

Summary

Ebbeck et al. (2014)'s *Readiness of Early Childhood Professionals in Singapore to Take on a Leadership Role* investigates the willingness level of educators in undertaking leadership positions. In Singapore, there is a pressing need for more educators to take on leadership positions due to the rapid expansion of preschool and childcare centres, coupled with 'leadership' as a key criterion for the quality licensing of the Singapore Pre-School Accreditation Framework (SPARK). Hence, this study further explores the factors that motivate or discourage educators to step up into such roles.

An action research approach was adopted for this study which integrates both research and enquiry-led action in order to encourage changes and improvements in current practices. The study followed a mixed methods research design that included quantitative (i.e. online survey) and qualitative (i.e. focus group discussion) methods. A convenience sample of 64 practising teachers was used; 54 teachers were involved in the survey while another 10 teachers participated in the focus group discussion.

The findings demonstrated that 63% of the respondents felt ready to take on leadership roles, while another 33.3% of the respondents felt unready for such a role. 3.7% of respondents did not provide an answer to the question. This suggests that there is substantial inclination in educators to embark on leadership positions.

Factors that were found to motivate and support the teachers' readiness for such roles are: prior experiences in the early childhood sector as well as leadership experiences and knowledge in other fields; sufficient leadership skills; and professional development. This study also revealed several obstacles that hindered the readiness of educators to take on leadership positions. Some factors that respondents cited were the lack of experience, lack of mentoring, and personal career preference in which the educator prefers teaching over supervisory work.



Through both the survey and focus group discussion, the study recommended organisational support through four main areas. The practice of open communication is emphasised as this allows doubts and misunderstandings to be clarified. Furthermore, both formal and informal open communication is argued to “be effective in enhancing leadership in school settings.” Mentoring and external courses are also two recommended key areas that would provide the relevant field experiences and skills. This supports educators by acting as the “hand-holding in the initial stage of [the] leadership experience”. Lastly, remuneration is another recommended key area as this represents an appropriate ‘reward’ for the educators who step up into such positions. Often, educators with leadership roles were faced with more expectations and higher workload but were only provided with limited or no remuneration.

This study ultimately calls for better and more extensive support to encourage and prepare educators in embarking on such roles, while also raising the quality of early childhood education and profession in Singapore.

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