing understanding of broad-based pedagogical leadership in Finnish early childhood education through cultural artifacts

Educational Management
Administration & Leadership
1–23

© The Author(s) 2024



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/17411432241285413

journals.sagepub.com/home/ema



Hannele Marjaana Roponen , Elina Fonsén ,
Tuulikki Ukkonen-Mikkola, and Raisa Ahtiainen 

Abstract

This ethnographic case study examines the artifacts of the leadership culture of one Finnish early childhood education (ECE) center and how they appear from the perspective of broad-based pedagogical leadership. Qualitative content analysis with a directed approach was guided by Pasquale Gagliardi's and Mary Hatch's definitions of artifacts. In addition, artifacts were analyzed through broad-based pedagogical leadership. Based on the analysis, thirteen activities, six verbal expressions, and thirteen objects of leadership culture were found in the data. Most of the artifacts were indirect pedagogical leadership, and some had several purposes due to staff interpretations. The interpretations varied both between the leaders and the staff but also within the staff. The findings indicate that symbolic leadership is present in many leadership situations and that a lack of knowledge about the symbolic and cultural dimensions of leadership can undermine leaders' good intentions. The results of the study can be utilized in practical work in leading organizational cultures and in structuring pedagogical leadership in ECE. Additionally, the research has theoretical implications by enriching leadership research in ECE and enhancing the concept of broad-based pedagogical leadership, which can be used in leadership training programs in the field of education.

Keywords

Broad-based pedagogical leadership, cultural artifacts, early childhood education, case study

Introduction

Cultural artifacts that are the most superficial manifestations of culture (Brown, 1996; Jones, 1996), can be instruments of influence for leaders who are aware of their potential (Paalumäki, 2004). By consciously and continuously directing the meanings associated with cultural artifacts (Fonsén and

Corresponding author:

Hannele Marjaana Roponen, Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Alvar Aallon katu 9, Jyväskylä 40014, Finland.
Email: hannele.m.roponen@student.jyu.fi

Lahtero 2024; Paalumäki, 2004), organizational culture can be significantly influenced by leadership (Heikka et al., 2016; Lahtero and Risku, 2014; Lumby, 2012). Thus, an excellent leader needs to master symbolic and cultural leadership in addition to the technical, human, and pedagogical dimensions of leadership (Lahtero and Risku, 2014; Sergiovanni, 2001). However, the symbolic and cultural perspective seems to be missing from the leadership views of educational leaders (Lahtero and Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015), or they find it hard to recognize (Fonsén et al., 2022). Thus, the concept of pedagogical leadership needs to be broadened to include the cultural dimensions of leadership, as in, for example, broad-based pedagogical leadership (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024; Lahtero and Kuusilehto Awale, 2015; Lahtero and Salonen, 2022; Lahtero and Laasonen 2021).

Staff shortages in early childhood education (ECE) are challenging the function of ECE organizations and the well-being of leaders (Kristiansen et al., 2021; Roponen et al., 2024). The main reasons at the organizational level for the change in career plans among ECE teachers in Finland include the leadership and organizational culture (Kangas et al., 2022), which highlights the importance of conducting this research dealing with the skills of symbolic and cultural leadership. Additionally, teachers tend to identify more with their profession than with the organization where they teach (Mintzberg, 1998; Oliveira, 2012). Thus, educational leaders need other ways to increase staff engagement, since teacher engagement has a positive effect on children's learning outcomes (Sun, 2015). The link between culture and organizational performance is strong (Lumby, 2012), and an increase in organizational performance and staff engagement can only occur when technical, human, and pedagogical leadership is complemented by aspects of symbolic and cultural leadership (Lahtero and Salonen, 2022; Sergiovanni, 2001). Organizational culture is not modified or maintained by luck and intuition but by knowledge of organizational cultures (Lahtero and Risku, 2014).

ECE in Finland refers to a systematic and goal-oriented entity consisting of upbringing, education, and care, with a special emphasis on pedagogy (Act 540/2018). Several reforms have been made to the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) in recent years. Most recently, in August 2022, the amendments were related to the support system for children's learning and development. The qualification requirements for ECE leaders and teachers were updated in 2018. After the transition period, every leader must have a master's degree from an ECE teacher program by 2030 (Act 540/2018). In 2021, the Finnish government ordered a review of the current situation, the creation of a development plan for ECE leadership, and a national training program for educational leadership (Heikonen et al., 2023). This resulted in a proposal that in the future, in addition to a master's degree, the qualification requirement for an ECE leader would be an entity of leadership studies where broad-based pedagogical leadership and organizational cultures are included (Heikonen et al., 2023).

Purpose and research question

This ethnographic study focuses on the visible aspect of ECE leadership culture, specifically on cultural artifacts arising from ECE leadership and what is their purpose within the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership. Our research question is: What kind of cultural artifacts arise from ECE leadership, and what is their purpose within the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership?

The article is structured as follows. In the first two sections, we will discuss the key concepts of the study, broad-based pedagogical leadership, and cultural artifacts. Then, we will introduce the

study context and the analysis method. In the results section, we present the cultural artifacts of ECE leadership, their purpose within the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership, and the types of artifacts involved (e.g., routines, rituals, phrases). Results of the analysis are followed by a discussion of the findings where we also demonstrate the theoretical implications of the results for the theory of broad-based pedagogical leadership.

Broad-based pedagogical leadership

Leadership in educational organizations is often described through pedagogical leadership (Heikonen et al., 2023), which is similar to instructional leadership (Lahtero and Salonen, 2022). A model of broad-based pedagogical leadership (Figure 1) developed within the framework of basic education interprets leadership as direct or indirect and includes a cultural dimension of leadership (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024; Lahtero and Salonen, 2022; Lahtero and Laasonen 2021). Direct pedagogical leadership focuses on the learning and teaching processes, for example, direct guidance and support of teachers' competence and learning, both in everyday school life and through, for example, development discussions (Lahtero et al. 2021; Lahtero and Laasonen 2021; Alava et al., 2012). Pedagogical leadership through technical leadership (e.g., structures, scheduling,

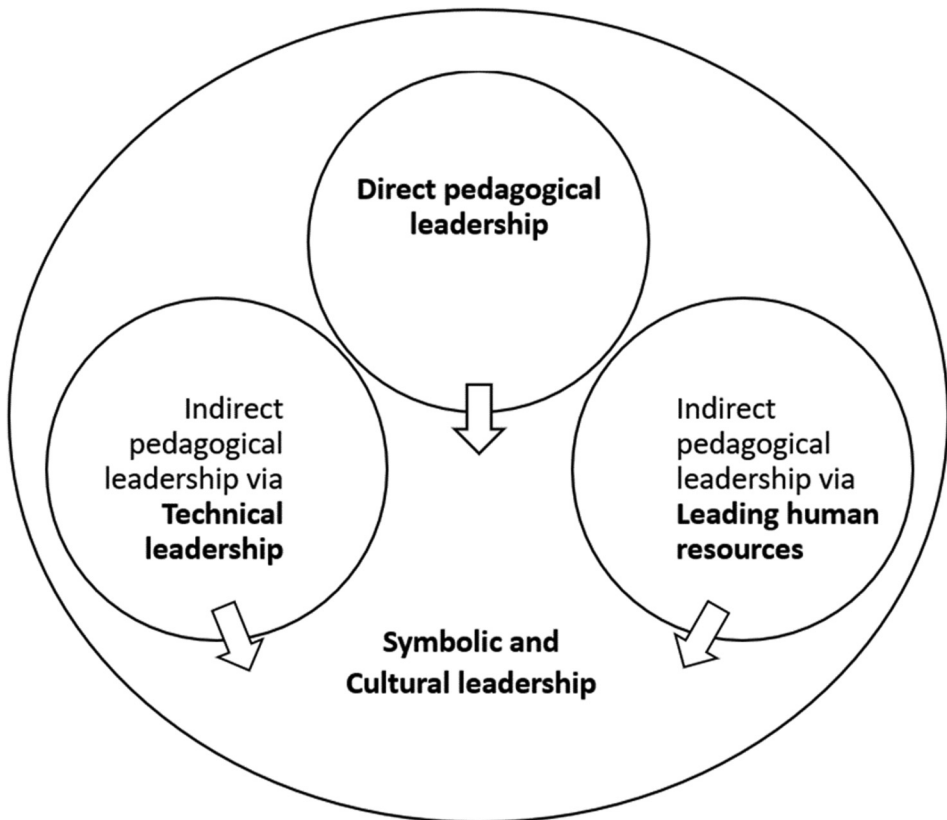


Figure 1. Broad-based pedagogical leadership (based on Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024).

coordinating, finance) and human resource leadership (e.g., psychological factors, motivation, well-being) is indirect (Lahtero and Salonen, 2022; Lahtero et al. 2021). If the focus is solely on technical leadership, neglecting human and pedagogical aspects, staff motivation diminishes, and the fundamental mission becomes obscured (Fonsén and Lahtero 2024). Likewise, prioritizing pedagogical leadership while marginalizing technical and human aspects prevents the attainment of education and learning (Lahtero and Laasonen 2021). Thus, effective learning and teaching require a well-organized organization with motivated and committed staff.

Sergiovanni's (2001) five forces of leadership have similarities with broad-based pedagogical leadership. However, the areas of broad-based pedagogical leadership are not seen as separate from each other, like the five forces of leadership, but that the symbolic and cultural dimension of leadership is present in all technical, pedagogical, and human resource leadership situations (Lahtero and Risku, 2014). Technical, pedagogical, and human resource leadership forms the foundation for being a competent leader, but an excellent leader also masters the symbolic and cultural dimensions of leadership (Fonsén et al., 2022; Lahtero and Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015). The foundation guarantees the functioning of the organization, but not alone excellent education and teaching (Lahtero and Laasonen, 2021). The symbolic tasks of leadership are seen as the most demanding in other leadership models as well, such as the competency hierarchy model (Fonsén et al., 2022).

The basic principle of symbolic leadership is that the meanings given to events and their interpretation are more important than what happens in the organization (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024: 8; Lahtero, 2011). Fonsén et al. (2022) argued that symbolic leadership is present in direct and indirect pedagogical leadership through staff's interpretations of leadership, but only a conscious and deliberate attempt to structure the meanings given to work by staff makes it cultural leadership (see also Lahtero et al. 2021). Gotvassli (2018) stated that symbolic leadership is a challenge to ECE leaders but beneficial, especially in the current changing environment. ECE in recent years has undergone global and national reforms that have challenged the functioning of educational organizations (Eskelinen and Hjelt, 2017; Ho et al., 2016; Kristiansen et al., 2021). ECE leaders in Finland are leading units formed of two or more centers, and the number of employees has increased (Eskelinen and Hjelt, 2017). Similar changes have occurred internationally. The expanding staff count seems to be amplifying challenges, including the capacity of ECE teachers to engage in decision-making and receive support from the ECE leader (Ho et al., 2016). When conditions are unpredictable and there is a need for leading change, a leader's ability to deal with the symbolic system of the organization is critical (Lahtero and Risku, 2014). Studies on educational organizations have identified culture as invaluable to the successful improvement of teaching and learning, and in studies where cultural features do not support and encourage reform, changes are not taking place (Deal and Petersen, 2009). Cultural artifacts are effective in strengthening existing values and norms, and failing to remove or modify old cultural artifacts and replace them with new ones usually leads to failure in leading the culture of the organization (Higgins et al., 2006).

Fonsén et al. (2022) studied the views of educational leaders on leadership competence and the requirements for its development. In their study, there was little or no mention of symbolic leadership in the leaders' responses, and the leaders were unable to identify symbolic leadership. Thus, regardless of the training provider, leadership training for educational leaders should have a more holistic approach, as in broad-based pedagogical leadership where symbolic leadership is included (Lahtero and Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015; Lahtero and Salonen, 2022).

Cultural artifacts

Organizational culture refers to the culture of an organization (Juuti, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2001), such as leadership culture and operating culture (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2012). Lahtero and Salonen (2022) state that leadership culture is a subculture of the organization’s operating culture and they affect one another (see Figure 2).

Mintzberg (1983) called organizational culture *ideology* which is a social phenomenon consisting of the beliefs, norms, and values of an organization (Mintzberg, 1998). Organizational culture changes constantly when its members interact with each other (Seeck 2021). Schein’s organizational culture theory (2017) states that the shared beliefs, basic assumptions and values (non-observable) within the culture have encouraged activities that produce cultural artifacts (observable) that are the most superficial manifestations of culture (Brown, 1996; Jones, 1996). However, Gagliardi (2006) has stated that artifacts are not secondary, superficial manifestations of deeper cultural phenomena but are themselves primary cultural phenomena (Paalumäki, 2004). Artifacts influence our perception of reality to the point of subtly shaping beliefs, norms, and cultural values (Gagliardi, 2006). Thus, values and norms affect artifacts (Schein, 2017), but artifacts also affect values and norms (Gagliardi, 2006). Any artifact can be a symbol if it produces meanings (Gagliardi, 2006), and symbols stand for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel people to action (Hatch, 2018; Juuti, 2006). When symbols are given meanings, they can convey cultural information, for example, what is valued in the organization (Juuti, 2006). Thus,

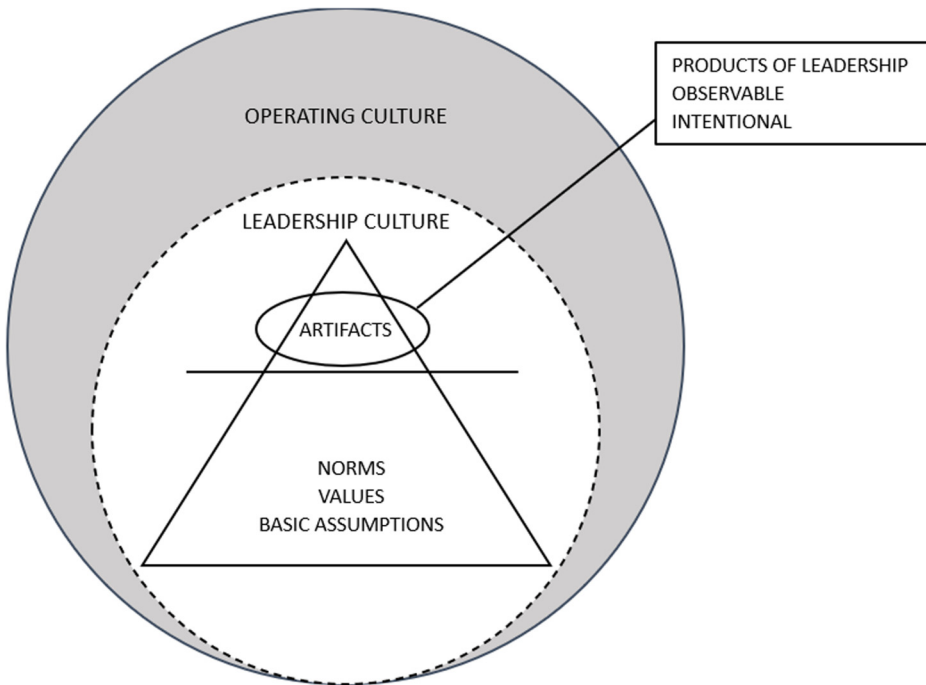


Figure 2. Operating and leadership culture based on Schein (2017), Gagliardi (2011) and Lahtero and Salonen (2022).

artifacts make it possible to see behind the action, and the study of artifacts enables us to aim directly at the heart of the culture (Gagliardi, 2006). A symbolic perspective on the study of cultural artifacts sees organizations as systems formed by shared symbols and meanings (Lahtero, 2011).

According to Gagliardi (2011: 3), artifacts may be defined as a) products of human activity that exist independently of their creator, b) are observable, and c) have a purpose, as they are aimed at solving a specific problem or satisfying a specific need. Artifacts are understandable in the environment in which they are produced and used since they arise as a result of the social interaction of a specific group of people, which makes them products of human activity (Niiniluoto, 1990), and in this study we are specifically interested in products of leadership. In terms of expression, artifacts have been broadly defined to include all observable artifacts of culture, such as behavioral activities, objects, and verbal expressions (see e.g., Hatch, 2018; Schein, 2004). A narrower definition of artifacts covers only material forms of culture (i.e., objects) (Gagliardi 2011; Gagliardi, 2006). In our research, we used a broader definition of artifacts, as shown in Table 1.

Artifacts are intentional, meaning that their existence has a purpose (Gagliardi, 2011). For example, in rituals such as meetings (Lahtero 2011), the significance is that events are always repeated in the same way to reduce the anxiety that people living in a complex world have (Juuti, 2006). Repetition underscores our sense of purpose and direction (Sueldo and Streimikiene, 2016; Deal and Peterson, 2009: 90). Routines share some elements with rituals, such as repetitiveness, but while rituals are collective actions performed by a community, routines are individual activities (Leone, 2011). Turning to the differences between ceremonies and rituals, Sueldo and Streimikiene (2016) incorporate ceremonies and rituals, whereas Lahtero (2011) distinguishes between them based on their elaborateness and frequency, highlighting school events like celebrations as examples. Our study examines the purpose of leadership culture artifacts through direct and indirect pedagogical leadership (Fonsén and Lahtero 2024; Lahtero et al. 2021), revealing the importance of rituals such as meetings in, e.g. fostering pedagogical dialogue (direct leadership) or organizing staffing resources (indirect leadership via technical leadership).

Study context. In August 2022, we solicited participants for our study through emails sent to ECE centers in Southern Finland. Five centers showed interest in the study over a three-week period, and we selected one center with a distributed leadership system for participation. The center consisted of two leaders, seven teachers, and eight nurses. Five teams had been composed of the seven teachers and eight nurses and they formed two professional groups in the center. In the center, the legal requirement was one adult for every seven children aged over three and one adult for every four children under the age of three (Act 540/2018). The center was part of a new unit consisting of three other centers in 2021 so the leaders had been working together for a year before the data

Table 1. Examples of cultural artifacts based on Hatch (2018).

Activities	Objects	Verbal expressions
Ceremonies	Art	Stories
Social routines	Furnishings	Humor
Rituals	Photos	Speeches
Parties	Posters	Nicknames
Rewards	Appearance	Metaphors

collection started. In the entire unit, there were a little over 60 employees and approximately 350 children divided into four centers.

Ethnographic research in organizations requires close observation of the members of the organization for an extended period of time (Hammersley, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005). The observation period in this study took place from September 2022 through April 2023. The observations were made almost weekly and aimed at exploring cultural artifacts. The observations consisted of each of the five teams' team meetings (5), leadership team meetings (6) which were teacher meetings, pedagogical meetings (3) being open for both professional groups (i.e., ECE teacher, ECE nurses), and staff meetings (2). The number of participants in all other meetings than team meetings varied from five upwards as there were no set limits on attendance. Additionally, the observations included daily activities in the center. Written material consisted of meeting agendas (8), e-mails (8), center's pedagogical vision (1), and a personnel survey conducted by the city (1), which are described in more detail in the findings.

In ethnographic research the observation material can be complemented with both discussions and interviews (Hammersley, 2006). We employed a semi structural approach in our interviews to better understand the participants' unique perspective rather than a generalized understanding of a phenomenon (McGrath et al. 2019). In this study we interviewed leaders, teachers, and nurses. Interviews conducted in September 2022 (2), March 2023 (1), and May 2023 (4). Individual interviews with leaders (2) took place in September 2022, and the themes consisted of the management system, meeting structures, and leadership activities. The aim was to gain knowledge for planning the observation period and to enable the leaders to describe their leadership activities. The leaders had different areas of responsibility (pedagogy, administration), and an additional individual interview (1) was held with the pedagogical leader in March 2023, which mainly focused on the personnel survey. Semi structured focus group interviews (4) consisted of 32 open ended questions regarding the observed cultural artifacts and were held in May 2023 with nurses and teachers separately. The aim of the focus group interviews was to obtain information on how personnel interpret the artifacts, that is, the symbolic perspective of leadership. For practical reasons, both professional groups were divided into two groups to minimize disruption of the center's activities. Therefore, nurses were interviewed in groups of four, while teachers were interviewed in groups of three and four.

The entire data for this study consisted of observation notes, recorded meetings, written material, and interviews (Table 2).

Leaders. The pedagogical leader communicates with families, handles children's affairs, and sets topics for leadership and pedagogical meetings. The administrative leader manages personnel and financial matters. The leaders can substitute for each other when needed. Both are qualified ECE teachers; the administrative leader holds a social science degree and has training in coaching leadership, while the pedagogical leader holds an older vocational teacher education degree that was offered before teacher training in Finland was moved to higher education in the 1990s, and completed a year-long leadership course. As of September 2022 when the data collection began, the administrative leader had 2.5 years of leadership experience, and the pedagogical leader had 3 years.

Data analysis

This study examined the cultural artifacts of ECE leadership. The variables for directed content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2015) that were used to analyze the observation and interview material are

Table 2. Research data.

Data type	Data details	Data collection rounds	Total duration	Participants
Observation	Team meetings videotaped and recorded	5 meetings	5 h	Teachers Nurses
	Leadership team meetings videotaped	6 meetings	8 h 40 min	Leaders Teachers
	Pedagogical meetings videotaped, written notes	3 meetings	4 h	Leaders Teachers Nurses
	Staff meetings videotaped	2 meetings	2 h 40 min	Leaders Teachers Nurses
	Daily activities written notes	8 observations	20 h 30 min	Leaders Teachers Nurses
Interview	Individual videotaped, recorded	3 interviews	3 h 35 min	Leaders
	Focus group videotaped	4 interviews	5 h 14 min	Teachers Nurses
Written material	E-mails	8	–	–
	Meeting agendas	8	–	–
	Pedagogical vision	1	–	–
	Personnel survey	1	–	Teachers Nurses

based on Gagliardi's (2011) description of artifacts. Therefore, the leadership artifact must 1) be a product of leadership, 2) be observable, and 3) have a purpose. The observation and categorization of artifacts of leadership culture was guided by Hatch's (2018) broader description of artifacts, as shown in Table 1. All interviews were transliterated and coded word-by-word using ATLAS.ti, and the recorded material was transliterated for artifacts. We were aware that content analysis with ready-made categories would limit the results of the study and the examination of the phenomenon as a whole (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), so we extended the analysis beyond the analysis categories by describing the purpose of the leadership artifacts through the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership, which made it possible to examine symbolic leadership (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024).

The artifacts of the ECE leadership culture, that is, the products of leadership (see Gagliardi, 2011), are categorized and presented in the findings based on their type: activities, objects, and verbal expressions (Hatch, 2018). In Table 6 at the end of the Findings chapter, the purpose of artifacts is illustrated through direct and indirect pedagogical leadership to more clearly connect the results to the research context. The purpose of the artifacts was examined based on interviews with leaders, observations, and staff interpretations which in this study also form the symbolic leadership.

Ethical considerations

The city where the center was located granted a research permit for data collection. Before the collection started, written consent was obtained from all the participants who had received the content

of the study and a description of the usage of the data in written form. Participation in the study was possible to suspend or stop at any time. No identifying information was mentioned in the article to avoid identifying the participants. In the article, the leaders are named with pseudonyms: Anna (administration) and Laura (pedagogy). If children were present during observations, no video or audio material was collected.

Findings

Artifacts related to leadership activities

Based on interviews and observations, we found thirteen activities (see Table 3) that can be divided into seven rituals (pedagogical meeting, leadership team meeting, team meeting, staff meeting, Friday meeting, development meeting and greeting round), three ceremonies (parent’s evening, Christmas party and Staff’s Christmas coffee event), and three social routines (morning rounds, acting as chairperson and rewarding). To distinguish between rituals and social routines: all rituals are communal actions, while social routines involve mainly the leader performing actions.

The seven rituals found were all collective actions (Leone, 2011). The purpose of pedagogical, leadership team and team meetings was to generate and maintain pedagogical discussions about children’s learning. In addition, shared pedagogical decision-making took place in leadership team meetings where only the teachers attended. Pedagogical meetings were open to both professional groups. Team meetings took place weekly, although not regularly for all teams, and Laura dealt with them occasionally. Pedagogical and leadership team meetings were held once every three weeks. The pedagogical and leadership team meetings were conducted occasionally as hybridized unit meetings with another center in the unit via Microsoft Teams. Staff interpretations of pedagogical and leadership team meetings as hybridized unit meetings were mainly negative due

Table 3. Artifacts related to leadership activities.

Cultural artifacts	Purpose	Type of activity
Pedagogical meeting	Maintaining pedagogical discussion	Ritual
Leadership team meeting	Setting goals	
Team meeting	Organizing daily non-pedagogical activities	
Staff meeting		
Friday meeting	Human resourcing	
Development meeting	Leading performance	
	Setting goals	
Greeting round	Maintaining interaction	
	Supporting staff	
Parent’s evening	Maintaining interaction	Ceremony
Christmas party	Supporting staff	
Staff’s Christmas coffee event		
Morning rounds	Maintaining interaction	Social routine
	Supporting staff	
Acting as a chairperson	Coordinating the meeting	
Rewarding	Supporting staff	

to technical issues and a lack of interaction. Pedagogical and leadership team meetings were cultural artifacts that were modified by the leaders (Higgins et al. 2006):

Anna: These meeting structures are made by us. There have been meetings before but in slightly different ways because the leader has also been different. We have made changes to the meeting structures.

The staff felt that there were many overlapping topics in all of the center's meetings, which is why they sometimes felt the meetings were "a waste of time." Additionally, both nurses and teachers stated that decisions were supposed to be made in leadership team meetings, but teachers added that the decisions made at the meeting were not actually adhered to:

Teacher 5: Things are left unfinished, and it [the leadership team meeting] is not beneficial. . . The meeting just drags on and on, and there are same topics in both [pedagogical and leadership team] meetings.

Teacher 6: Yes, and on consecutive days there might be a leadership team meeting and a staff meeting where the same things are discussed again. One starts to think that there are more important things than listening to the same things again. . . And then the decisions change when there are different people in the [staff] meeting. The decisions made at the leadership team meeting on Monday will not be upheld. On Tuesday, there will be a staff meeting, and decisions are re-made.

Staff meetings were held about once a month, and they were open to both professional groups. They included matters related to the center's everyday life, such as work shifts and human resourcing. Friday meetings were also for human resourcing purposes, but only for the upcoming week. Friday meetings started as a result of the distributed leadership model. Leaders were less present in the center, and staff meetings were held about once a month, so every week the staff met with each other and went through the following week's human resourcing, which was communicated to the leaders:

Nurse 1: Their [Friday meetings'] purpose is to look at the upcoming week, if it is known that someone is absent.

Nurse 2: It [the Friday meeting] has been developed because we [the staff] have felt that we have to have one in order for things to work.

Human resourcing in staff meetings involved hiring substitutes, that is, financial management tasks. Development meetings were held on both individual and team levels. They were about leaders' immediate supervision of the staff's expertise by setting strategy-related goals, but also about encounters with personnel, where they are "seen and heard as individuals," as the staff described. Thus, the development meetings had a dual purpose due to staff's interpretations (Lahtero and Risku, 2014). From the perspective of recurrence (Sueldo and Streimikiene, 2016), all dates of all meetings held by leaders were agreed upon at the beginning of the academic year. However, the starting times of meetings changed very often, for example, because the leaders had not arrived from their last meeting or because of technical problems.

During the greeting round at the beginning of each meeting, the staff would tell how the group was doing. However, the teachers felt that the greeting round should focus more on pedagogy and knowledge sharing.

All three social routines (morning rounds, acting as chairperson, rewarding) were individual and conducted by the leader (Leone 2011). Whenever the leaders were in the center, they aimed to start the day by visiting every group and greeting staff members in their morning rounds. In meetings, the leaders acted as chairpersons, and by doing so, they aimed to encourage the staff to participate in the conversation and to coordinate the meeting. The distribution of speeches was more consistent in meetings where pedagogical matters were discussed, and if held in the coffee room, the staff coming for a break did not interfere with the meeting as much as they would have, for example, in a staff meeting. The staff felt that it was important for the leader to function as the chairperson and to have someone who could prevent overlapping discussions.

Leaders rewarded staff with gift cards at the staff's Christmas coffee event, where the leaders explained the criteria for why a particular team was rewarded. Staff members' interpretations of rewarding differed (Hatch 2018; Lahtero 2011). Some of the teachers felt that the criteria for rewarding were fair because they felt that leaders rewarded them for basic work or developing the community, for example, by sharing knowledge in the center. The others felt that the criteria for rewarding were unfair because leaders were absent most of the time, so in practice, they could not see the work for which they were giving rewards. All the nurses said that it is nice that the teams are now rewarded one at a time:

Teacher 7: I don't know exactly how it goes, but in my opinion, it's been pretty fair so far. It's not like the same team gets rewarded repeatedly.

Teacher 1: Sometimes I wonder if it would've been better if you rewarded the whole staff collectively instead of alternating between teams... And with so many staff members, leaders don't even see how you do the basic work [they are rewarding].

Nurse 1: It's nice that they're now rewarding one team at a time.

All three ceremonies (parent's evening, Christmas party and Staff's Christmas coffee event) existed in the organization before the current leaders, so the leaders maintained existing artifacts of leadership culture. All the observed ceremonies started with the leaders' short speech. In their speech at the staff's Christmas coffee event, the leaders thanked and praised the staff. The leaders' behavior in ceremonies was about maintaining interaction but also about giving support to the staff:

Teacher 7: It was a good thing that they [the leaders] were there [at the parents' evening]. In the beginning, closing the gates in the yard and caring for sick children at home was discussed, so it was good that those kinds of things are communicated by the leaders, that parents understand that the rules are not just invented by us the staff.

The social routines found in this study, excluding acting as a chairperson, focused on interacting with and supporting the staff (Fonsen and Lahtero, 2024).

Artifacts related to objects

There were thirteen objects found in the data that were of different types, including architecture/furnishing, digital documents, posters, clothing, photos, memos, a board, a book, a survey, and a pedagogical vision (see Table 4).

The leaders held meetings in two locations: the gym and the center's coffee room. The location was decided on the same day the meeting was held. In the coffee room, there was a table and chairs

for meeting attendees, but the gym did not have these, which is why the meeting attendees sat on mattresses and on low benches intended for children. Although there was room for improvement in ergonomics, there were far fewer distractions in meetings held in the gym. Since the coffee room was also a staff break room, employees came and went into the meeting room throughout the meeting. The staff described that it is hard to concentrate in the meeting when there were distractions throughout the meeting, but it was also important for the staff that there was a quiet place for having a break:

Teacher 1: The coffee room is not a good meeting location.

Teacher 2: Yes, because people want to take a break there.

Teacher 3: People are constantly coming and going to get coffee, so it always interrupts that meeting a bit.

Teacher 1: You should also be able to take a break without having to listen to the meeting.

Teacher 2: Yes, otherwise it does not feel like a break.

Deciding the meeting location was about leading and coordinating the structures of the organization (Lahtero and Salonen 2022). However, the choice of meeting location also affected well-being and the interaction between the leader and the staff as the staff described. Thus, the meeting location had a dual purpose due to staff's interpretations (Lahtero and Risku, 2014).

Staff members did not use the leaders' office, even in the absence of the leaders. Staff stated that the leaders' office was dreary due to a lack of furnishings. Staff compared the lack of decorating to what had been done by previous leaders, who, according to staff, had all made the office look like their own; thus, the lack of decorating of leaders can be seen as modifying the artifact of leadership

Table 4. Artifacts related to leadership objects.

Cultural artifacts	Purpose	Type of object
Meeting location	Coordinating meeting structures	Architecture
Leaders' office	Supporting teaching environment	Furnishing
Clothing	Supporting teaching environment	Clothing
	Supporting staff by interacting with parents	
Meeting agenda	Planning	Digital document
Meeting memo	Documenting	
Action plans	Goal setting	
	Planning pedagogical activities	
Photos	Supporting well-being	Photo
Meeting dates	Coordinating	Poster
Schedule		
Whiteboard	Human resourcing	Board
A book related to renewing practices of support	Supporting teaching and learning processes	Book
Personnel survey	Supporting well-being	Survey
Pedagogical vision	Supporting teaching	Written document

culture (Higgins et al., 2006). The leaders themselves explained that they had not decorated their office because they felt that the office was a shared space. The leaders thought of their office as an office for the entire staff and available, for example, for meetings or planning of pedagogical activities.

The leaders dressed neatly and formally. The leaders themselves stated that since they were in customer service work and there could be meetings with guardians at any time, they should respect their customers by dressing neatly. Staff perceive leaders' interaction directly with guardians as an important way to provide support to staff.

Before all of the meetings, the leaders sent the agenda via email to the staff. In the meeting agenda, the center's name, meeting title, dates, and agenda items were documented. Finally, the leaders welcomed everyone to the meeting and signed the agenda and always added a photo in the end which was related to the current season and put there to cheer the staff as they described it:

ECE unit name

ECE centers XX and XY, separate meetings

Leadership team, 1 March 2023, at 12.15pm-13.45pm, Agenda

1. Opening the meeting and selecting the secretary
2. Mid-term review of the group's action plan
 - Bring your team's review of the achievement of goals to the leadership team meeting;

What successes and challenges have you had?

3. Planning of the development day of the ECE center
4. Other issues

Welcome!

Anna and Laura



Data example 1. (Meeting agenda March 1, 2023).

Agendas and meeting memos were used to coordinate and schedule meetings (Lahtero et al., 2021), as were the poster about meeting dates and the weekly schedule of the leaders that showed their whereabouts one week at a time. Different schedules and meeting agendas were considered important by the staff because they helped them to anticipate future events. Meeting memos were stored in Microsoft Teams, but not all staff members had access to them. Additionally, the staff said that the meeting memos did not differ much from the agendas, which had led to a situation in which the staff members asked each other what had been discussed in the meeting in order to enable the flow of information. Microsoft Teams was used to store a lot of other information as well, such as action plans of the center and the groups, which were used for documenting goals and planning pedagogical activities.

Leaders communicated their schedules week by week to staff. At the end of the week, leaders emailed staff their schedule for the following week, showing their whereabouts, and the schedule was printed on the door of the leaders’ office:

Anna and Laura’s schedule 22 May 22–26, 2023

Mon 22	Tue 23	Wed 24	Thu 25	Fri 26
Anna Center1	Anna MORNING Center3 AFTERNOON Center2	Anna Work shifts Remote workday	Anna MORNING Center3 AFTERNOON Center4	Anna Center4
Laura MORNING Center3 AFTERNOON Center4	Laura Center2	Laura MORNING Center1 AFTERNOON Preschool event, elsewhere	Laura MORNING Center3 Afternoon Center2	Laura Center4

Data example 2. (Leaders’ schedule May 22–26, 2023).

The whiteboard in the coffee room was also used to coordinate and schedule the center’s every-day life. Employee names were color-coordinated depending on, for example, whether the employee was present or absent. The whiteboard was updated by both leaders and staff, but more often by staff because leaders were not present on a daily basis. The purpose of the whiteboard was to coordinate and support staff work by communicating about human resources (Lahtero and Salonen, 2022). The white board was in the center before the current leaders, so they were maintaining that cultural artifact.

In the leadership team meeting in October 2022 and pedagogical meeting in October 2022, Laura mentioned a book that examines the renewing practices of support in ECE. At the pedagogical meeting, Laura encouraged the staff to read the book and gave instructions on how to borrow the book from the center. However, most of the staff did not recognize the book in the focus group interviews held in May 2023. The purpose of the book in leadership team meetings was to directly support goal setting and teaching processes:

Table 5. Artifacts related to verbal expressions.

Cultural artifacts	Purpose	Type of verbal expression
“Welcome!”	Coordinating meetings	Phrases
“Thank you!”		
“How are you?”	Supporting staff	Nicknames
Usage of nicknames	Practicality	
Situational humor	Supporting well-being	
Speeches	Supporting staff	Speech
	Maintaining interaction	

Laura: I took this book with me, we have got this book in every center, and this is really great. You may have heard of this. This has been covered quite a lot in the media: Noora Heiskanen and Marja Syrjämäki's *Pienet tuetut askeleet*. I haven't read this completely yet, but the first thing I went to see here was such a theme as sensitive adult interaction, warm interaction. And when we talk about children's participation, about their opportunities to influence everyday life, a really essential part of it is the warm interaction of adults and the role of adults in creating and maintaining warm interaction. (Leadership team meeting 10/2022)

A personnel survey was conducted every other year by the city, and the results were managed under the direction of the leaders with the staff of the center. The staff thought that conducting surveys was a good thing, and the results were reviewed together, but their impact was not fully conveyed:

Teacher 7: Yes, I have always answered them [personnel surveys]. In my opinion, it is important that they [the thoughts of the staff] appear somewhere. The results are always reviewed, but how much concrete impact they have. . . . But yes, they are always handled.

In the survey, the staff answered questions related to work (e.g., workload), the work community (e.g., working atmosphere), and, for example, leadership (e.g., the fairness of decision-making). The use of the survey results aimed to support the well-being of the staff.

The pedagogical vision held the values of the whole unit that the center under study is a part of. The content of the pedagogical vision aimed to create a common value base for teaching, and it was written by the leaders under study, so it was a new cultural artifact. For the staff, the pedagogical vision remained distant.

Artifacts related to verbal expressions

According to the data, we found six verbal expressions (Hatch, 2018) that can be classified into five types: phrases, nicknames, humor, and speech (see Table 5).

The leaders always started meetings by saying *Welcome*, which silenced the meeting attendees. The staff said that the *Welcome* at the beginning of the meeting was a sign that the meeting was starting, which communicated the intention to organize and coordinate. At the end of the meetings, the leaders said, "Thank you," which led to the meeting attendees collecting their belongings and leaving the meeting room or to the start of a one-on-one conversation with the leader. Additionally, if someone left the meeting in advance, the leaders thanked them for participating in the meeting. Thanking them for attending a meeting can be seen not only as coordinating the end of the meeting but also as managing the psychological factors of the educational environment (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024) in the same way that leaders thanked substitute workers for coming to help in the center.

Nicknames were used for certain employees. Both the leaders and staff said that the leaders did not create the nicknames. The staff also said that it would be strange if leaders had created nicknames for employees. The nicknames had developed over time in the organization, when there had been several people with the same name. The purpose of leaders using nicknames was purely rational. When nicknames are used for employees, it is easier to communicate.

The staff described the leaders as humorous. Humor was present in situations where, for example, the staff, together with the leader, sarcastically discussed the center's gym as a suitable meeting place. Leaders said that they did not tell jokes because jokes could be understood in

many different ways, and what one person would find funny, others could find offensive; thus, they aimed to use humor only to create a relaxed and positive atmosphere. In general, humor was present in very situational moments, for example, during a meeting where the leader allocated development meetings that had been renamed, even though the purpose of the meeting was the same as before:

Anna: Individual development meetings have now been renamed at the city level, and all ECE centers will have a discussion with the same name.

Nurse: So, it now has a cool new name?

Anna: [Answers with exaggerated formality] Yes, and it is called [the name of the development meeting].

Nurse: Wow!

[The leader and the staff in the meeting room start smiling and laughing together.] (Leadership team meeting 3/2023)

The leaders gave speeches at the beginning of the ceremonies, where they praised the staff, and if guardians were present, the leaders thanked them for their cooperation. At a Christmas party, leaders added play to their speech:

Laura starts to count together with the children the pages she is holding.

Laura: Five pages! Let's get started, this might take a while. Dear parents. Ow! What's pinching me in my hat?

Laura: Dear parents. OW! What is in here? Someone is pinching me! Should I look at what is pinching me? Wait a minute. What is in here? There is something in my hat.

The children laughing: It is the pincher!

Laura: It IS the pincher! A small teddy bear. It wants to tell me something, wait a moment I'll listen.

Laura: You'll never guess what it said.

Children: YES WE DO!

Laura laughing: Do you? Do you want to hear what it said?

Children: YES!

Laura: It said that it doesn't want to hear any long speeches; it just wants to see the children perform. Raise your arm if you also want to see the children perform.

Laura states, 'Let's bring the festive crowd to the stage,' concluding the speech by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas. (Christmas party 12/2022)

Although the staff found the speech given at the Christmas party very nice, they described the leaders' speeches in general as contradictory (Hatch, 2018; Lahtero, 2011). Some found the situations awkward and some important:

Teacher 7: In my opinion, it [the speech in the staff's Christmas coffee event] is nice. I probably wasn't there myself when it happened; I arrived towards the end. In my opinion, what comes through in both is

that they are both really lovely people. The warmth and ... I don't know how to describe it, but it somehow gives a nice feeling.

Teacher 1: In a way, they [leaders' speeches] are a bit awkward sometimes.

Nurse 5: Well, it [the speech] is important. It feels nice, the way they [leaders] express gratitude for the year during Christmas. It feels important to me at least.

Nurse 3: Perhaps we nevertheless see that the appreciation should come in our everyday lives. It might be lovely to just sit and enjoy the fact that it's wonderful to have the time to sit together and engage in relaxed conversation instead [of speeches].

The first topic in every meeting held by the leaders was to listen to the meeting attendees talk about how they were doing. The leaders asked each meeting attendee: *How are you doing?* Depending on what the staff replied, leaders sometimes asked additional questions or offered sympathy if staff expressed exhaustion. The leaders' question could therefore lead to sharing knowledge among staff or to support staff's well-being (Lahtero et al., 2021).

Cultural artifacts through direct and indirect pedagogical leadership. Since the purpose of this study was also to see how the cultural artifacts appear in relation to broad-based pedagogical leadership, the intentionality of the cultural artifacts (activities, objects, and verbal expressions) found in this study are compiled through direct (e.g. pedagogical meeting) and indirect pedagogical leadership (e.g. staff meeting) in Table 6. Artifacts with dual purposes (e.g. development meetings) due to the interpretations of staff i.e. symbolic leadership are marked with italics.

Table 6. The purpose of cultural artifacts through direct and indirect pedagogical leadership.

	Indirect pedagogical leadership via Technical leadership	Direct pedagogical leadership	Indirect pedagogical leadership via Leading human resources
Activities	Staff meeting Friday meeting Acting as chairperson	<i>Development meetings</i> Pedagogical meeting Leadership team meeting	<i>Development meetings</i> Christmas party Christmas coffee event
Objects	<i>Meeting location</i>	Team meeting	Parents' evenings
Verbal expressions	Meeting agenda Meeting memo Meeting schedule Leaders' schedule Whiteboard "Thank you!" "Welcome!" Nicknames	Action plans A book related to support Pedagogical vision	Morning rounds Greeting round Rewarding <i>Meeting location</i> Office Clothing Photos Personnel survey "Thank you!" Humor Speeches "How are you?"

Discussion

The aim of our study was to examine the cultural artifacts of ECE leadership. Based on our analysis, we found thirteen activities, six verbal expressions, and thirteen objects (Hatch, 2018) as products of leadership (Gagliardi, 2011). On the basis of the findings of this case study, we are inclined to further develop the broad-based pedagogical leadership model (see Figure 1) since the purpose of this study was also to examine the purpose of cultural artifacts within the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership. Figure 3 shows an outline of direct and indirect pedagogical leadership, complemented by symbolic leadership. The area of direct pedagogical leadership (the sphere in the center) is smaller since there were more cultural artifacts associated with indirect than direct pedagogical leadership. This resonates with our previous research (X et al., YYYY), where we found that the increase in organizational sizes and staff numbers reduced the time for leaders to have pedagogical discussions with staff, both in formal meetings and informal encounters. In which, however, there is an even greater need in the current situation of Finnish ECE, due to the national shortage of ECE teachers and the resulting shortage of pedagogical skills (X et al., YYYY).

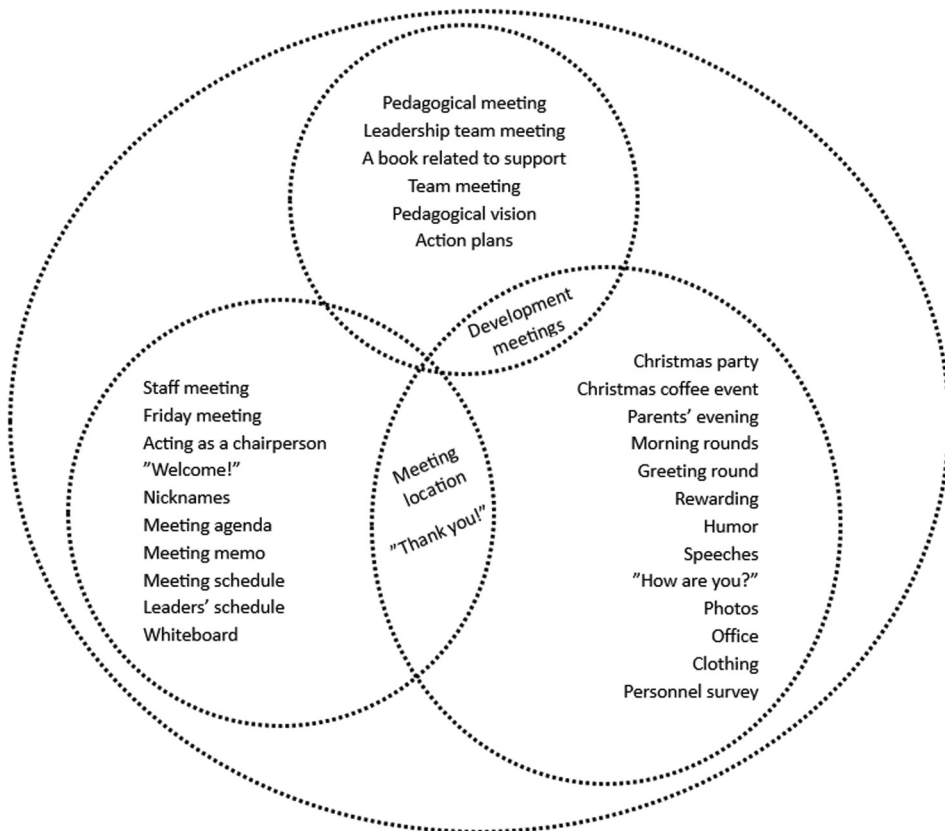


Figure 3. Broad-based pedagogical leadership model based on this study.

Three of the cultural artifacts had dual purposes because of the staff's interpretations, i.e. symbolic leadership, which indicates that it is not possible to divide the areas of broad-based pedagogical leadership strictly through indirect and direct pedagogical leadership (Lahtero and Risku, 2014). Hence, the areas of direct and indirect pedagogical leadership are shown in Figure 3 overlap. Consequently, other purposes are formed for artifacts when the staff interpret leadership and give meanings to artifacts; for example, the development meetings were about strategic work (direct pedagogical leadership) but also about leading the psychological factors (indirect pedagogical leadership via leading human resources) because of symbolic leadership formed of the staff's interpretations. Almost all cultural artifacts were given meanings by the staff. Thus, the areas of broad-based pedagogical leadership are drawn with dotted lines in Figure 3, since symbolic leadership permeates direct and indirect pedagogical leadership. Seeing that almost all artifacts in this study received interpretations from staff, it seems that symbolic leadership was present in many, if not all, leadership situations (Lahtero and Risku, 2014).

Some of the artifacts were created previously and then maintained by the current leaders (e.g., ceremonies), and some of them were new, such as the book related to support, the existence of which has most likely been influenced by the reforming ECE environment in Finland; most recently, in August 2022, the amendments in the Act (540/2018) were related to the support system for children's learning and development. Consequently, the symbolic leadership that influences the areas of direct and indirect pedagogical leadership in Figure 3 is drawn in a dotted line, because the changing ECE environment affects artifacts of leadership culture and, therefore, the leadership culture. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between broad-based pedagogical leadership model (see Figure 1) and cultural artifacts, as applied to the research findings presented in this article.

The findings confirm the basic principle of symbolic leadership that what happens is not as relevant as what it means (Fonsén and Lahtero, 2024), emphasizing the need for ECE leaders to understand the symbolic dimension of leadership. The lack of furnishing of the office was interpreted by the staff as dreary, even though the leaders themselves thought it was a shared space for the entire staff. The symbolic meaning given to the office by staff influenced the use of the office more than the leaders' attempt to make it a shared space. Hence, the identified knowledge gap in the symbolic and cultural dimensions of leadership from prior studies (Fonsén et al., 2022; Lahtero and Kuusilehto-Awale, 2015), is compounded by the findings of this study, which specifically highlight how it may undermine the well-intentioned efforts of leaders.

According to our findings, artifacts stand for multiplicity of meanings and are interpreted differently within an organization (Hatch, 2018; Juuti, 2006; Lahtero, 2011). For example, the meanings the staff gave to the leaders' speeches differed. Some found the situations awkward and some important, unlike leaders' presence at events like parent evenings unanimously seen as crucial support for staff (see Achituv and Hertzog, 2018). The findings also show that not all artifacts become symbols (Gagliardi, 2009). The pedagogical vision did not receive meanings from the staff, leaving it as an artifact and not as an instrument of influence (Paalumäki, 2004).

Conclusion

This case study suggests that the way leadership in ECE is structured should also include the symbolic and cultural dimensions, as in broad-based pedagogical leadership. Based on our findings, the leadership culture in the center consists of artifacts that each leader maintains, modifies, and creates in turn. It exists – whether the leader is aware of it or not. Thus, this study strongly encourages

leaders to articulate more clearly the purpose of leadership to the staff because the staff interprets artifacts differently, and only a conscious and deliberate attempt to structure the meanings given to leadership by staff can be considered cultural leadership (Fonsén et al., 2022). Only then can cultural artifacts become leaders' instruments of influence (Paalumäki, 2004) but failing to do so usually leads to failure in leading the culture of the organization (Higgins et al., 2006), as evidenced by interpretations related to the office of leaders in this study. Failure in leading the culture of the organization may also lead to a change in career plans among ECE teachers as Kangas et al.'s study (2022) revealed.

Since the findings of our study show that leadership in the center is more indirect pedagogical leadership, that is, influencing the environment of teaching and learning, than directly influencing teaching processes, the challenge is how to use the reduced time for pedagogical discussion needed for high-quality pedagogical leadership (Lahtero and Salonen, 2022). Moreover, it is important to realize that the size of the unit directly affects the effectiveness of pedagogical discussion, remembering that culture is a social phenomenon which is led through the means of interaction, and requires ample time to be developed (Schein, 2017; Seeck, 2021). This challenge may also be faced by other centers, as the sizes of ECE organizations in Finland and elsewhere have grown (Eskelinen and Hjelt, 2017; Ho et al., 2016). However, in this study, the staff highlighted overlapping issues in meetings, so it might be useful to examine, for example, the purpose of various meetings in the center.

The center studied was part of a relatively new unit that had been formed one year before the data collection started. Additionally, ECE in the past years has undergone many reforms, and in times of change, having knowledge about the symbolic-cultural perspective of leadership is essential because when cultural features are not supporting reform, changes will not take place (Deal and Peterson, 2009). Hence, this study suggests that leadership training for ECE leaders should have a more holistic approach meaning including the symbolic and cultural perspective of pedagogical leadership, as in broad-based pedagogical leadership, regardless of the training provider to support the leaders in leading change (Fonsén et al., 2022; Lahtero and Salonen, 2022). The leadership study entity in the field of education and teaching (Heikonen et al., 2023) could be considered as a model for leadership trainings.

Lumby (2012) stated that rather than focusing on changing others, the goal is changing oneself and fully understanding one's own culture, which may be the most sustainable tool to enable leaders to make persistent adjustments to the cultures in their organization. Consequently, the next phase of our research will be to examine the leadership culture of the center, which will be formed out of the network of meanings given to artifacts in this study by the ECE center staff.


Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.


Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Hannele Marjaana Roponen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7470-9985>

Elina Fonsén  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2547-905X>

Raisa Ahtiainen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1925-6578>

References

- Achitov S and Hertzog E (2020) Partners or managers? Mothers or bosses? Conflicting Identities of Israeli Daycare Managers. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(12): 1931–1944, DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2018.1552948
- Act 540/2018 The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2018/20180540> (accessed 14 June 2023).
- Alava J and Halttunen M, L and Risku (2012) Muuttuva oppilaitosjohtaminen. *Finnish National Agency for Education, Memos* 2012:3. Available at: <https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Muuttuva%20oppilaitosjohtaminen.PDF> (accessed 30 November 2023)
- Brown A (1998) *Organisational Culture*. London: Financial Times Pitman Publishing.
- Deal TE and Peterson KD (2009) *Shaping school culture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Eskelinen M and Hjelt H (2017) *Varhaiskasvatuksen henkilöstö ja lapsen tuen toteuttaminen*. Available at: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80737/okm39.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y> (accessed 14 June 2023).
- Finnish National Agency for Education (2022), *National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Available at: https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman%20perusteet%202022_EN_final_23%20.pdf (accessed: 11 December 2023)
- Fonsén E, Ahtiainen R, Kiuru L, Lahtero T and Hotulainen R and Kallioniemi, A (2022) Kasvatus- ja opetusalan johtajien näkemyksiä johtamisosaamisesta ja sen kehittämistarpeista. *Työelämän tutkimus*, 20(1): 90–117. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37455/tt.95779>.
- Fonsén E and Lahtero T (2024) The Theory of Pedagogical Leadership: Enhancing High-Quality Education. In Ahtiainen R, Hanhimäki E, Leinonen J and Risku M and Smeds-Nylund A-S (eds) *Leadership in Educational Contexts in Finland. Educational Governance Research*, Vol 23. Springer, Cham, 159–177. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37604-7_8
- Gagliardi P (2006) Exploring the aesthetic side of organizational life. In: Clegg SR, Hardy S, TB Lawrence and Nord WR (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Studies* (2nd ed). UK: SAGE Publications.
- Gagliardi P (2011) Artifacts as Pathways and Remains of Organisational Life. In Gagliardi P (eds) *Symbols and Artifacts. de Gruyter Studies in Organization* 24.
- Gotvassli K-Å (2018) Leadership in early childhood centers. In: Granrusten PT (ed) *Leadership for Learning: The New Challenge in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Hammersley M (2006) Ethnography: problems and prospects. *Ethnography and Education* 1(1): 3–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820500512697>.
- Hatch MJ (2018) *Organization theory. Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives* (4th ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heikka J, Halttunen L and Waniganayake M (2016) Investigating teacher leadership in ECE centers in Finland. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research* 5(2): 289–309. <https://journal.fi/jecer/article/view/114062/67261> (accessed 24 September 2023).
- Heikonen L, Ahtiainen R, Fonsén E, Heikkinen K-M and Kallioniemi Lahtero T A (2023) Kohti kehittyvää johtajuutta : Varhaiskasvatuksen sekä esi- ja perusopetuksen johtajuushankkeen (VEPO 2035) loppuraportti. *Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland* 2023:7. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-760-4> (accessed 11 August 2023).
- Higgins JM, McAllaster C, Certo AC and Gilbert JP (2006) Studying cultural artifacts to change and perpetuate strategy. *Journal of Change Management* 6(4): 397–415. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697010601087057>.
- Ho D and Teng Lee M Y (2016) Size matters – The link between staff size and perceived organizational support in early childhood education. *International Journal of Educational Management* 30(6): 1104–1122. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-09-2015-0125>.
- Hsieh H-F and SE Shannon (2005) Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9): 1277–1288, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>.

- Jones MO (1996) *Studying Organizational Symbolism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Juuti P (2006) *Organisaatiokäyttäytyminen, Otavan kirjapaino Oy*, Helsinki, Finland.
- Kangas J, Ukkonen-Mikkola T, Sirvio K, Hjelt H and Fonsén E (2022) Kun aika ja resurssit eivät riitä tekemään työtä niin hyvin kuin osaisi ja haluaisi sitä tehdä: varhaiskasvatuksen opettajien käsityksiä työn haasteista ja mahdollisuuksista. *Kasvatus ja aika* 16(2): 72–89, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33350/ka.109089>.
- Kristiansen E, Tholin Rydjord and Bøe K M (2021) Early childhood centre directors coping with stress: Firefighters and oracles. *International Journal of Educational Management* 35(4): 909–921. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-12-2020-0584>.
- Lahtero T (2011) *Yhtenäiskoulun johtamiskulttuuri: Symbolis-tulkinnallinen näkökulma. Doctoral dissertation*, University of Jyväskylä. Available at: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/25796> (accessed 30 November 2023).
- Lahtero T, Ahtiainen R and Kallioniemi Fonsén E A (2021) Rehtoreiden ja opettajien käsityksiä perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman toteutumista edistävästä tekijöistä laajan pedagogisen johtamisen viitekehyksessä. *Hallinnon tutkimus* 40(5): 326–338 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37450/ht.103069>
- Lahtero T and Kuusilehto-Awale L (2015) Possibility to engage in pedagogical leadership as experienced by Finnish newly appointed principals. *American Journal of Education Research* 3(3): 318–329. DOI: 10.12691/education-3-3-11.
- Lahtero T and Laasonen I (2021) Broad-based pedagogical leadership. In Holappa A-S, Hyyryläinen A, Kola-Torvinen P and Korva S and Smeds-Nylund A-S (eds), *Kasvatus- ja koulutusalan johtaminen: 205–219*. PS-kustannus.
- Lahtero T and Risku M (2014) Symbolic leadership culture and its subcultures in one unified comprehensive school in Finland. *International Journal of Educational Management* 28(5): 560–577. DOI: 10.1108/IJEM-03-2013-0036.
- Lahtero T and Salonen M (2022) *Pätevästä erinomaiseksi. Rehtori koulun toimintakulttuurin kehittäjänä*. Helsinki: Professional Publishing Finland Oy.
- Leone M (2011) Rituals and routines: A semiotic inquiry. *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 5(1): 107–120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/css-2011-0109>.
- Lumby J (2012) Leading organizational culture: Issues of power and equity. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 40(5): 576–591. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143212451173>.
- Lunenburg FC and Ornstein AC (2012) *Educational Administration – Concepts and Practices* (6th ed). Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- McGrath C and Palmgren P J, and Liljedahl M (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher* 41(9): 1002–1006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>
- Mintzberg H (1983) *Structure in Fives*. Hoboken: Prentice-Hall.
- Mintzberg H (1998) *The Structuring of Organizations*. Hoboken: Prentice-Hall.
- Niiniluoto I (1990) *Maaailma, minä ja kulttuuri*. Keuruu, Finland: Otava.
- Oliveira N (2012) *Automated organizations. Development and Structure of the Modern Business Firm*. Heidelberg: Physica. Available at: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1007/978-3-7908-2759-0>.
- O'Reilly K (2005) *Ethnographic Methods*. London: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Paalumäki A (2004) *Keltaisella johdetut. Artefaktit, johtaminen ja organisaation kulttuurinen identiteetti. Doctoral dissertation*, University of Turku. Available at: https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/96648/Ae5_2004.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y (accessed 30 November 2023).
- Roponen H, Fonsén E, Ukkonen-Mikkola T and Ahtiainen R (2024) Leading early childhood education centers as professional bureaucracies – Social organizational structures in Finnish early childhood education. *International Journal of Educational Management* 38(1): <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2023-0287>.
- Seeck Hannele 2021: *Johtamisopit Suomessa - Taylorismista innovaatioteorioihin*. 6th edition. Gaudeamus Oy.
- Schein EH (2017) *Organizational culture and leadership* (5th ed). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., USA.

- Sergiovanni T (2001) *The Principalship: A reflective practice perspective*. Boston: Ally & Bacon.
- Sueldo M and Streimikine D (2016) Organizational rituals as tools of organizational culture creation and transformation: a communicative approach. *Transformations in Business & Economics* 15(2): 89–110. Available at: <https://etalpykla.lituanistika.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2019~1580894032129/J.04~2019~1580894032129.pdf> (accessed February 27 2024).
- Sun J and Leithwood K (2015) Leadership effects on student learning mediated by teacher emotions. *Societies* 5(3): 566–582. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc5030566>.