

## Developing Pre-service Teachers as Leaders: A Case of Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong

by

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### **Abstract**

*This case study aims to examine the discourses of Early Children Education (ECE) curriculum and preservice teachers' teaching practicum in Hong Kong to explore issues of developing preservice teachers as leaders for their future career. Adopting the qualitative case study methodology, semistructured interviews and documentation were mainly used for data collection to address the following research questions: (a) To what extent are preservice teachers in ECE in Hong Kong aware of the needs of leadership development for their future career? (b) To what extent are the preservice teachers in ECE in Hong Kong able to be developed as leaders in the process of teacher education? (c) What are factors influencing the leadership development of preservice teachers in preschools in Hong Kong? Documents such as program handbooks, field experience handbooks, and student participants' teaching portfolios were collected for analysis. Both teacher educators and preservice teachers were invited for individual interviews to reflect on their experiences of supervising or participating in teaching practicum. The findings revealed that both teacher educators and preservice teachers were aware of the importance of developing preservice teachers as leaders. The teaching practicum provided various opportunities for preservice teachers to develop leadership skills. However, personality and learning experiences provided in the curriculum will also impact on leadership development. This study also informs policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher educators about possible curriculum changes and potentials of developing preservice teachers as leaders for their future career.*

### **1. Background**

Historically, the professional development level of local preschool teachers was rather low (Opper, 1992). In the past, those who had received nine years of basic education were permitted to take on teaching responsibilities in classrooms. Pre-service teacher education at

one-year certificate level was required for professional registration not until 2003. The majority of preschool teachers learnt how to teach mainly from the experiences of those serving in the frontline in the sense that they were trained in a modified form of apprenticeship (Ho, 2012). The *Hong Kong Policy Address 2006* stated that all new preschool principals should hold a bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE), while all teachers who are already employed in preschools should obtain the Certificate of ECE (equivalent to a two-year Higher Diploma) by 2012 (Hong Kong Government, 2006). In 2013, the Hong Kong government has set up a committee to examine the feasibility of free ECE (Hong Kong Government, 2013). Currently, the public debate as to whether the teacher education policy can promote quality ECE is emerging. There has been a call for longer and more appropriate professional development programmes at bachelor degree level for local preschool teachers (CNOPE, 2011). Against this policy background, the study reported in this chapter aimed to examine the discourses of early childhood education (ECE) curriculum and pre-service teachers' teaching practicum in Hong Kong and to explore issues of developing pre-service teachers as leaders for their future career. To develop leadership of pre-service teachers, it is important to identify and analyze pedagogies implemented in the curriculum and teaching practicum that might strengthen or constrain leadership development. ECE in Hong Kong was taken as an illustrative case for this study. The discussion arising from the research findings of the study will contribute to the international dialogue on innovative pedagogies of teacher education in the age of globalization.

## **2. Literature Review**

In the last two decades, teacher leadership has been extensively discussed, mainly in relation to in-service teachers. Relatively little is known about the relationship between teacher leadership and the development of pre-service teachers as leaders for their future career. Fullan (2001) argued that the quality of leadership determined the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in classroom. Teacher leadership is considered as a critical element for school reforms, sustained school improvement and student achievement (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Xu & Patmor, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the majority of preschool teachers were trained in a modified form of apprenticeship (Ho, 2012). They often perceived their roles and responsibilities to be limited to implementing the decisions imposed by the school management and tend to uncritically accept the centralized power and authority exercised by preschool principals (Ho & Tikly, 2012). In the current school reform, teacher leadership is now promoted as a key to school improvement in ECE in Hong Kong. For example, a *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* was issued in 2006, which stated that preschools must establish internal mechanism for curriculum improvement. Under circumstance of school reform, many preschool principals have set up functional groups of teachers to lead curriculum change. A practice of teacher leadership is emerging in the local ECE sector (Ho, 2012).

## 2.1 Conceptualizing leadership development for pre-service teachers

As mentioned earlier, little attention has been given to leadership development of pre-service teachers and research in this area in the field of ECE (Bond, 2011; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). In recent years, the needs for developing pre-service teachers' leadership have been increasingly recognized by scholars and researchers (e.g. Brown & Danaher, 2008; Hackett & Lavery, 2010; Hard & O'Gorman, 2007; Katyal, 2010; Melsner, 2004; Xu & Patmor, 2012). Bond (2011, p. 281) argued that the idea of teacher leadership should be introduced to preservice teachers and teacher preparation programmes, under the guidance of teacher educators, are "ideal places to introduce the concept and begin to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions", which gives pre-service teachers a reference of leadership for them to work with their students in the future. Teaching practicum is certainly such an important place for pre-service teachers to work with their supervisor, the teacher educator, to become aware of and develop leadership. By examining the educational context in Hong Kong, Katyal (2010, p. 282) pointed out the importance of preparing pre-service teachers as it will help pre-service teachers to make school-based learning more meaningful to their students in the future "by focusing on how student teachers can facilitate their students to be critical learners and enhance their socialization process". In this study, it is preferable to examine whether the curriculum and teaching practicum are able to cultivate pre-service teachers to be critical learners equipped with social skills to develop their leadership skills.

Although teacher leadership is not a new term, the notion of teacher leadership itself is rather difficult to be defined as the term opens to a range of interpretations (Hard & O'Gorman, 2007). Additionally, the contextual factors are different for in-service teachers and pre-service teachers respectively. Xu and Patmor (2012, p. 252) considered teacher leadership as a way of "empowering teachers to take a more active role in school improvement". Harris and Muijs (2004), however, took leadership as a catalyst for change. It is not taken as an administrative concept but collaborative efforts to promote professional development and the improvement of educational services, which can be conceptualized as "a set of behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively" (ibid., p.17). For pre-service teachers, leadership could mean whether they can take an active role in the process of teacher education and engaging in the working and social communities. It can be also referred to a set of behaviours and practices that require collaboration. Woodrow and Busch (2008) took the concepts of feminist research on leadership in their project of developing leadership in ECE and regarded leadership as everyday situated practice to be activated and consolidated while pre-service teachers entered into the early childhood community. Such interpretation of leadership for pre-service students has made the abstract concept of leadership concrete for them and helped to make a link between what they have learned and their practice especially during teaching practicum. Pre-service students experienced at first hand "the situated nature of knowledge and the reality of knowledge-building and production in local communities"

(*ibid.*, p.91). These various interpretations of leadership help us to understand the issues of developing pre-service teachers as leaders.

## **2.2 Issues of developing pre-service teachers as leaders**

Developing pre-service teachers as leaders requires efforts from various parties. According to Lingard et al (2003, p. 2, as quoted in Hard & O’Gorman, 2007, p. 55), the main task of good leadership is “to lead learning by creating and sustaining the conditions which maximize both academic and social learning”. From this perspective, it is important to provide supportive environment for pre-service teachers to develop their leadership. Hackett and Lavery (2010, p. 84) agreed that “effective leadership involved providing the right environment for people to convey and articulate their own ideas”. Brown and Danaher (2008, pp. 157-158) studied the collaborative professional learning in the first year early childhood teacher education practicum and argued that universities must play a crucial leadership role in developing and promoting strategically high-quality professional experience for pre-service teachers. Perea (1998, pp. 487-489) suggested that university could play an role in assisting pre-service teachers to develop characteristics of a well-prepared teacher who has knowledge of 1) subject matter and ability to organize and communicate it effectively with all students, 2) pedagogy and the ability to place students at the center of learning, 3) assessment and the ability to use evaluative tools to aid instruction, 4) language and culture and ability to use knowledge to plan and deliver effective instruction, 5) available technology and ability to apply knowledge to classroom organization and through instructional strategies, 6) own skills and ability to self-assess and reflect and 7) collaborative strategies and the ability to work with parents, community members, public agencies, and professional colleagues. These characteristics reflect the knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers need to be a leader in their individual and professional learning and should be embedded in teacher education programmes.

In helping pre-service teachers to develop their leadership, teacher educators also play an important role, especially during field experience and teaching practicum. Such work-related learning provides “opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore theories, ideas and strategies in various contexts, assisting them to formulate their own philosophy and practice” (Walkington, 2010, p. 177). Teacher educators as their mentors can help pre-service teachers to reflect and link between teacher education curriculum and teaching practicum and thus enable them to “observe, interact, experiment and reflect in a supportive environment” (*ibid.*) Leadership can also be developed by encouraging pre-service teachers to take initiative, solve problems, work as a team and help others (Chambers & Lavery, 2012), which can possibly be embedded in teacher education curriculum and teaching practicum. Bond (2011) suggested that teacher educators should help preservice teachers aware of the various ways that they can lead in their future schools since the role of the teacher is multifaceted and extends beyond

the classroom. The supportive, reflective and facilitative role that teacher educators play can certainly contribute to leadership development of pre-service teachers.

Recognition of teacher identity is another factor that impacts on pre-service teachers' leadership development. Hard and O'Gorman (2007, pp. 55-56) identified two interrelated categories: interpreted professional identity that "indicates how individuals' professional sense of self is influenced by the views of others" and interpreted leadership capacity that "refers to how individuals interpret their ability to enact leadership". These two categories suggest a link "between how individuals perceive themselves as professionals and their capacity to lead" (ibid.). It is significant to help pre-service teachers to be aware of and construct their professional identity in the process of teacher education. Factors related to leadership development have been suggested in practical term, such as "know yourself", "know your field", "know your context", and "know your challenges" (ibid., p. 58), similar to the characteristics of a well-prepared teacher proposed by Perea (1998) as mentioned earlier. Bond (2011) also described the knowledge (e.g. knowledge of self, others, schools and teaching), skills (e.g. metacognitive skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills) and dispositions (such as self-confidence, a respect to others, and a willingness to serve.) that teacher leaders should have. These factors provide different perspectives to understand the issues of developing pre-service teachers as leaders.

To develop pre-service teachers' leadership skills, Xu and Patmor (2012, p. 253) emphasized the need of a shift in their vision and perspectives:

The sooner they can move beyond their student perspective to the teacher perspective or the administrator perspective, the better they can prepare for the teacher leadership responsibility. We will share one activity grounded in this strategy. (Xu & Patmor, 2012, p.253)

They also proposed the need of engaging pre-service teachers in analyzing real-life teacher leadership cases (ibid.). Such view has been shared by other scholars. Katyal (2010, p. 282) echoed Hallinger (2003) that contextual contingencies play an important role in leadership activities in teacher education. Harris and Mujis (2004) identified factors in nurturing teacher leadership: beliefs, structures, trust and rewards. Apart from rewards, Xu and Patmor (2012, p. 255) suggested that teacher preparation programmes help pre-service teachers shape their beliefs about teacher leadership, understand school structures that allow teacher leadership and know how to work with or change such structures, and understand the importance of trust among school stakeholders and help them develop strategies for building trust.

In summary, using the above review of the literature on teacher leadership and the development of pre-service teacher as leaders as a theoretical framework, this study will examine the pedagogies of curriculum, teaching practicum and roles of faculties and

universities and teacher educators to explore personal, professional and social domains that have an impact on leadership development of pre-service teachers.

### **3. Methodology**

In this research, a qualitative case study was adopted to address the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent are pre-service teachers in ECE in Hong Kong aware of the needs of leadership development for their future career?
- 2) To what extent are the pre-service teachers in ECE in Hong Kong able to be developed as leaders in the process of teacher education?
- 3) What are factors influencing the leadership development of pre-service teachers in preschools in Hong Kong?

The research design is outlined in detail below:

#### **3.1 The curriculum and teaching practicum**

In Hong Kong, there were four universities offering Bachelor of Education (ECE) programmes. Among these, only one of them provided full-time mode of study. To achieve the aims of this study, the programme offered by that university was selected for case study. In the following, we will describe the programme in terms of its aims and structure with a focus on the Field Experience component. The programme aimed to nurture early childhood educators to be professionally competent and knowledgeable; able to work collaboratively with young children, various school stakeholders, and other professionals; and committed to improving the quality of ECE in Hong Kong. In terms of programme structure, there were six components including Major Studies, Education Studies, General Education, Co-curricular Learning, Electives and Field Experience. We will outline the first five components and explain the last one (i.e. Field Experience) in details. The component of Major Studies was to encompass students the foundations of child (from birth to 8 years old) and family studies. Education Studies was to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary inquiries about teaching and learning. General Education was to broaden students' perspectives on the social, cultural, and political issues in Hong Kong and the globe. Co-curricular Learning was to extend learning experience through experience-based activities. Electives was to provide greater flexibility and multiple learning pathways for students.

Closely linked with Major and Education Studies, Field Experience was to enable students to put their theory learning into practice and understand teachers' work in the aspects of teaching and learning, learner development, school development, and professional development. It was consisted of induction (including educational visits), teaching supervision, professional portfolio, and block practice. Field Experience was carried out in the fourth and fifth year of studies. At the beginning of Field Experience, educational visits would be arranged to provide students opportunities to observe different educational settings including international preschools and local primary schools. Throughout the period of Field

Experience, each student was under supervision of a teaching staff. Students were required to carry out teaching practice in a local preschool for a block period of 6 months in total: two weeks in the first semester and four weeks in the second. The teaching staff (i.e. supervisor) visited the student (i.e. supervisee) once in the first semester and twice in the second to provide feedback and evaluation on teaching practice. Throughout the period of Field Experience, students were required to submit lesson plans, class observation records, teaching reflections, conduct peer observations, and receive mentorship from the class teacher and principal whom the student worked with. By the end of Field Experience, students were required to submit a professional portfolio for overall evaluation. The teaching practicum adopted a non-grade assessment approach in the first year. A pass was given to those who were able to meet the requirements and standards of teaching practicum while fail was given to those who were not able to do so.

### **3.2 Participants**

In this study, one teacher educator, who supervised the teaching practicum of Bachelor of Education Full-time Programme (ECE), was interviewed to reflect on her experiences of supervising the teaching practicum. About four students of the same programme who have completed teaching practicum in their third years of study were invited for individual interview to reflect on their experiences of both provided curriculum and teaching practicum, and two of them accepted the interview invitation. Both of them passed the teaching practicum.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

In this study, documentation and semi-structured interviews were mainly used for data collection.

Documents such as programme handbook, field experience handbook, student participants' teaching portfolio, and assessment form were collected and analyzed. These documents as educational discourses and "concrete material objects" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58) are rich sources for discourse analysis. Students were invited to join the study and give their consent at the end of the academic year (i.e. July/August 2014). Individual semi-structured interviews were arranged and conducted afterwards. By that time, all grades for teaching practicum had been submitted. Both teacher educator and pre-service teachers did not have to be concerned that the interviews might affect grading of teaching practicum. To avoid giving any psychological pressure to the student participants, all interviews were arranged and conducted by the Co-investigator of the study who did not have any direct relationship with them. The interview for the teacher educator was last about two hours while those for the pre-service teachers were about one hour. Questions (Appendix 1 and 2) were designed to examine three domains of leadership development: personal, professional and social. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Follow-up interviews, if needed, were conducted after being transcribed and initially analyzed to clarify some unclear points in the recordings or invite further explanation.

For data analysis, an unstructured system of coding (i.e. a system with no numbering or subcategories) was used first to identify themes in the collected data with reference to the literature review (see Section 2). After that, different codes were categorized into different themes under the topics such as awareness and factors. Discourse analysis was used to explore the sets of textual relationships between various data texts and contextual factors, situated meanings and identity construction as leaders of pre-service teachers. Intertextuality, a term coined by Kristeva (1986), was used as a tool of discourse inquiry to explore the explicit or implicit “dialogues” between texts that constitute “intertexts” and produce links between texts (Fairclough, 2001, p. 233). These links or textual relations indicate an active social process of meaning-making, offering the insights into understanding issues of developing pre-service teachers as leaders in a context of teacher education in ECE in Hong Kong.

#### ***4. Developing pre-service teachers as leaders***

##### **4.1 Understanding the concept of leadership**

The findings in interviews indicated that although students might have different interpretations of leadership, they all agreed that leadership was not about being an administrative leader. They believed:

“On one hand, you can lead others to listen to your opinion; on the other hand, you need to listen to others. Then you adjust your own opinion.” (Student B)

Teachers don’t have to be a top leader, but they must have leadership skills. (Student A)

Student B linked her understanding of leadership with the teaching practicum:

“You should know how to lead children in class and express your own opinions clearly; On the other hand, you should listen to children and colleagues. Then you can adjust your own ideas about teaching, and how you work with other colleagues. You can discuss with other colleagues about your own teaching and obtain their suggestions so that you can adjust your own teaching.” (Student B)

Student A agreed that leadership occurred while working with colleagues and children.

A good teacher must be a good leader. ... Teachers need to work together. ... Although teachers might be responsible for different projects, they have to work together. Also, when teachers have good leadership skills, they can lead children to learn. (Student A)

Student B also pointed out that leading students could happen beyond classroom:

If you have no leadership skills, it is difficult to lead the whole group of children, not just in classroom, but also during the implementation of activities. For example, if you take children for a trip, you know how to lead them to follow the instructions. Otherwise, they won’t listen to you and you cannot lead the whole team. (Student B)

It seems that both of them didn't understand the concept of teacher leadership in a narrow way, i.e. an administrative leader. They were aware that how teacher leadership could occur in "everyday situated practice" (Woodrow and Busch, 2008). They were also aware of the importance of leadership while working with colleagues. They both agreed that teachers should be a leader.

However, teacher educators take leadership further than what pre-service teachers have considered. In the interview, the teacher educator explained her belief about leadership:

I think that understanding of leadership is related to my understanding of teacher professionalism, i.e. professional knowledge, professional autonomy and professional responsibility. ... I will advocate students to work on research-based practice to help them to understand their practice. In terms of professional knowledge, pre-service teachers' leadership means that they are able to apply what they have learned in their field experience. (Teacher Educator)

She continued to link leadership with professional autonomy:

You have to make decisions at any moment in the process of teaching. ... You don't have to wait for the institution to give you opportunities. In everyday practice, the principal won't keep an eye on you all the time. You can have your own judgment about how to work with children. Even if the curriculum is fixed, you still have your own space to practice, not necessarily following "the script" all the time. (Teacher Educator)

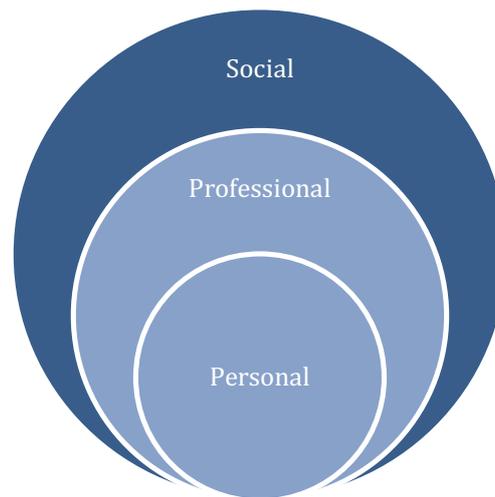
Her comments echoed Woodrow and Busch's (2008) idea about activating and consolidating leadership in everyday situated practice. For teachers, taking leadership is to take an active role in their everyday practice, not waiting for being given the opportunities.

She further explained that teacher leadership also means to take the professional responsibility not only for school management but also for providing quality service and for nurturing the holistic development of young children. She strongly believed that pre-service teachers should be an innovative leader to go beyond the constraints and lead changes in local preschool context.

#### **4.2 Exploring the factors that impact on leadership development**

As indicated in Figure 1, personal, professional and social factors can impact on the leadership development of pre-service teacher. Personal factors such as personality, motivation and beliefs affect how pre-service teachers view their role as leaders and whether they are willing to take initiatives. Professional factors refer to the professional knowledge and skills, school curriculum and field experiences they have gained, which

greatly impact on their understanding of teacher leadership and the field of teaching practice to identify challenges that enable and/or constrain teacher leadership in practice. Social factors refer to how pre-service teachers understand the context of early childhood education in a holistic way and encounter with preschool principals, in-service teachers, parents and other community members. The holistic understanding of the local preschool context and experience of working with various stakeholders in preschool settings will help pre-service teachers meet the challenges that they might have to face with.



**Figure 1: Various factors that impact on the leadership development of pre-service teachers**

When being asked about why the interviewees chose to study in BEd (ECE) Programme, both of them were highly motivated:

I am very interested in early childhood education. Everything went smoothly in the past three years. I am looking forward to becoming a preschool teacher after graduation. (Student A)

I chose this programme because I like children very much. I want to be a preschool teacher because I feel happy to be with children. (Student B)

However, they didn't view themselves as an active learner:

I don't think that I am very active in learning. But basically I can attend classes on time, follow teachers' instructions and submit all assignments, just being normal. (Student A)

I think that I am a kind of "absorber". I can follow teachers' instructions, read notes and memorize them. I am not kind of students who often ask questions in class. I am not active. I am quite passive. (Student B)

Student A explained why she was passive and what she usually did when encountering problems:

I am not very familiar with early childhood education, so sometimes I would like to listen to teachers first and then I will try to digest it.

If I have a problem, I will ask. But I will discuss with my friends first. I am quite passive. I seldom asked questions since I was little. If I have different opinions with my friends, I will then check with teachers. (Student A)

Such views might be shared by many students in Hong Kong due to the educational tradition and Chinese culture. However, both of them found that the teaching practicum helped them to change. They tried to observe teaching practice in the preschool and integrate what they had learned with the practice:

I have learned many theories in class and I am not sure whether they are applicable and how. The teaching practice helped me to know what is applicable and what need to be improved. (Student A)

During the teaching practice, I observed whether teachers in the preschool used some teaching methods that I have learned in the curriculum. I discussed about my teaching plan with my teachers and considered how to incorporate those suggestions into my own teaching practice. (Student B)

The teaching practicum also helped them to shift in their vision and perspectives as suggested by Xu and Patmor (2012).

I find that the teaching practicum not only helped me to be aware of the routines for teachers, but also learn many other things, such as what to do after class, what documents for submission to the principal and how to communicate with parents. ... It is also very important to learn how to work together with other colleagues. (Student A)

During the teaching practicum, I found some other issues, such as inadequate manpower, a lot of administrative work, and many activities to coordinate. I have a different understanding about being a teacher in preschools. (Student B)

It seems that the teaching practicum helped them move beyond their student perspective to the teacher perspective or the administrator perspective, which helped them to prepare for the teacher leadership responsibility. In addition, the above quotes indicated that pre-service teachers started to be aware of the social context of early childhood education and how to communicate with others including colleagues and parents. These social elements certainly can affect pre-service teachers' decision making and sense of responsibility.

### **4.3 Providing a supportive environment for leadership development**

To develop pre-service teachers' leadership, universities and departments have a strategic role to play such as policy making, curriculum design and resources allocation. According to the interviews, pre-service teachers expected that the institute and department could provide more workshops about early childhood education such as how to control children's emotion. They hope that they can be provided with opportunities and resources to visit or work in preschools in other countries or mainland China. They also made suggestions for curriculum

changes:

It is necessary to open a course for developing leadership. ... When I started Year 3, I felt that I should not be passive any longer. I have learned how to make decisions while doing the teaching practicum. It will be much better if we are taught how to do so. It's better if we could learn decision making while teaching much earlier. We need to develop our leadership even we won't be a teacher in the future. (Student A)

At present, teachers haven't emphasized particularly on this area. However, teachers sometimes asked us to work on a group project and do presentation. We can practice leadership skills. ... I don't think that we have to have a particular course to develop our leadership. However, there could be more activities for us to participate. (Student B)

Apart from universities and departments, teacher educators also play an important role in developing pre-service teachers' leadership. Their understanding and perception of leadership determine whether they can help pre-service teachers to activate everyday situated practice into an opportunity of practicing leadership skills both in curriculum implementation or during the teaching practicum. Pre-service teachers reported what teacher educators have done can directly or indirectly support their leadership development. For example,

Every time, my teachers will explain what I should do as a learner or as a teacher, or how parents will respond. They gave examples about different roles. Sometimes it is to take care children and it is to build up the responsibility. They help us to understand different roles. (Student A)

Student A also reported a need for peer support:

In fact, we could have more sharing. Although we have class together, we seldom discuss about our teaching practicum. We don't have opportunities to discuss about the problems that we have had in the teaching practicum, and our concerns. We might have different approaches to the same situation, which might all work well. It will be great if we could share with each other. (Student A)

During the teaching practicum, field supervisors' support is crucial to pre-service teachers' field experiences, their professional understanding and practical knowledge and skill development.

My field supervisor is very good. She will support me but won't remind you of everything. ... When I am teaching, she will keep quiet, but note down some points for improvement. When children are sleeping or she has time, she will discuss with me and explain to me. ... Anyway, I am a green hand and don't know about many things and make mistakes. My field supervisor is more like my sister rather than a supervisor. (Student A)

I usually discuss with my field supervisor about the activities that I have done and ask for feedback. She is very supportive. She will provide feedback on my teaching plan and make some suggestions in detail. She will also encourage me to try my own ideas. (Student B)

Student B also reported that the kindergarten was very supportive. She was even invited to join their outdoor trip.

To summarise, various parties indicated in Figure 2 can be involved in providing a supportive environment for developing pre-service teachers' leadership: universities and departments can make policy, reallocate resources and promote strategically high-quality curriculum and professional experience for pre-service teachers; teacher educators can provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore theories, reflect on their experiences of teaching practicum and develop their professional understanding and their own philosophy of teaching. Students can work with their peers to share their experiences and learn collaboratively to cope with challenges in the teaching practicum; field supervisors can also support pre-service teachers effectively by helping them to understand the real life of teachers in preschools and apply what they have learned into practice.

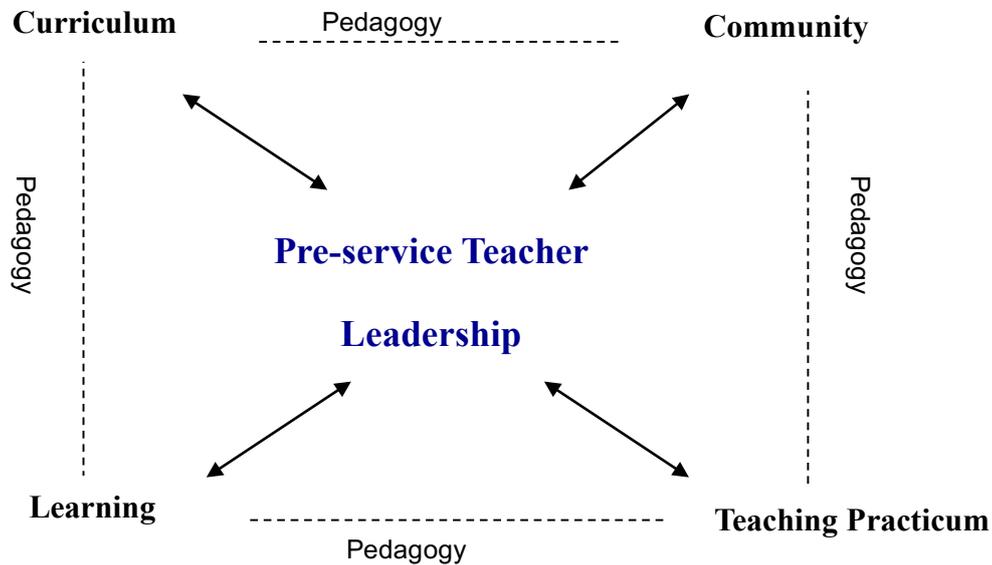


**Figure 2 Providing a supportive environment for pre-service teachers' leadership development**

#### **4.4 Leadership as pedagogy: Becoming teachers as becoming leaders**

In teacher education, especially during teaching practicum, pre-service teachers work closely with teacher educators and field supervisors to get to know the field and apply what they have learned in teacher education curriculum into the teaching practice. They keep constructing and reconstructing their professional knowledge, skills, and self-understanding by reflecting on their own experiences, seeking feedback from various parties, and learning how to make decisions and work with others. Leadership development as pedagogy can help pre-service teachers not only learn how to become teachers but also leaders. Figures 3

illustrates how pre-service teacher leadership can be activated by and affect the pedagogical practices.



**Figure 3 Pre-service Teacher Leadership as Pedagogy**

### **5. Conclusions**

To conclude, this case study examined the discourses of Early Childhood Education curriculum and pre-service teachers’ teaching practicum in Hong Kong to identify factors that impact on developing pre-service teacher leadership. Both the teacher educator and pre-service teachers were aware of the needs for developing leadership, and such awareness had been enhanced during the teaching practicum. Personal, professional and social factors can impact on pre-service teachers’ leadership development. However, a supportive environment can be built up for developing pre-service teachers’ leadership due to the collaborative efforts made by universities, departments, teacher educators, field supervisors and their peers. Leadership as pedagogy can strongly support pre-service in becoming teachers and, more importantly, leaders for their future career.

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