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Early childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

There are clear links between quality early childhood education (ECE) and positive outcomes for children and increasing research reveals the link between effective leadership of early childhood centres and quality ECE within centres. Development of ECE leaders to support their leadership skills and competencies is essential as a pathway to support quality ECE. The aim of this research was to give voice to teacher leaders in the ECE sector by exploring their perspectives on their own journey into leadership. Surveys and interviews were used to gather data on leader experiences. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and a case study approach. Findings indicated that leaders believed they were poorly equipped to take on their leadership role and called for practice-based leadership support that goes beyond a theoretical understanding of leadership. It was also found that ongoing leadership development was largely self-initiated with a clear call for supported networking to create connections between leaders in what has become a highly competitive sector. This research is relevant to the ECE sector because it discusses the experiences of ECE teachers as they enter into leadership roles.

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