

Reflection Upon Effective Leadership in The Early Childhood Services from Policy and Practice Perspective

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Abstract

This critical review focuses on the importance of being leader and the effects of effective leadership in the early years settings. It will be examined the relevant literature, exploring research studies in accordance with effective leadership, the differences and similarities between management and leadership, the challenges of developing leadership in the early years. Followingly, gender in leadership and the importance of reflection for leaders in their practices will be discussed. This study aimed to put an emphasis on how leadership policy and practice are necessary for the early years settings to support early years education with powerful and valuable way. There are limited number of researches about leadership in early childhood services in relevant Turkish literature. Therefore, this review will add a critical perspective to the growing Turkish early years education literature especially within some essential longitudinal studies such as Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS), Effective Leadership and Management Scheme (ELMS) and The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Research.

Keywords: Early childhood, effective leadership, policy, practice

Article Type:

Review

Ethics Declaration:

This study has been prepared by following all ethical rules.

Erken Çocukluk Eğitim Hizmetlerinde İlgili Dokümanlar Ve Uygulamalar Kapsamında Etkili Liderlige Eleştirel Bir Bakış

Öz

Bu derleme çalışmasında erken çocukluk eğitiminde verimli olmak için etkili lider olmanın önemine üzerinde durulmuştur. İlgili alan yazın araştırma çalışmaları kapsamında erken çocukluk eğitim sektöründeki yöneticilik ve liderlik arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar etkili liderlik üzerine tartışmalar çerçevesinde incelenecaktır. Devamında, liderlikteki cinsiyet durumlarına ve liderlerin uygulamalarındaki düşünceleri tartışılacaktır. Bu çalışma, liderlik prosedürleri ve uygulamalarının erken çocukluk eğitimini güçlü ve değerli kılmak için nasıl etkili olarak kullanacağını vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye'deki alan yazında erken çocukluk eğitimindeki liderlik konusunda belirgin ve limitli araştırmalar vardır. Bu yüzden bu derleme Türkiye'deki erken çocukluk eğitim alanındaki çalışmalarla ek olarak liderlikle ilgili yurt dışında yapılan yapılan uzamsal çalışmalar (ELEYS, ELMS, EPPE) kapsamında eleştirel bir boyut ekleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Erken çocukluk eğitimi, erken çocuklukta liderlik, liderlik dokümanları, liderlik uygulamaları

Introduction

Booren and Downer (2012) have argued that in order to develop children's skills and attitudes, it is possible that structured settings might help to foster their development. According to Ball (1999), quality pre-school education experience leads to permanent social and educational gains for those children who receive it. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) research (Taggart et al, 2003) indicated that pre-schools can play a crucial role in challenging social exclusion and preparing children well for primary schools. Schools have an immediate impact on children's scholastic success, their learning of language, mathematics and science.

Additionally, the Taggart et al (2003) found that children who initially present with anti-social and anxious behaviours can have such behaviours decreased by experience of high-quality early childhood education. Therefore, leadership in early years is a significant element to provide children high quality early experiences. It is suggested that well-developed leadership is crucial to improve quality in services and better results (Pugh, 2006). Also, the UK government has invested in nursery education providing additional funding since 1997 (Andreae & Matthews, 2006). Pugh (2006) highlighted that well-developed leadership is important for the development of quality in services and better results for young children. This review will examine the work of researchers that has affected and shaped the understanding of leadership in the early years. Effective leadership in the early years, the barriers for leadership practice, gender in leadership and leadership quality practice will be explored followed by discussion on what the future might hold for the effective leadership in the early years.

Effective leadership in early years

Leadership is a concept that is hard to define for a number of reasons. These reasons include the changing nature of leadership and the difficulty in both determining who is a leader and in indicating exactly when leadership is illustrated (Karnes & Bean, 1996). Early years settings promote the ideal context to observe, practice and guide leadership skills and attitudes. However, "it is not just a matter of placing children in a group setting and saying 'now go play'" (Morda & Waniganayake, 2010), the development of leadership abilities works best when integrated into the play-based curriculum "by choosing objectives relating to leadership" (Bisland, 2004).

High quality experiences can be assured by committed and well-trained teachers. Siraj-Blatchford (2007) states that the teacher can be a role model and can also promote children's self-esteem. Teachers should assist and support children's actions and play in order to provide high quality experiences. In addition, it was discussed in the Taggart et al. (2003) that children should be able to rely on their teachers as this trustworthy relationship is important for effective

interactions. Effective interactions are important when pupils need individual help. The research made clear that there is a reasonable connection between highly qualified staff who have leader degree and high-quality provision for children (Hallet, 2013). Early Years Professionals (EYP) highlighted that their approaches in leadership practice is important in order to increase the quality of pedagogical processes such as focusing on interactions between staff, children, planning and the quality of learning environment and there were four key outcomes:

- a) *strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality*
- b) *establishing a common understanding of the improvements that were required and developing norms around quality*
- c) *developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities that focused on improving process quality*
- d) *enhancing practice leadership capacity in the setting*"(Department for Education, 2010, p. 6).

In order to shape intellectual skills and creativity, to reinforce children's imaging world and to enable them to deal with problems on their own, teachers should guide them and provide situations that stimulate the children's own interest in the class (Montie, Xiang & Schweinhart, 2006). Saracho and Spodek (2006) said that the best practices and the best outcomes in early years are related to the quality of the teachers. The EPPE Project (2003) found that "settings which have staff with higher qualifications, especially with a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff show higher quality and their children make more progress". Also, researchers in the UK found that the more qualifications teachers have, the more effective they are in their relationships with children (Montie, Xiang & Schweinhart, 2006). Hence, being a teacher leader has a crucial role to play in providing a more interactive learning process and to support 'high quality' experiences for young children. Davies (2005) has highlighted eleven different perspectives on leadership. Most of them are appropriate for the early years context such as strategic, transformational, ethical, learning-centred, constructivist, emotional, distributed and sustainable leadership.

Practitioners in the early years choose multiple leadership styles rather than a single style for daily activities in the classroom (Geoghegan et al, 2003). "Different leadership styles are judged to be effective in different situations, rather than one leadership style being effective in all situations" (Morda & Waniganayake, 2010). In light of this perspective, the first step in effective leadership is the ability to interact with others in ways that provide vision and purpose, set realistic and achievable goals, monitor and celebrate success, improve a team dynamic and inspire open communication (Rodd, 2006). From these ways within early years settings the focus is on developing relationships between children, families and staff (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Rodd, 2006).

Law and Glover (2000) highlighted that effective leaders know when to use professional decisions, when to support, when to strongly encourage and when to show alternatives to leading. Every early childhood practitioner can make a decision to become a leading professional by demonstrating increasing competence in their work; becoming a critical friend to colleagues; supporting the development of others, children, parents and staff. Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) has created a community of EYP who are more eager and confident about taking on a role of leadership in early years settings and who feel better able to make developments in quality in their settings. As the national survey revealed, eighty-seven per cent of EYP highlighted that EYPS had provided them great opportunity to improve their colleagues' knowledge and skills and almost as many thought it helped them become better able to identify and improve colleagues' effective practices (Department for Education, 2010).

Well-developed professionalism in early childhood is important in order to deal with challenges in the settings and to deliver high-quality services for children and their families (Rodd, 2006). Leadership in the early years settings seems to be more a result of groups of people who work together to influence and encourage each other rather than efforts of single person who

focuses on getting the work done (Jorde-Bloom, 1997; Morgan, 1997). Therefore, all members of staff in early years provisions are encouraged to share and discuss their different perspectives of leadership and that might help professional development of the leadership (Rodd, 2006). Effective leadership is equipped with a range of abilities such as "...confidence to empower, enable to delegate, motivation and enthusiasm, willingness to celebrate existing achievements, communication and listening, mediation and negotiation skills" (Aubrey, 2008). Fullan (2001) described five competences of effective leaderships to achieve a culture of change; they are moral purpose, understanding the change process, relationships, knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making. In order to be an effective leader, one needs to be an efficient manager, however, management abilities are not same as leadership skills. Management skills are necessary but not sufficient for effective leadership (Rodd, 2006; Law & Glover, 2000). It is leadership that responds to the needs of staff working within the organization as well as the external needs of others, parents and the society (Aubrey, 2008).

The connection between leadership and effective provision is vital element for early childhood settings, where research shows that leaders play an important role in the provision of quality services. Effective leadership has been found to be a key element of effective early childhood provision (Muijs et al, 2004; Harris et al, 2002; Rodd, 2006). Other factors that have taken into account to the focus on leadership include pressure for increasing professionalization and accountability from within and outside the profession (Rodd, 2006). Effective Leadership in the Early Years Study (ELEYs), Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) state clarifications of effective leadership practices described in the early years settings that took part in the study:

- “ -Identifying and articulating a collective vision
- Ensuring shared understandings, meanings and goals
- Effective communication
- Encouraging reflection
- Commitment to ongoing, professional development
- Monitoring and assessing practice
- Distributed leadership
- Building a learning community and team culture
- Encouraging and facilitating parent and community partnerships
- Leading and managing: striking the balance” (p.12)

Here the idea of striking a balance between leadership and management is highlighted. In accordance with the research, the Department for Education's research report (2010) stated that "Early Years Professional Status has created a cohort of Early Years Professionals who are more willing and confident about taking on a leadership role in their settings and who felt better able to make improvements in quality in their settings..." (p. 6). These qualities are important to support being an effective leader and to make high quality early years education.

Leadership and management

It is hard to distinguish between the understanding of leadership and management. They are linked inherently and interwoven. However, the conceptualism of leadership and management are not fully discovered in early years settings (Moyles, 2006). However, in Turkish literature there is only one-way side to look at leadership as it is same with manager or administrator. There are some of researches discussed about the managers encountered problems in school environment (Bute and Balci, 2010), qualities of pre-school administrators in accordance with pre-school teachers' thoughts (Susmak and Hacifazlioglu, 2013), pre-school teachers and administrators' perceptions about thinking skills instruction in early years (Akbiyik and Kalkan Ay, 2014). Manager and leadership are not the same while manager is a role as leading the

procedure in schools, leadership is a skill that can be seen as a kind of working style that influencing someone or something better. There is one more research broke the borders and looked at the leadership skills of pre-school managers (Zembat, 1994). She showed in her research that pre-school managers should have qualifications such as taking responsibility, being tolerant, having leadership skills, being reliable, having verbal skills, convincing skills, having self-confidence, being honest, planning and organisation skills. It can be clearly seen that there are limited number of studies about how leadership can influence in best way the early years education sector not only policy but also practice perspective. Therefore, it must be underlined that leadership has not only one-size-fits-all perspective especially in early years. Effective leaders in early years need to be careful that their leadership role is more than regular management which focuses on the present and is dominated by issues of continuity and stability (Rodd, 2006). Management and leadership are different perspectives of the work of early childhood education directors and managers (Waniganayake et al, 2000). Management is distinguished by active involvement in pedagogy, positive relationships, effective communication and high expectations for increasing professionalism (Solly, 2003). West-Burnham (1997) explained that leadership considers vision, mission, provision and transformation of the organizations whereas management considers effective employment of the vision and operational matters, ensuring the organization is carry out effectively and adequately to achieve its goals. Burnes (1996) suggested that the role of a leader contain the roles of a manager and often vice versa. Therefore, managers' and leaders' roles overlap significantly.

"The Effective Leadership and Management Scheme for the Early Years" project (ELMS) is a vehicle for professionals who are in leadership and management roles in early years settings to help them to evaluate their effectiveness (Moyles, 2006). It is argued that the aim of evaluation of leadership and management is to provide the best possible experiences for young children and early educators. Effective leadership and management are principal to the quality agenda. Moyles (2006) highlighted leadership qualities, management skills, professional skills and attributes, and personal characteristics and attitudes. The effective leadership and management scheme (ELMS) aims to ensure that practitioners in these settings adopt the best possible experiences and direction in their work and play and that parent and care-givers can have confidence in the particular settings attended by their children (Moyles, 2006). However, Dunlop's research (2002) on nursery teachers' concepts of leadership, which was conducted in the West of Scotland, found that nursery teachers who are working in nursery schools and nursery classes see themselves with a quality leadership responsibility that is not always admitted by their managers: they distinguished between leadership and management. Both leadership and management characteristics are significant in the context of education, especially early childhood education "where the parents/client and teacher/manager relationship is altering rapidly" (Smith & Langston, 1999). Smith and Langston (1999) identified a manager who operates, regulates, and recognises current policy and practices. However, they stated that a leader is a person who inspires others, empathises with staff, motivates, initiates changes, has targets, makes decisions, provides opportunities to develop, and promotes team spirit. They highlighted that leadership and management characteristics are a necessity in running early childhood education settings. The ELMS adapted and built upon these arguments in order to promote high quality early childhood education.

On the other side, a research study conducted by Solly (2003) found that there were differences in who could be seen as a leader in different types of early childhood settings. In nursery classes, primary schools, private and voluntary settings, respondents saw that there is only one leader who is the official leader (owner, head teacher). Leaders in these settings do not have obvious leadership traits such as being authoritative and restrictive but rather take a collaborative approach to Early years providers play different roles in their leadership according to the setting in which they are based. For instance, Osgood (2004) declared that private-sector providers were more likely to implement business principles to the management of their settings, while those managing voluntary-sector settings were very uncomfortable with an entrepreneurial agenda. Private nursery managers tended to have less collaboration and a less community-

centred approach to leadership because of concerns about competition which put profit making at risk. (Osgood, 2004; Dunlop, 2008). It can be clearly seen that the private early years sector might give priority their trade profit instead of educational profit as high-quality standards which shows this aim is incoherent with ELMS aspects.

The challenges of developing leadership in the early years

In achieving quality improvement, effective Early Years Professionals adapted their approaches to practice leadership in line with their settings' needs and capabilities and to meet the challenges of improving and sustaining the quality of practitioner interaction with children (Department for Education, 2010, p. 6).

There is a real lack of clarity at the national level about the fulfilment of the leadership role at the Early Years Foundation Stage in England, although it has been changing and developing over several years. It was believed that uncertainty of status for the early years led to education for young children being generally thought of as easy and something that any professional could do (Aubrey, 2008). Boardman (2003) claimed that early childhood leaders face challenges arising out of significant, diverse and complex educational and organisational challenges, difficulties with knowledge and relationships. Hence, practitioners who have wide experience and broad knowledge will have immense resources to help them in creating a vision which will inspire staff's support (Rodd, 2006).

Through addressing barriers to effective leadership, Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) indicated why traditional leadership theories do not work in early childhood education. They lay emphasis on the fact that discussions about leadership have been too restricted by the traditional tendency to consider leadership to be the position of the manager of a setting. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) suggest a new model for distributive leadership in which they recommend that many staff can implement a leadership role in the same early childhood pre-school setting at the same time. "In proposing a distributed leadership model for early childhood these researchers are exploring new ways of defining leadership in early childhood: their work reflects changing views of such leadership" (Dunlop, 2008, p. 35). It is necessary to improve the leadership qualifications of teachers in the early years, and it is obvious that leaders who can provide and promote high quality education for children. However, some studies (Bloom, 1997; Muijs et al, 2004; Rodd, 2006) indicate that most of leaders in early years settings in the UK found that there might be defined as focusing more on improvement than development; there was more focus on management than on leadership (Muijs et al, 2004). "Early childhood practitioners' perception and comprehension of and confidence in their leadership role with staff, parents and other professionals are not clear or well developed and this limitation in professional development may describe the difficulties in leadership" (Rodd, 2006). That the responsibilities of leaders and child carers are hard to separate has not helped either the early childhood profession or the society to understand the challenges of the diverse leadership roles in the early childhood education (Caldwell, 2003; Moyles, 2003).

However, Solly (2003) found that the majority of early childhood leaders in her study thought there was a difference in leadership styles in their sector and others. A social constructivist model of learning is often advocated in early years, and Solly argued that leaders in early years education settings have positive learning dispositions to enable others. Participants saw their energy as inspiration, ambition and demand along with being a lifelong learner and having a team culture (Solly, 2003). The link between effective leadership and children's success has been vigorously supported through school inspection. Effective leadership has an understandable impact on pupils' learning (HMIE, 2000). Even though leadership has been found to be central to successful schools, equally there is scope for improving the quality of that leadership (HMIE, 2000), managers often focused overly on the day-to-day activities without being strategic in the longer term. The complementary nature of leadership and management is often assumed; however, in the educational literature a distinction is clearly drawn: leadership is perceived to include vision, based on shared values (Celik, 2000). Leaders are better placed to provide both motivation and direction to colleagues (HMIE, 2000).

It is a significant issue of leadership that the responsibilities and terms are not clear such as professional and pedagogue (Celik, 2000). The terms and their positions of leaders are not very certain. The Ten-Year Childcare Strategy for graduate level leadership or full day care settings as a first step in better conditions, and for the leadership of multi-disciplinary teams, together with an understanding of how young children's learning might be developed through activities in childcare settings, is a skilled and demanding job (Owen, 2006). The implications of leadership in early years settings are important, largely because it is suspected that the relative newness of these settings may not have enabled the establishment of inherent languages to improve and that the rationality boundaries may have not been clearly established (Briggs & Briggs, 2009).

Gender in leadership

Female professionals are traditionally working as leader and manager in early years services (Carli & Eagly, 2011). Dunlop (2008) stated that "the gender of leadership may be a way in which leadership in early childhood is set apart from other sectors of education" (p. 8). That brings to the literature that gender differences put various options for leadership in early years settings. According to Rodd (2006), women, describing the concept and need for leadership, may lack of understanding what leadership may mean in an early childhood service. In this sector the concept of leadership can involve sets of reciprocal relationships (Dunlop, 2005) and these have more in common with the early childhood pedagogical approaches than with traditional business concepts of leadership (Dunlop, 2008). There is a view that leadership styles are different between male and female leaders (Mujis et al, 2004). It is understood that the qualities of agentic leaderships are more suitable for men than women, and the characteristics of effective leadership is confident and male emerge (Hallet, 2013).

In Osgood's study (2004) a high percentage of the sample was female. They reported some concern "based on perceptions that government's push towards commercial models of childcare management favoured masculinised entrepreneurialism over an ethic of care" (Dunlop, 2008, p.8). However, Osgood (2004) found that managers in early childhood settings were prepared to adopt commercial approaches provided that their commitment to care, local community and parents and managers would not be affected and that their emotional investment and commitment to work was taken into account. They wish to encourage their professionalism, whilst maintaining an ethic of care and opposing a form of entrepreneurship that in their view might be a disadvantage to provision (Osgood, 2004) and overly masculinised (Dunlop, 2008). Previous methods and traditional leadership theories may not have been suitable to the early years education area in that they reflected a hierarchical, top-down, male-oriented approach (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001) that was mostly accepted by those in the business world.

The professional inability of female leaders in early years leadership positions to associate themselves with the traditional leadership role is because leadership characteristics are generally considered to include male qualities such as aggression, forcefulness, competition and independence (Scrivens, 2002; Blackmore, 1989). However, more studies related to women's leadership in the early years sector highlight that women see it as empowering others (feminine quality) rather than having power over others (a masculine trait) (Scrivens, 2002; Miller & Cable, 2008, 2011; Aubrey 2008; Lindon & Lindon, 2011). This concept of gender disposition has been discussed by Aubrey (2008) "there is a danger in too closely associating characteristic of leadership with masculine or feminine values and qualities that leads both to stereotyping women and alienating nurturing men" (p. 2). Pearn and Kandola (1993) have shown that 80 percentages of senior managers, when asked to portray a successful manager, described male's traits. This focus on males who are already known as successful managers did not represent all the possible forms of leadership and leaders there might be (Briggs & Briggs, 2009). Heilman's survey (1989) (Cited in Dunlop, 2008) related to the leadership of males and females in workforce, reported that women lack of confidence but they are more sensitive and sociable.

Practice in leadership

Leadership is about personal traits and for this reason about a single person playing a leadership role into which is built concepts of competition and power. This does not overlap easily with the collaborative approaches upon which early childhood practice is based (Thornton, 2005; Dunlop, 2008). Early years prior-to-school services are often non-hierarchical and most employees are women (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Rodd, 2006). This clearly explains why distributive leadership models are most preferred in early childhood settings. There is a strong case to adapt different form of leadership as a means of dividing multiple services and complicated engagement (Aubrey, 2008).

The early childhood sector is developing and a large proportion of families now take advantage of pre-school education (Scottish Executive, 2004). Childcare and early education settings are different, and include nursery classes, primary schools, private and voluntary settings (Dunlop, 2002; Muijs et al, 2004; Solly, 2003). These diverse settings generally have contrasting philosophies, structures and a range of quality models. In order to provide high quality education in early years and to sustain it, leaders need to be aware of the curriculum and team spirit and need to know to practice where it is necessity.

Hallet and Roberts-Holmes (2010) described professional leader as '*leaders of learning*'. Kagan and Hallmark (2001) identified a number of key Early Years Professionals' (EYPs) leadership attitudes, including community leadership and pedagogical leadership. Heikka and Waniganayake's research (2011) found that EYPs have two roles of leading practice and acting as change agents in early years settings. It has been examined how the research on pedagogical leadership in early childhood education requires to be "informed by approaches that are sensitive to the ways in which EYPs develop others' leadership by distributing responsibilities" (Department for Education, 2010, p. 16). Heikka and Waniganayake related leading practice to the concept of pedagogical leadership, which they defined as:

"...taking responsibility for the shared understanding of the aims and methods of learning and teaching of young children from birth to 8 years... teachers have a significant role and responsibility to ensure that the educational pedagogy employed matches children's interests, abilities and need" (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011: 500).

The link between pedagogical leadership and distributed leadership has considerable value because, in order to be effective, pedagogy has to be shared, communicated and evaluated throughout a setting. Hence, pedagogical leadership has a collaborative and co-operative function (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) found that, in effective settings, the leadership characteristics of contextual literacy and commitment to cooperation and to the development of children's learning were vigorously expressed. Practices of effective leadership described in the research contained identifying and articulating a collective vision; providing shared understandings, meanings and goals; encouraging reflection, and facilitating parent and community partnerships (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni 2007).

Traditionally leadership in the early years has been interwoven with individual skills characteristics and personal traits in the leader (Nivala & Hujala, 2002). Recently in England, the National College for School Leadership is actively providing professional development opportunities. As a part of its Community Leadership Strategy it has presented as the first national schedule to address the requisitions of leaders within multi-agency early years settings. The qualification is known as the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership, it acknowledges that leadership in the early years has a particular point, especially as integrated services improve and combined staffing models progress to be an attribute of early years sector (Dunlop, 2008).

Conclusion

This paper examined and illustrated the works of researchers that have influenced the understanding of leadership and use of effective leadership in the early years sector, especially on

the UK policy basement. Quality early childhood education and leadership in educational settings are parallel elements. Even the concept of leadership in the early years has only recently emerged; there are many benefits of using effective leadership such as to ensure a fruitful early childhood experience and provision of quality services. Training is essential to provide relevant knowledge and skills for effective leadership roles in early years services (Sylva et al, 2004).

The first step of the effective leadership is the skill to communicate with others, identify real and reachable goals, observe and praise success, support a team and inspire staff to communicate within early years settings; the focus is on developing relationships between children, families and early years education providers. Leadership and management in the early years assume great importance in this context. Leadership traits, management abilities, professional skills, personality and attitudes are vital to promote professionalism in the sector. For this reason, management and leadership may be carried out together. In relation to gender and leadership, it has been discussed that female leaders are more prepared to take on management roles and, in such roles, they might show more empathy with staff, other professionals, parents and the wider community. Male leaders on the other hand have been found more likely to work with a group and they feel that they have more authority in their job. To sum up, there might be some strategies to develop leadership skills in the early years sector to provide quality educational provisions and educational management such as encouraging, engaging, supporting and building relationship with families and educators as a working team. It is important and crucial that these areas in leadership policy need to developed and involved into the early years education setting as it an emerging sector provides children with high-quality standards. This critical review aimed to put an emphasis on lack of strength of in-depth studies in Turkey including leadership policy in early years, also aimed to find a way to encourage, engage and support educators' leadership throughout their experiences in this sector.

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Genişletilmiş Özeti

Giriş

Taggart ve arkadaşlarının (2003) yaptıkları çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre yüksek kaliteli bir erken çocukluk eğitimi anti-sosyal ve anksiyete davranışları sergileyen çocukların bu davranışlarının gözlemlenmesinin azaldığını vurgulamıştır. Bu yüzden erken çocukluk eğitim sürecinde liderler tarafından çocuklara yüksek nitelikli deneyimlerin sağlanması önemlidir. Erken çocukluk eğitiminde, liderliğin etkili şekilde kullanıldığı kurumlarda sorunlu davranışların giderilmesi gözlemlenmiştir (Pugh, 2006). Birleşik Krallık hükümeti, liderlerin gelişim eğitimi ve çocuklar üzerindeki etkilerinin incelenmesi ve sürdürülmesi için 1997 yılından beri yatırım yapmaktadır (Andreae & Matthews, 2006). Bu derleme, erken çocukluk döneminde liderlik anlayışını etkileyen ve şekillendiren araştırmacıların çalışmalarını inceleyecektir.

Erken çocuklukta etkili liderlik

Siraj Blatchford ve Manni'nin (2007) çalışmasında erken çocukluk uygulamalarında etkili liderlerin özellikleri şu şekilde sıralanmıştır:

- iş birliği vizyonuna sahip olduğunu ifade edebilir ve bunu detaylı tanımlamak
- iş ortamında düşüncelerin ve hedeflerin paylaşımını sağlamak
- etkili iletişim
- düşünmeye teşvik etmek

- sürekli gelişime bağlı kalmak
- uygulamayı izleme ve değerlendirmek
- öğrenen takım kültürü kurmak
- ebeveyn ve toplumdaki diğer kişiler için kolaylık ve imkân sağlamak
- -liderlik ve yönetimdeki dengeleri sağlamak

Yöneticilerin ve öğretmenlerin bu gibi liderlik özelliklerini olmasının okuldaki pedagojik atmosferi de olumlu destekler. İngiltere'de yapılan uzamsal çalışmalar da bu yaklaşımın üzerinde durulmuştur ve sistem içinde benimsemıştır. Bilişsel gelişimi ve yaratıcılığı şekillendirmek için çocukların hayal dünyaları desteklenmeli ve onlara kendi başlarına problemlerle mücadele etme şansları verilmelidir. Öğretmenler bu beceriler için sınıflarda gerekli ortamları hazırlamalı ve çocuklara gösternmelidirler (Montie, Xiang & Schweinhart, 2006). Bu ise liderlik özelliği gelişmiş öğretmenlerin özelliklerinden birisidir.

Liderlik ve Yöneticilik

Liderlik ve yönetim kavramları arasında ayırım yapmak zordur. Bu iki element doğal olarak birbirine bağlıdır ve iç içe geçmiştir. Bununla birlikte, liderlik ve yönetim kavram sallaşması erken çocukluk eğitimi ortamlarında tam olarak keşfedilmemiştir (Moyle, 2006). Ancak, Türkiye'deki alan yazısında çoğulukla liderlik ile ilgili olarak yönetici algısı üzerinde durulan çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmalarla, okul ortamında karşılaşılan sorunlar (Bute ve Balci, 2010), okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin düşünceleri doğrultusunda okul öncesi yöneticilerinin nitelikleri (Susmak ve Hacifazlıoğlu, 2013), okul öncesi öğretmenleri ve yöneticilerin erken yaşlarda düşünme becerisi öğretimine ilişkin algıları (Akbiyik ve Kalkan Ay, 2014) konuları üzerinde durulduğu görülür. Müdür ve liderlik aynı değildir, ancak yönetici okullarda prosedürü yöneten bir rol iken, liderlik, birini veya bir şeyi daha iyi etkileyen bir tür çalışma tarzı olarak görülebilen bir beceridir. Okul öncesi yöneticilerinin liderlik becerilerine bakan Zembat (1994) tarafından yapılmış bir araştırma daha vardır. Araştırmada okul öncesi yöneticilerinin sorumluluk alma, hoşgörülü olma, liderlik becerilerine sahip olma, güvenilir olma, sözlü becerilere sahip olma, ikna etme becerileri, kendine güven, dürüst olma, planlama ve organizasyon becerileri gibi niteliklere sahip olması gerektiğini gösterilmiştir. Liderliğin erken yaş eğitim sektörünü sadece gerekli dokümanlarla değil uygulama perspektifini de en iyi şekilde nasıl etkileyebileceği konusunda sınırlı sayıda çalışma olduğu açıkça görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, özellikle erken çocukluk eğitiminde liderliğin herkese uygun tek bir bakış açısına sahip olmadığından altı çizilmelidir. Erken çocukluk döneminde, etkili liderlerin, liderlik rollerinin bugüne odaklanan ve süreklilik ve istikrar konularına hâkim olduğu, düzenli yönetimden daha fazlası olduğuna dikkat etmeleri gereklidir (Rodd, 2006).

Erken çocukluklığında gelişen liderliğin zorlukları

İngiltere'deki erken çocukluk eğitimi dönemindeki liderlik rolünün yerine getirilmesi konusunda ulusal düzeyde gerçek bir netlik yoktur, ancak son yirmi yılda değişip ve gelişmektedir. Boardman (2003), erken çocukluk eğitim sektöründe çalışan liderlerinin önemli, çeşitli ve karmaşık eğitsimsel ve örgütsel zorluklardan, bilgi ve ilişkilerle ilgili zorluklardan kaynaklanan zorluklarla karşılaştığını belirtmiştir. Bu nedenle, tecrübe ve iyi alan bilgisine sahip liderlerin, eğitim ortamındaki personele ilham verecek bir vizyon oluşturmada onlara yardımcı olması ve gerekli imkanları sunması beklenir (Rodd, 2006). Eğitim sektöründe liderliğin ne olduğunu hangi şartları taşıdığını ve pozisyonlarının net olmaması en bilinen zorluklardır.

Liderlikte cinsiyet

Erken çocukluk eğitim sektöründeki kadın liderler kendilerini geleneksel liderlik rolüyle ilişkilendirmiştir, liderlik özelliklerinin genellikle erkek nitelikleri içerdigini vurgulamışlardır (Scrivens, 2002; Blackmore, 1989). Bununla birlikte, erken çocukluk eğitim sektöründe kadın liderliği ile ilgili daha fazla araştırma, kadınların bunu başkaları üzerinde güç sahibi olmaktan (erkek nitelik) ziye başkalarını güçlendirmek (kadınsı nitelik) olarak gördüklerini vurgulamaktadır (Scrivens, 2002; Miller ve Cable, 2008, 2011; Aubrey 2008; Lindon ve Lindon, 2011).

Liderlik Uygulamaları

Gelişmekte olan erken çocukluk eğitim sektörü sayesinde ailelerin büyük bir kısmı okul öncesi eğitimden yararlanmaktadır (Scottish Executive, 2004). Erken çocukluk eğitim ortamlarının genellikle farklı felsefeleri, yapıları ve modelleri vardır. Çocuklara ilk yıllarda kaliteli eğitim vermek ve bunun devamlılığını sağlamak için liderlerin kurumlarda uygulanan müfredatların, yönetmeliklerin ve daha da önemlisi ekip ruhunun farkındalığına sahip olmaları ve gerektiği yerde bilgilerini kullanmaları gereklidir.

Sonuç

Bu makale, liderlik anlayışını ve özellikle İngiltere'nin bu konuya ilgili dokümanlarını ve erken çocukluk eğitim sektöründe etkili liderlik kullanımını içeren çalışmalarını incelemiştir. Kaliteli erken çocukluk eğitimi ve eğitim ortamlarında liderlik birbirlerine paralel unsurlardır. Verimli ve kaliteli bir erken çocukluk deneyiminin yanı sıra standartları yüksek bir eğitim hizmeti sağlamakta liderlik okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında önemli bir unsurdur.