



ICSEI

International Congress for
School Effectiveness and Improvement



UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE
INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS
AVANZADOS EN EDUCACIÓN **IE**

CiAE
CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN
AVANZADA EN EDUCACIÓN

Symposium: Leadership in Chilean Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): towards an exploration of its features and challenges

María José Opazo, Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Xavier Vanni & Loreto de la Fuente
Centre for Advanced Research in Education (CIAE) Institute of Advanced
Studies in Education
University of Chile

11th January, 2023
Viña del Mar, Chile

📍 Periodista José Carrasco Tapia N° 75 • Santiago • Chile

☎ (56-2) 2978 2762 ✉ contacto@ciae.uchile.cl 🌐 www.ciae.uchile.cl

Introduction

- ECEC has been acknowledged as a key factor in children's development in their early stages of life (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), alongside other benefits associated with its role in decreasing social inequalities (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Noboa & Urzúa, 2010).

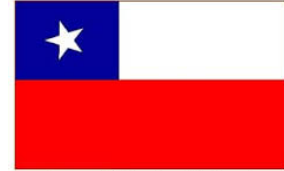


- While there is no consensus in the international literature about what it means to provide quality ECEC, the role of principals has been highlighted because, through their leadership practices, they can foster work environments in educational communities that can contribute to generating favourable learning spaces for children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2006).
- Thus, the topic of leadership at this educational level becomes especially relevant.
- However, the evidence on this topic exists mainly concerning school education, being ECEC less explored (Hujala et al., 2016). Moreover, the evidence in Latin America on leadership in the ECEC context is scarce (Opazo, de la Fuente, Valenzuela, & Vanni, 2022; Falabella, Barco, Fernández, Figueroa, & Poblete Núñez, 2022).



Research context: Early Childhood Education and Care in Chile

Chilean ECEC is predominantly funded with public resources (OECD 2017) through its provision in the following institutions:



Nurseries administrated by The National Board of Nurseries (**JUNJI**, for its acronym in Spanish) and **Integra Foundation** (Ministerio de Educación 2001). In those nurseries, children from **6 months to 4 years old attend**. There are private nurseries as well, in less proportion though.

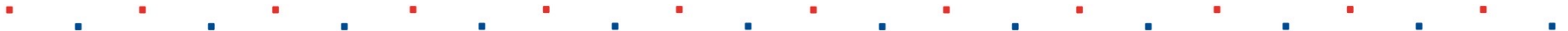
In addition, ECEC is also provided in **schools**: those are managed by municipalities or by private organisations, publicly funded by the State through vouchers for children who attend kinder and pre-kindergarten, this is, **children of 5-6 years old**.



Research context: Early Childhood Education and Care in Chile

Most of the Chilean ECEC provision is publicly funded, so private ECEC centres represent approximately 10% of the total, according to recent data from the Ministry of Education (2020).

Usually, in ECEC Chilean nurseries there are: a principal, who leads the centre; ECEC teachers, who plan and deliver pedagogical experiences to children, and teaching assistants, a person who assist them on a daily basis. In the schools, instead of a ECEC principal, in some cases there are ECEC academic coordinators who lead the early childhood education in the school.



Symposium aim



Centre for Advanced Research in Education (CIAE) Institute of Advanced Studies
in Education
University of Chile

This symposium explores Chilean Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) leadership's features and challenges identified by a research team in the Centre for Advanced Research in Education at the University of Chile. We would like to take this opportunity to present our current projects and the results of the research line we have developed over the last couple of years.



Symposium structure

1. The Framework for Good Management and Leadership in Early Childhood Education, presented by Juan Pablo Valenzuela.
2. You are stuck here, at the office: Chilean ECEC principals' pedagogical leadership in JUNJI and Integra Foundation, presented by Xavier Vanni
3. Effective Practices of Leadership among Chilean ECEC Leaders, presented by María-José Opazo
4. Q&A from the audience



1

The Framework for Good Management and Leadership in Early Childhood Education, presented by Juan Pablo Valenzuela



The Framework for Good Management and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

JP Valenzuela, L. De la Fuente, X. Vanni, & MJ Opazo
Viña del Mar, January 2023



October 2019: Project “Elaboration of a Framework for Good Management and Leadership in Early Childhood Education”

- *Which allows defining dimensions and practices of leadership, and also fundamentals skills, personal resources, actions and knowledge for developing the leadership in ECE, and permits to orient continuous self development and training processes, and reflects particularities of this level of education (definition from Ministry of Education/Vice Ministry of Early Education, 2019)*

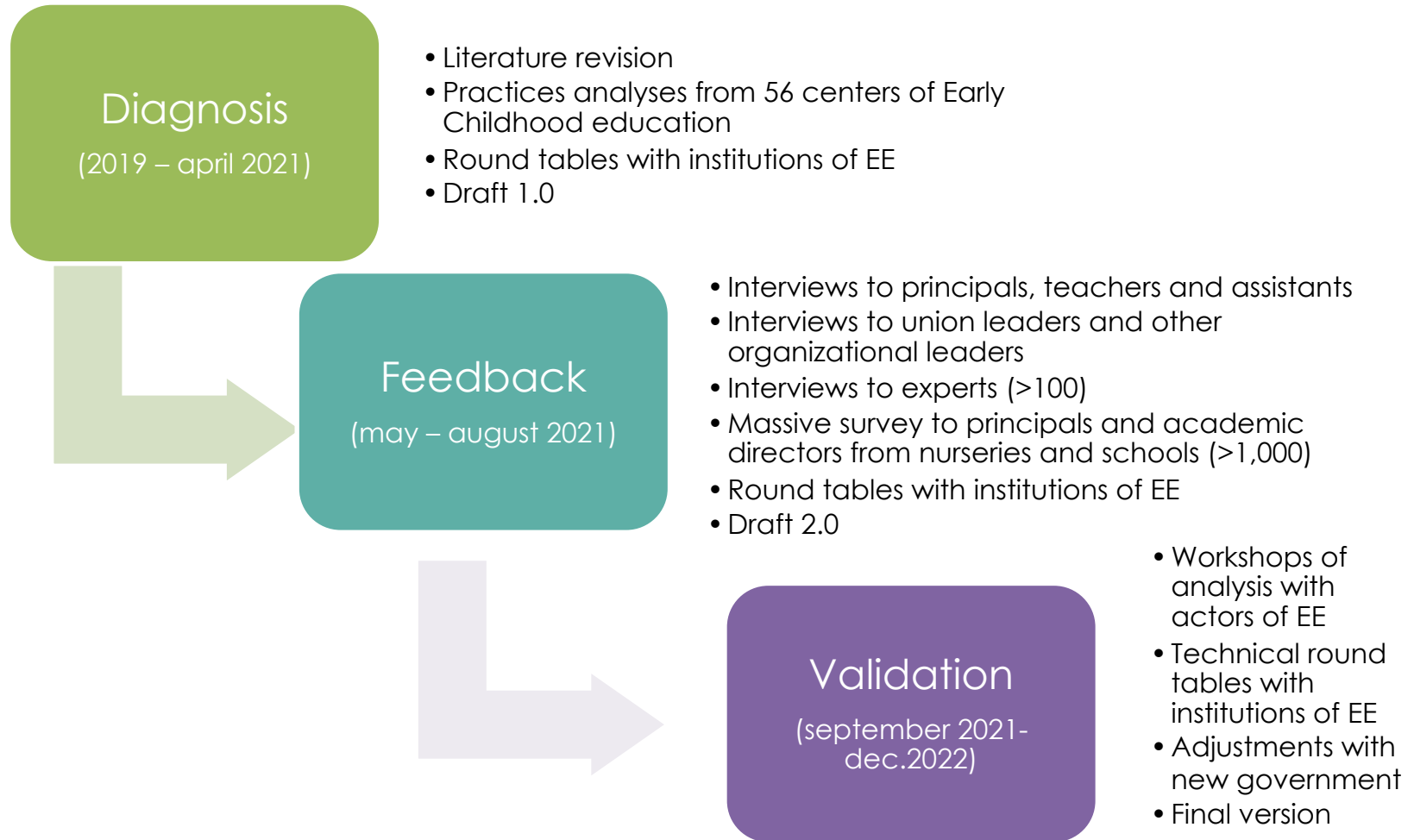


Relevance of a Framework for GML in General and for ECE

- It **allows defining the practices, skills and knowledge** for leadership development in the corresponding sector.
- It **guides the practices of a certain type of actor**, in addition to the training, evaluation and development processes associated with its role.
- It **integrates common capacities and practices** of a group of actors in a certain sector, and **orders, classifies and hierarchizes them**.
- It **aligns and generates synergies in the policy instruments** aimed at improving managerial capacities.
- In the case of ECE, it **closes a gap in this type of orientation, since the MBD in school education already has two versions**, and has not considered a particular view of EC education.
- It should be used in different social and institutional contexts, and for different levels of ECE



Gradual, participative and collective process, including all key actors from Chilean Early Childhood Education and experts. Systematic validation and using a language makes sense to actors





We conformed an Alliance with the institutions of the Early Childhood level and educational communities



What is specific to leadership in Early Childhood education? (CIAE, 2018; CIAE, 2022)

Few international studies about leadership for ECE, but some particular issues for this level

- **Holistic process** that involves more than the leader: the organization and everyone who has an influence on the implementation of educational practices in Early Childhood (families, tutors, other schools, networks, etc.)..
- **“Caring leadership” (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014)**: the focus is not only learning, but also care, well-being and development. The leader manages to harmoniously develop the field of well-being and care for children, and the pedagogical field.
- Search for a **pedagogical purpose through play and care.**
- Importance of a balance between **emotional intelligence and practical intelligence. And large demand of administrative duties.**
- **Strong connection with the** community in which the nursery/school is located. Situational leadership or contextual literacy (Southworth 1998, 2004). **Relevance of the participation and involvement of families.**
- **High feminization of the career**, with low salaries and professional status (associated with caring for people).

What we learned from International Frameworks/Orientations about ECE

- There are different instruments for ECE (Standards, Framework or Orientations for the level)
- 7 instruments from 6 countries (Malta, Australia, United States-Illinois-, New Zealand, Scotland and England)
- All of them suggest practices and skills (with different deep level) than if they are implemented could improve ECE
- They mention characteristics of **effective leadership**: almost all frameworks have: **pedagogical monitoring and evaluation; formation of teams and professional learning community; & set a collective vision**
- 4/7 mention the importance **of the implementation of practices for professional development in service and the establishment of alliances with parents**. Only 3/7 **management of interpersonal relationships and effective communication**. Only 2 use of **evidence and networking**
- **No particular consideration of rural center or for specific groups (eg. hospital centers)**

Framework Structure

The MBDLEP describes several **dimensions of practices and personal resources issues** which orient management and leadership



Components

i. Practices: : set of actions carried out by a person or group of people, which responds to the needs and objectives of an institution, in a particular way, depending on the relationships between the people who work in it and its context (Spillane, 2005).

ii. Personal resources: attributes of people (they can be individual or collective) that are at the base of action and decision-making, to the extent that they give meaning and purpose to practices.

People or groups make decisions and promote initiatives motivated by principles, based on knowledge and through skills.

People or teams decide which **practices** to deploy and through which actions, depending on a series of **internal factors**, such as their values, cognitive processes, motivations, feelings of self-efficacy, abilities, optimism, knowledge and experience (Day et al. , 2007)..



Framework's Six Dimensions of Leadership

1. Building a shared vision and culture

2. Nurturing relationships with families and the community

3. Leading pedagogical leadership and the generation of learning environment

4. Safeguard children's well-being

5. Leading the professional development of pedagogical teams

6. Managing the organization, the work environment and its resources



Principles that guide the leadership of managers in ECE

Good relationship and well-being

Equity

Singularity

Inclusion and non discrimination

Ethics and profesional development

Trust and probity



Skills intrapersonal and interpersonal which are basic for leadership and make the actions possible



Knowledge that supports the actions and decisions of leaders

- About International agreements , national policies and normatives about ECE and childhood protection
- About Educational improvement, good management and leadership

Also are including several good authentic experiences and practices for every dimension

From 56 Early Childhood centers analyzed at the first stage of Framework elaboration (example about Dimension D Safeguard Children Well-Being)

"Generating positive environments for good treatment with children and their families"

The director visualizes the care and well-being of the children as a central element that guides her practice and that of the pedagogical team. Its priority is the good treatment of staff, families, children, creating a positive and motivating environment for daily work. In this sense, it states that it is always attentive to the needs of boys and girls, seeking strategies to improve treatment and daily care.

In this regard, the attachment that aunts generate with children and their families stands out. This is expressed in concrete actions and important details, for example, that at the end of the day, they deliver the boys and girls combed and clean. Cleanliness, therefore, has been an aspect that families highlight and is one of the reasons why parents declare that they keep their boys and girls in the nursery, even in some cases, it has been the main cause for return to the educational center.

As part of good treatment, maintaining respectful and understandable communication with the family is a factor that generates a positive environment and reinforces the strategies and actions for the care of children. The director, educators and technicians are aware that good and timely daily communication with the family allows them to have important information on the development of children. For example, if the child ate breakfast, if he has already changed his diaper, etc. On the other hand, they point out that good communication allows them to guide and model families in improving their parenting skills and their routines, so that the children at home eat healthy, wash themselves or are stimulated with activities that reinforce the activities they do. in the nursery.

(Sala Cuna, VTF, Ovalle, Coquimbo Region)

Main strengths of the Framework of the Good Management and Leadership in ECE in the voice of actors: Legitimacy and relevance (from several workshops and surveys)

- Good reception of the Framework: **a necessary and valuable instrument for the system.**
- Its construction **starts from the daily reality of real leaders and teams.**
- **It is comprehensive and gives a complete proposal.**
- The **practices stated are familiar and close to their daily work** (they are reflected in the Framework).
- It contributes **to give visibility to the work carried out in NT in schools**, from the perspective of management.
- It **establishes a floor and a shared route for the cycle as a whole**, independent of the administrative dependency, level, territory and modality of the centers.
- **It validates central pedagogical strategies for ECEC, such as those that give priority to play as learning process and that consider the interests of boys and girls.**



Main challenges identified for the implementation process

- Challenges in its daily application and in that it serves as a reference for action
 - Learning from the experience of the Framework for the School System (1st version).
- Learning about experience at ECE in schools (a level with less development)
- Connect it with teachers' college programs and with continuous training programs for leaders, teachers and technicians in early education.
- Identify better practices and experiences (systematically include new ones), and orient to continuous improvement of the Framework.

Muchas Gracias!



2

***You are stuck here, at the office:* Chilean ECEC principals' pedagogical leadership in JUNJI and Integra Foundation, presented by Xavier Vanni**





You are stuck here, at the office: Chilean ECEC principals' pedagogical leadership in JUNJI and Integra Foundation

María-José Opazo, Loreto de la Fuente, Juan Pablo Valenzuela & Xavier Vanni

To cite this article: María-José Opazo, Loreto de la Fuente, Juan Pablo Valenzuela & Xavier Vanni (2022): *You are stuck here, at the office:* Chilean ECEC principals' pedagogical leadership in JUNJI and Integra Foundation, European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, DOI: [10.1080/1350293X.2022.2031247](https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2031247)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2031247>



Published online: 02 Feb 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



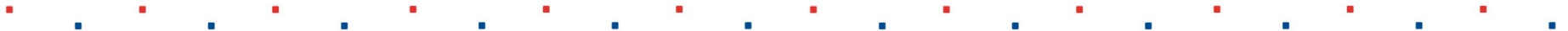
View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Motivation and Objectives

- This paper aims to explore Chilean ECEC principals' pedagogical leadership, with the purpose to generate knowledge about ECEC leadership for the Latin American context, particularly for the Chilean case, where we have scarce evidence about this topic.
- In general, ECEC leadership has been an underdeveloped research area (Hujala & Eskelinen 2013), in comparison with primary or secondary education. ECEC leadership has been commonly described as holistic or comprehensive; involves not only the principal but also the entire staff, families and anyone related to the implementation of pedagogical practices.



- Also, it is characterised by a strong sense of vocation or passion for children's care, learning and development; a caring leadership (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet 2014). A caring leadership refers to an ethics of care, which implies establishing close relationships based on concern, care, and attention towards children, their parents, and others involved in children's learning and development.
- The research also draws upon the concept of distributed pedagogical leadership, (Heikka, 2019), which can be defined through five dimensions: i) enhancing shared consciousness of vision and strategies between the stakeholders; ii) distributing responsibilities for pedagogical leadership; iii) distributing and clarifying power relationships between the stakeholders; iv) distributing the enactment of pedagogical improvement and developing strategies for distributed leadership.



Methodology

- A qualitative methodology approach was used to describe actors' perspectives and subjective experiences (Creswell 2013) related to the ECEC setting's leadership, specifically a multiple case study.
- A purposive sample was used that included 13 nurseries from two public providers: JUNJI and Integra Foundation, since most of the children enrolled in ECEC attend their nurseries (82%). All of them placed in Santiago, the capital city.
- Analysed institutional documents of each nurseries (institutional educational project, protocols, regulations, etc.).



- We used semi-structured interviews with principal (13), teachers (26), teaching assistants (26), and parents (26).
- In addition, we used shadowing technique to observe principals in their daily work activities, during one full day.
- The empirical material was subjected to a content analysis made for each of the 13 cases, this paper presents the results of one piece of the cross-case análisis.



Photo: Revista “Niñez hoy”, Number 1, September 2021.

The Administrative Work

All the principals said that one of the most time consuming tasks they have to do is related to the administrative work. Few nurseries have administrative assistants – such as secretaries, so they have to deal with all the administrative work.

This administrative workload emanated from different sources: from the sponsor institutions, JUNJI and Integra Foundation head offices, but also daily tasks related to human resources management such as leaves and permits. It's includes answering central headquarters' the requests they received, managing staff's permits and providing emotional support to them, and respond to unforeseen events and the unscheduled meetings with parents.

“You are stuck here (at the office), in the computer (...) I feel our duty get lost here, doing all these requirements, you lose time, one should have someone to do all this administrative paperwork, so one could be more involved in the pedagogy”. (Principal)

In that context, according to the principals' perspectives, it is difficult for them to carry out pedagogical leadership, primarily because of the lack of time they have in their daily working experiences.



The focus on children's well-being

After administrative work, the principals dedicate a significant part of their time to efforts related to the well-being of the children. Principals said that their leadership is strongly focused on the bond they have with families and the management related to children's well-being and safety measures:

So, I really do invest a lot of time in teamwork and the families; when there are problems, some unforeseen situations, I talk very much with the families, I invite them to reflect, give them examples, and the teamwork, always. So, that is the constant here, always; so, I do invest much time. (Principal)

In the last years, it has been an intensification of concern, policies and protocols to following children requiring support due to domestic violence and mistreating situations. All those procedures are led by principals, through family interviews, ECEC teachers' reports, and so forth. Also, principals can manage conflictive issues that sometimes occurred, so conflicts do not arise on a bigger scale.

What I acknowledge the most of the principal is the fact that she, always, has been involved in the topic of good treatment in children. For instance, here, we have had awful families, very bad, neglected children, etc., and she [the principal] has been there; moreover, she has rescued children from their homes. She has rescued them from drugs by taking those children to her home...(Teaching assistants)

The Pedagogical Work

ECEC principals' leadership is based on limited space to develop pedagogical leadership due to a high administrative workload.

In both institutions, once a month principal leads a meeting with teachers focused on pedagogical reflection through group dynamics in which different issues are discussed. Teaching assistants are not considered part of the teamwork who works directly with the principals.

“She (the principal) leads the meeting and says ‘let’s start the meeting, here is the blackboard’ and she wrote down all the topics to be discussed in the meeting (...) all of us are saying our opinions, with ideas, brainstorm ideas, seeing how and when those ideas will be made, if they will be doing in the morning, the afternoon, if we would invite parents or the local policy, and so forth”. (Teaching assistants)

However, in meetings, sometimes besides discussing related pedagogical issues, other administrative themes are raised. For instance, the coordination of future activities or the nursery’s maintenance. In that sense, principals said that the pedagogical leadership is divided between them and the ECEC teachers or carried out mainly by ECEC teachers, depending the administrative support that the principal has.



Conclusions and Recommendations

- It is difficult for principals to be pedagogical leaders due to the lack of time, mostly because of the administrative work they have to carry out. They spend a considerable amount of time in their offices, rather than in the classroom, with educators and children supporting them pedagogically.
- The significant amount of paperwork, alongside the hierarchical structures of the institutions which administrate ECEC settings, has led to a datafication of ECEC (Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury 2016).
- There is a strong component of caring leadership in the principals. The ethics of care plays a key role. Caring and concern for children's care is a discourse, accompanied by concrete practices.

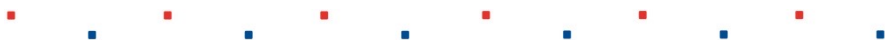


Conclusions and Recomendations

- There is a distribution of responsibilities for pedagogical leadership, but only between ECEC teachers, not with the teaching assistants, and even less with families. Collaborative practices are present in the ECEC centres, alongside incipient spaces for developing a pedagogical leadership in the pedagogical meetings.
- We suggested from the level of policies that, professional development initiatives, orientations and opportunities related to pedagogical leadership should be developed. In addition, resources should be allocated for automation and further standardisation through digital technologies of the administrative procedures.
- Initiatives such as The Community of Learning of the Educational Unit meetings (CAUE) in JUNJI and the Training Evenings in Integra Foundation should be promoted strongly since they represent one of the few opportunities for discussing pedagogical issues in the educational communities.

3

Effective Practices of Leadership among Chilean ECEC Leaders presented by María-José Opazo



Introduction

- This presentation aims to explore effective practices of leadership that Chilean Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) principals carry out in nurseries and schools.
- As it has been mentioned through this symposium, leadership in ECEC has been commonly defined as more holistic and comprehensive in comparison with school leadership.
- So, in this presentation, we want to explore the particularities between ECEC leadership in nurseries and schools.



Methodology

- Research design is qualitative, at an exploratory level.
- Through multiple case studies (Stake, 2006) of nine nurseries and five schools.
- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the principals (N=1), ECEC teachers (N=4) and teaching assistants (N=4) of each educational setting.
- Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the interviews (Schulz, 2013) were conducted through Zoom and Google Meet.



A note about “effective practices”

- Research design is qualitative, at an exploratory level.
- So, practices are defined by and based on the subjectivities of participants.
- Practices were identified as effective for the principal and the staff.
- We triangulate the data with the rest of the team so we can validate those practices.
- We think these could be useful for other nurseries and schools.



Findings

- Findings show that there are significant differences between the effective practices identified in ECEC leadership between both contexts, nurseries and schools.
- For instance, in nurseries, there is a stronger focus on the pedagogical principles of early childhood education (i.e. the use of playful methodologies, the child as the protagonist of his own learning, relationship with families, and so forth).
- In contrast, even though that focus is also present in schools, leaders have to negotiate it with school requirements.



Photo: Revista "Niñez hoy", Number 1, September 2021.



NURSERIES LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES:

The relationship with families and the community is a crucial factor

One of the studied nurseries has a “Cultural Rescue Project” based on the history of the commune where the nursery is placed, funded by a regional culture fund. This project implies working with the older adults of the educational community, who go to the nursery to share their experience and history with the children.

So, we applied to the regional culture fund project and we have been awarded, and I remember that a local authority asked me “but how is aunty Millycent is going to teach history to the toddlers and babies?”, I mean, he couldn't believe it, how...?, he asked me “but how are you going to do it?”, so I stood up and explained him how we were going to do it (...) It was wonderful, we worked with the community elderlies who went to the nursery to tell stories, to tell stories to the children, to play the guitar, to listen to a record player... you work all the senses with children in this methodology (Nursery principal).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES:

Practices related to the development of a shared culture within the school: “*be included in the school*”

For the leader, it is very relevant that preschool education is part of the school and that its artistic seal is also reflected in the 5-year-olds' levels. From her perspective, the proactive attitude that must be taken regarding the issue of inclusion or consideration of ECEC in the shared culture of the school is to generate the actions to make it happen.

We try, for example, as I told you, to participate in most of the initiatives that the school also takes. If the school says "we have an artistic profile", we also somehow try to implement it into our routines. Now, how did we do it? What we did was request to the management that we could count on the dance teacher for a weekly class, that we could also count on the music teacher for a weekly class, and so forth (ECEC academic coordinator from school).

- **How ECEC leaders exert their leadership differs, whether the leader works in nurseries or schools.**
- **In that context, it could be argued that time and spaces for reflection are crucial elements to achieving leadership's effectiveness by identifying one's own and context's weaknesses and limitations, alongside sharing experiences with others (Sharp et al., 2012).**
- **A challenge is worth to considering as well: the diverse contexts in which the work of early years leaders is situated, and the reality of the families and children with whom they work.**
- **The urgency to respond and satisfy the several demands that principals receive from the context appears as a constant challenge when exercising leadership (Nupponen, 2006)**



📍 Periodista José Carrasco Tapia N° 75 ▪ Santiago ▪ Chile

☎ (56-2) 2978 2762 ✉ contacto@ciae.uchile.cl 🌐 www.ciae.uchile.cl

