Constructing a Shared Understanding of Leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Leadership theories in ECEC have not adequately considered the histories or complexities in the sector. These complexities can be attributed to a confusion of purpose, fuelled by a turbulent policy context and a wide range of providers in a childcare market that lacks parity. The uniqueness of ECEC requires a qualitative, interpretative and participatory methodology to illuminate previously ignored nuances in understanding the purpose and leadership in ECEC. Through listening to a range of stories and constructing narratives of lived realities and leadership expertise, this research will go beyond previous explorations of ECEC leadership, offering a more thoughtful understanding of what leadership in ECEC really is all about.

My unique ECEC position

Importance of ECEC

Importance of Leadership

My vision for this research

Policy, funding and regulation

- Detailed timeline
  - For the key events over the past 100 years that have all contributed to why we are where we are in the ECEC sector.

  - Tool used to understand the sources of policy.
  - Problem stream, political stream and policy stream. Policy windows, torrents and entrepreneurs too.

- Hall (1993)
  - Tool used to understand consequences of policy streams. 1st, 2nd or 3rd order changes altering the measures, instruments or hierarchy of goals.

- Quality
  - This term is used throughout, particularly in regulation documents and literature. But it is not neutral or objective and I will problematise it.

Purpose

- Explore perpetuating tensions: Romanticism vs Entrepreneurialism Education vs Care (Educare)
  - Support the labour workforce or supporting child development
  - Maybe it is all of them?

Pedagogy

- Explore perpetuating tensions: ORF-state vs PRF-workforce

- Bernstein (2000)
  - Leading pedagogical approaches
  - Development of EYFS/curriculum
  - Play vs School readiness

Provision

- The childcare market developing:
  - MacMillan vs Owen (The debate!)
  - Nursery school vs Nursery class
  - Growth of more types of provision
  - The Current uneven playing field.

Personnel

ECEC personnel are marginalised, not only in the education sector by those in the same profession, but also through the perceptions of the wider community. This can be attributed a lack of pay, issues with qualifications, gender, and perceived knowledge needed to work in ECEC. With this in mind, there needs to be more advocacy and activism from the sector to make its own case to the public and government, this is a leadership responsibility that I believe should be shared in some way by all stakeholders.

Leadership in ECEC

Existing literature on leadership in ECEC suggests a confusion of purpose is present. There is a lack of empirical research available and what is available does not adequately consider the workforce. Hope has been hung on pedagogical leadership, a relatively new to idea in ECEC. However, this disregards huge parts of a leaders role. There are many shortcomings to be explored and exploited in a critical and productive way.

Interpretative

- Within a social constructivist, post-modernist/structuralist paradigm, complexity is inevitable. I plan to elucidate this phenomenological complexity.

Narrative-Participatory

- Clandinin’s work on narrative construction will help to map part of the landscape with a range of stories.
  - Hearing the voice of the workforce and constructing a narrative of their lived realities.

Methods

- Walking and unstructured interviews.
  - 3 research questions...
  - Prompts will be environment, professional dialogue and other core themes.

Participants

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<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>What are individuals lived experiences of the purpose of ECEC? (Purpose of environment and professional conversations - secret, sacred and cover stories)</th>
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<td>RQ2</td>
<td>What are individuals lived experiences of leadership in ECEC? (What are their leadership responsibilities and what is it like to lead in ECEC)</td>
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<td>RQ3</td>
<td>What leadership expertise is needed for ECEC provision? (going beyond phenomenological exploration to construct a narrative around leadership in ECEC)</td>
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