

CHAPTER 6

Professional development in Icelandic preschools: A historical saga

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ABSTRACT

Today, professional development of teachers is one of the most important aspects of educational systems to lead successful schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Success of the school system is based first and foremost on a well-educated and motivated profession and that preschool teachers and principals are professional leaders in charge of the development of ambitious preschool work, and they should constantly develop. The aim of the research is to investigate professional development in Icelandic preschools from 1946 to 2019. The methodology of historical analysis is used in this research to examine the past to understand the present (Wynche, Sengers, & Grinter, 2006). Various data, e.g., records of minutes, books on the history of schools of education, and other documents, were used to establish a timeline (Jupp, 2006; Wyche, Sengers, & Grinter, 2006) for a clearer view of the history. Very few people who have researched professional development in preschools have used this method. Findings support the view that preschool teachers and principals have been compliant to the needs of society and are managed and steered by the needs of parents and policymakers affecting the working conditions of the profession, all linked to professional development. The preschool teachers and principals seek professional development to close the knowledge gap that occurs when demands change. However, they need optimal conditions and opportunities to develop in their careers.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of research on professional development of teachers; the emphasis has been mostly on their impact on student learning outcomes (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Jensen & Rasmussen, 2019). Professional development (PD), also known as continuous professional development (CPD) and in-service PD, ranks among the most important aspects of educational systems today (Crook, 2008). In this paper, the concept of professional development (PD) will be used with the focus on preschools. PD for preschool teachers and principals has been less frequently researched. As such, the literature review includes research from other school levels.

In many countries, including Iceland, schools are required by the government to have a PD plan for their teachers that defines development during the school year (Craft, 2000; Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011). One of the responsibilities of the municipality and the leadership and management team of the schools is to ensure that the teachers have the opportunity to develop their skills and have access to training. It is stated in the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools that the role of preschool principals and preschool teachers is to lead professional work, and that the guide is responsible for ensuring that teachers add to their knowledge and receive opportunities for PD (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011).

PD is a conscious and articulated process that leads to positive development and improvement; it should be part of the daily work of school professionals and should take place in a professional learning community (Richter et al., 2011; Starfsþróun kennara, e.d.). PD of principals has not been researched as much, but what research there is shows that PD's impact on school development and student learning outcome is high (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jensen & Rasmussen, 2019; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011) states that the success of the school system is based first and foremost on a well-educated and motivated profession and that preschool principals are professional leaders in charge of the development of ambitious preschool work, and they should constantly develop their careers (p. 23).

In response, this paper addresses the theory and practice of the PD of preschool teachers and principals in Iceland during 1946-2019, clarifying how they have engaged in their PD. The main question is then: *How has professional development been carried out in Icelandic preschools from 1946 through 2019 for*

preschool teachers and principals? The sub question is: *How have preschool teachers and principals influenced their own professional development?*

Different documents, data, and research were used to analyze the historical context of PD in Icelandic preschools.

Professional development

At the beginning of his or her career, basic education lays the foundation for the student's development and learning (Bjarnadóttir, 2015). PD takes place after the completion of basic academic studies, when the professional starts working in the field (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Smith, 2003). However, a basic education alone is not enough to maintain PD. Professionals need to systematically pursue PD throughout their careers, and such development and knowledge must be connected to the workplace (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002). In short, it is further knowledge that is acquired after initial academic training (Craft, 2000; Collinson et al., 2009; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Cherrington & Thornton, 2013). For preschool teachers and principals, PD has not been as well researched compared to other school levels but is supported with the newest research on PD. Literature in this study, therefore, also includes research from other school levels over the last decade, that best serves the purpose of this study to connect PD to the preschool setting.

Craft (2000) stated that being a professional means taking responsibility for one's own PD as well as the school's. Professionals need to continuously examine themselves and become acquainted with innovations in education for the benefit of students (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jensen & Rasmussen, 2019). By doing this, they develop individually as well as help the overall team at the school (Craft, 2000; Lessing & De Witt, 2007).

Both foreign and Icelandic research has dealt with increased demands from state authorities, and administrative factors, such as laws and regulations, which have influenced the work and working environments of professionals (Jónsdóttir, 2012; Barton, 2013; Hansen 2013; Hansen & Lárusdóttir, 2018). Collinson et al. (2009) stated that there have been many changes in the 21st century in policy implementation, which practitioners were left to solve without funds or continuing educational training. Brock (2012) emphasized that professionals early in their careers should make themselves heard in shaping policy as experts in their fields. In Kochan, Bredeson, and Riehl's (2002) research, time is termed as one of the barriers to PD among teachers and principals, but

there is also the question of priorities, for which it must be part of their daily work (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that principals consider themselves as having less time to perform their work as professional leaders do, and therefore less time for PD (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Collinson et al., 2009; Jónsdóttir, 2012; Hansen & Lárusdóttir, 2018). Research shows it is important for principals and teachers to develop their careers, but this can be challenging and sometimes “uncomfortable” because it calls for difficult changes. Individuals’ attitudes are most important because they affect the results and quality of PD (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Smith, 2003; MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004).

Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke, and Baumert (2011) said that PD enhances the professional competence of the teacher through increased pedagogical knowledge, motivation, beliefs, and self-regulatory skills gained through formal and informal learning opportunities. Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) argued that professional learning and PD are intertwined. It is important to link informal and formal development to ensure that learning has occurred.

Individual and school development are inextricably linked; you cannot have one without the other (Craft, 2000). There are indications that PD has a positive effect on teachers, students, and the school community as a whole when it is developed in practice (Craft, 2000; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002). According to Smith (2003), the goal is to become the best version of yourself as a professional, but the path is not a fixed route and changes with time. Smith (2003) suggested that to improve the profession, maintain interest, grow personally and professionally, and advance one’s career within the profession, the main warning for professionals is to not to become fossilized in their work.

Even though many agree on the importance of PD, the ‘right way’ to accomplish it has not yet been found (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). However, there are indications that a good start would be to develop critical thinking (Dyer, 2018), do research, learn from experience, and incorporate this into daily life (Schön, 1996; Smith, 2003; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). This means that teachers and principals need support from their superiors, motivation, opportunities, and time to re-evaluate, reflect, and research their work so they can improve and develop (Craft, 2000; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Lessing & De Witt, 2007; O’Keefe, Hopper & Jakubiec, 2019).

In conclusion, arguments have been made that education and the workplace play an important role in PD of teachers and principals and that skills are gained

through formal and informal learning (Richter et al., 2011). If PD is developed in practice in the workplace, there are indications it will have a positive effect on teachers, students, and the school community as a whole. However, real-life barriers such as time and work-related demands of policy implementations have negative effects on PD. This study focuses on the history and effectiveness of PD for preschool teachers and principals.

THE STUDY

Context

From the late 19th century until the mid-20th century, the women's suffrage movement had many effects on women throughout the world, and in Iceland it further affected the welfare of children (Jónsson, 2001). A coalition of women formed a women's alliance in 1917 with the goal of saving the children and others who were affected by the tuberculosis epidemic that raged through the country, leaving many orphans in its wake (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). In 1924, a privately-funded organization called Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf was established and started a last-resort daycare in Reykjavík for children of single women and for families in which the living situation of the children was severely inadequate (Sigurðardóttir, n.d.). A few years later, a new form of daycare center opened and was called a "preschool". In later years, the daycare center and the preschools merged into one center called a "preschool" (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The first women heading the daycare centers were usually nurses because of their knowledge of children's health, and with them were teachers and other good women to help (Guðmundsson & Jónsson, 1949). The data suggests that the same pattern was emerging in the other Scandinavian countries. In Norway, it was the same as in Iceland, helping women venture into the job market (Gotvassli, 2017), and in Finland, it was embedded in the welfare society (Karila, 2008).

As a result of the Second World War, many men and women in Iceland moved to the capital to find work because the armed forces that remained in Iceland brought work to the people. Over a 30-year period starting in the early 1940s, the Icelandic population increased about 70%, and over the same period there was a 149% population increase in Reykjavík alone (Indriðadóttir, 2004). The need for more daycare centers grew, especially after the war, and it is said that it left an emotional toll. Divorces became more frequent, leaving women alone to take care of the children, having to provide for them and seek help from social services in Reykjavík and Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

The Board of the Barnavinafélagið wanted only the best for the children and were inspired by the McMillan Nursery Schools in London (Sigurðardóttir 1998). From the start, the goal was to have well-educated early childhood teachers working in the daycare centers, but it was difficult because there were so few teachers with enough education (Sigurðardóttir, 1998); there was no early childhood teacher college in Iceland. There were only four early childhood teachers in Iceland during that time, and they had received their early childhood teacher education abroad (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). One of them was a principal at a daycare and preschool center in Reykjavík, who was the first to pitch the idea to the Board of the Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf of starting an early childhood teacher college in Iceland, so that young girls who did not have the courage or means to travel abroad to study could do so in Iceland (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The data suggest that she was the first to shed light on the importance and need for educated preschool teachers (Sigurðardóttir, 1998), which can be interpreted as the breaking of ground for early childhood teacher education in Iceland, which began in 1946.

Method

In the *SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (Jupp, 2006), historical analysis is described as a method that analyses the history that has been left behind to make sense of and learn from the past. It is a social research method that is often combined with other methods and can, according to Wyche, Sengers, and Grinter (2006), be beneficial in understanding culture. This can help us understand who we are and where we are going, but we need a specific process in doing so (Wynche, Sengers, & Grinter, 2006). Historical analysis is therefore a method of discovering what has happened in the past from records and understanding implications for the future.

The point of historical analysis was to gather and search information over time and organize and connect various sources to form an overview (Wortham, 2015). Different data sources (e.g., meeting minutes, books, news reports, and reports from Iceland's Ministry of Education) were analyzed to capture the historical context of PD of professionals in preschools in Iceland from 1946 to 2019. As all data were open, official public records, no permit was required from Iceland's Office of Data Protection.

This method was used because the conclusion of the study was not clear from the start, but rather gathered through observing the data (Jupp, 2006).

The main focus of this research was to look at how PD was presented through the historical timeline. Historical analysis is a social research method (Wyche, Senger, & Grinter, 2006), and it was therefore necessary to focus on the cultural, social, and economic factors happening during the same timeframe, to gain a clearer picture on the topic, which is part of the findings and addressed in the discussion.

A descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016) was then used to analyze the data. This is an interpretive act that summarizes the text to words, which then forms the topics (Saldaña, 2016). An inductive thematic analysis is an aim of the analysis of the data, or the topic that has been identified, from the bottom up, and describes any patterns and themes that occur (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Four periods soon became clear, as each represents a timeline. A theme was then developed from the material (Jupp, 2006; Wyche et al., 2006) to gain a wider perspective on how PD of teachers and principals in preschools has been carried out and how they have influenced their own PD in the historical context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are divided into four time periods. This sharpened the focus of PD in Icelandic preschools and helped with the analysis of the data.

Breaking new ground — Icelandic preschool teacher education: 1946-1965

The first principal of the Icelandic teacher college was Valborg Sigurðardóttir. She received a grant to study abroad and travelled to America in 1942 to study psychology. At the time, it was not common for women to receive a higher education, and was thought of as unladylike (Einarsdóttir, 2004). Sigurðardóttir knew that women sought the same education as men, and because of the women's rights movement, they also wanted to have careers (Einarsdóttir, 2004). The data suggested the need for daycare and preschools for this to happen.

The first two decades of the Icelandic teacher college was tough, due to funding and existence rights. The college had to move every few years during this time because it did not have proper accommodation (Einarsdóttir, 2004; Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The school needed a larger grant from the government and the municipality to survive (Sigurðardóttir, 1998), and the findings suggest a struggle between members on the Board of Barnavinafélagið, because some did not see the necessity to educate women to take care of children (Einarsdóttir,

2004). The belief at this time was that daycare centers and preschools were only for those who were less fortunate, but the idea was to change that image and that the education of teachers was important (Einarsdóttir, 2004). It seems that the change began with young men who had studied abroad and knew that preschools were more than just for those in need, and that they would benefit both men and women as a step towards equal rights (Einarsdóttir, 2004). In a memoir by a former preschool principal who graduated in 1950, she wrote that where she worked as a preschool teacher the children were from both poor and rich homes, the latter thinking that the children would benefit by spending half a day at a preschool because it was like an addition to the upbringing at home (Jónsdóttir, 2004). She also states that the parents were overall grateful to the preschool for taking care of the children and did not make any demands (Jónsdóttir, 2004). According to more recent research, it seems that demands from parents and stakeholders have not changed wholly; they think that the main focus should be that the children are well cared for (Harwood & Tukonic, 2016; Jónsdóttir & Colman, 2014), but it was not necessary that every teacher had a teaching license (Jónsdóttir, 2012), which is in harmony with views from around 50 years ago.

In this first timeline, the findings show that preschools were established throughout Iceland. The need for more educated teachers and principals increased, but, as mentioned earlier, the teacher college did not have the capacity to educate as many teachers as were needed (Einarsdóttir, 2004). Findings show that there was a need for literature written in Icelandic so that every preschool would have the same theoretical background from which to work (*Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára*, 1976). In the 1950s, the book *Starfshættir á leikskólum og dagheimilum* (Practices in preschools) was published (Sigurðardóttir, n.d.), and it was an answer to the lack of Icelandic material.

Making headway in professional development: 1966-1990

In 1956, the first participants from Iceland went to Norway (Sæmundsdóttir, Gunnarsdóttir, & Sigurðardóttir, 1975) to a Nordic preschool conference. After that there were almost always participants from Iceland, however, during the first years it was not a lack of interest but rather a lack of funding that was the reason for not attending (Sæmundsdóttir, Gunnarsdóttir, & Sigurðardóttir, 1975). The data show that much of the PD was for preschool teachers during those first years. The preschool teacher union published a newsletter called

Fóstra for many years where colleagues could write articles, stories, music criticism, and songs, all of which can be part of PD. For example, in a newsletter from 1980 there is an article by two principals from the municipality of Selfoss where they explained a new form of managerial and leadership structure for principals. Their idea was that the two preschool teachers should delegate the workload to lighten the burden of being the only principal (Jónasdóttir, 1980).

The first managerial and leadership seminar for preschool principals in Iceland was held in August of 1966 (*Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára*, 1976), twenty years after the Icelandic teacher college was established. Even though there had been other seminars for preschool teachers, this was the first that focused on the managerial aspect of the job of principal. The main subject of the seminar consisted of issues at hand in the profession such as management, finance, and pedagogical work (Sigurðardóttir, 1974; *Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf 50 ára*, 1976). The findings suggest that it was difficult to get experts to speak at a seminar because there were not many in Iceland, and the distance to other countries was a hindrance (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

In 1973, the first law regarding preschools (Lög um hlutdeild ríkisins í byggingu og rekstri dagvistunarheimila nr.29/1973) was passed, as well as a law regarding the Icelandic Teacher College (Lög um Fósturskóla Íslands nr.10/1973), 27 years after preschool teacher education began in Iceland. The teacher college (Fóstruskóli Sumargjafar) became a state-funded school, and the name was changed to Fósturskóli Íslands. The state took control of the education, and male students were accepted (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). These laws are considered the first milestone in granting preschool teacher education a permanent place in the Icelandic education system; they stipulate, e.g., the school should provide both formal and informal PD for preschool teachers (Sigurðardóttir, 1998).

The data show that the principals of the preschools began to talk seriously about higher education for preschool principals in 1972. The reason they gave was that as responsibility became greater, the work environment became wider, and demands increased from policymakers. It was necessary to reinforce and strengthen preschool education and provide a degree in leadership to those who planned to become school leaders because their education was not enough (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). It was not until 1983 that a one-year course in leadership and mentoring was funded by the government, and the first group graduated in 1984. Again, the funding was cut, and it was not until 1988 that it was re-established (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). Later, in 1997, education in school management

and leadership developed to the Master degree level when the school amalgamated with the Teacher University (Jóhannsson, 2011), making preschool leadership studies an important PD for those wanting to become preschool leaders.

The findings suggest that after the first law was passed, there was an increase in new preschools in Iceland, and Jónsson (2001) suggested that it was because of influence from the women's movement and pressure from women whose work participation had rapidly expanded. In an interview, a former preschool principal reflected on what she finds most important for the preschools: children and staff and the upbringing of children. She emphasized the need to increase pay to parents as well as teachers and shorten the work hours of parents so they can spend more time with their children (Jónsdóttir, 2004). In the early 1980s, she went to help a preschool in the countryside where she met with the CEO of a local company who was very interested in the preschool. He thought preschools were important so women could work, since they were valuable assets (Jónsdóttir, 2004).

The first Icelandic national curriculum guide for preschools was published in 1985, and another guide was published in 1987. These contained guidelines on how preschool work should be performed, and everyone had the same goals (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The guidelines also stated the principal ought to have time to get to know the children, teachers, and parents, and he/she should be a pedagogical consultant and not only be occupied with managerial work. It also stated there was not enough stability and human resource issues were time-consuming – the reason being a lack of educated preschool teachers and low salaries (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1985). The findings indicate that principals were active participants in the preschool, from sweeping the sidewalk, to collecting payments from parents (Jónsdóttir, 2004). The description of the role of the principal in a daycare center (Forstöðumaður dagvistarheimilis) was found in a newsletter from 1982 describing the principal as a manager of the centre (Geirdal, 1982). The first job description for both principals and preschool teachers was written in 1990 (Kennarasamband Íslands, e.d.). The job description says that the principal is a professional leader and must become acquainted with innovations related to the work (Kennarasamband Íslands, e.d.). However, it does not stipulate any other timeframe or description of what kind of PD is needed; the same goes for preschool teachers.

Findings from the late 1960s suggest that the Ministry of Education stressed the importance of studying OECD reports with an emphasis on improving the

teaching profession (Indriðadóttir, 2004). Even though the focus was on the primary school, this can be seen as relevant to the preschool as to how it influenced the profession later. In 1986, the Minister of Education had the OECD evaluate the Icelandic educational policy. Their findings suggest that the Fósturskóli was graduating well-educated preschool teachers and should be held to the same social standards as the other teaching professions in Iceland (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The findings imply that society saw preschools as good places that would care for children while the parents were working, and therefore were providing a service (Dýrfjörð, 2011; Jónasson, 2006). Even though society's emphasis was on care, the preschool teachers' and principals' educational views did not waver, and they continued to push for PD.

“The Times They Are A-Changin’”: 1990-2008

In this time period, the data shows many changes in the legal structure of preschools that had an effect on principals and other educators. In the early 1990s, preschool teacher education changed because of the offering of distance education. Communication between the teachers and students became stronger via internet and email. Distance education was a reaction to the preschool teacher shortage that existed especially in rural areas (Sigurðardóttir, 1998; Mörk, 2018).

New preschool laws in 1991 (Lög um leikskóla nr.48/1991) made preschool a part of the educational system in Iceland. The ground-breaking year for preschools was 1994, when they became the first school level in Iceland created with the passing of a new law, and every licensed teacher was called “preschool teacher” (Lög um leikskóla nr.78/1994). In the years to follow, other regulations were passed through parliament that affected preschools and principals. The regulations on activities in preschools (Reglugerð um starfsemi leikskóla nr.225/1995) instituted new criteria to mandate how many children could attend preschool. With this change, the number of children in preschool increased, and their average day became longer, but the number of teachers remained the same (Njáls, 2004). In 2001, a change was made to this regulation regarding the calculation on the preschool building and criteria listing how many children per teacher, which did not influence the work environment of teachers (Njáls, 2004). More recent research (Jónsdóttir, Garðarsdóttir, & Einarsdóttir, 2013) finds that Icelandic children are in preschool an average of about eight hours each day. Other Icelandic research suggests that policymakers and parents do not think that everyone working with preschool children should have the education

of the preschool teacher, and focus should be on care rather than being a school that educates children (Jónsdóttir, 2012).

A new preschool curriculum was passed in 1999, and its role was to be a guide with a flexible framework for those working in preschools, however, it did not mandate any PD for preschool principals (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1999). The findings reveal that there was drop-in student enrollment when the preschool studies became a university education (Einarsdóttir, 2012). This suggests that more educated preschool teachers and increased number of children enrolling in preschools do not go hand-in-hand. Preschool principals are left to lead and manage schools without the legal standard of preschool teachers, which is that two-thirds of employees be licensed preschool teachers (Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólastjórnenda við leikskóla, grunnskóla og framhaldskóla nr.87/2008). Looking at the demands that have come forth since 1990, the data show a significant change and relationship between school leaders defining themselves as managers rather than leaders (Hansen & Lárusdóttir, 2018; Jónsdóttir, 2012; Stefánsdóttir, 2014), making PD not a priority.

From crisis to restoration: 2008-2019

This period starts roughly in 2008 with the collapse of banks in Iceland and the beginning of the economic crisis. Recent research on the economic crisis in Iceland reveals many changes in the environment of preschools, including changes in the law. Findings bring to light that the impact of the crisis, which affected PD, was that funding was cut so meetings after working hours were cancelled, with less time to collaborate and consult (Davíðsdóttir et al., 2012; Stefánsdóttir, 2014; Hreiðarsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2017), even though laws mandate there should be time to collaborate. The crisis also affected the leadership role of the principals, which included, e.g., more reports to the municipalities (Stefánsdóttir, 2014).

There were new laws regarding education and hiring of teachers and principals (Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólastjórnenda við leikskóla, grunnskóla og framhaldskóla nr. 87/2008), and these laws (Lög um leikskóla nr. 90/2008) protected the professional status of preschool teachers. Three years later, the newest preschool curriculum was published, and two years later six series on the fundamental pillars of the curriculum were published, each in a separate book (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011). The curriculum acknowledged the growing changes in the educational environment and demands

on schools and teachers had grown and needed to be addressed (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011). In 2014, the Minister of Education published another demand, a White Book (Hvítbók) on educational reform (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2014), intended to be the basis for further discussion and consultation with all who benefit from education. The White Book's emphasis was on literacy, which affected PD for teachers and leaders in preschools, which had not previously been part of the pedagogical and theoretical background of preschool teachers (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1999).

Findings reveal that development is a continuous process throughout a career and that stakeholders should take this into account when enacting school reforms and collective wage agreements because there is, at present, no defined time for PD (Fagræð um símenntun og starfsþróun kennara, 2016). A recent report on the PD needs of teachers, principals, and consultants shows that preschool principals and teachers choose PD that relates to the requirements enacted by authorities. The barriers they claim seem to be lack of funding, no suitable training, no flexibility to do PD during working hours, and lack of motivation (Mýrdal et al., 2016). Instead, the findings imply that principals are compelled to implement changes and novelty by higher authority.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper, we discussed theory and practice of preschool teachers and principals in Iceland, carried out from 1946-2019. We analyzed data collected from several places. Historical texts about the Icelandic preschools (with the focus on PD) were attained from documents, books, interviews with pioneers in the field, and newsletters, obtained from the library of the School of Education at the University of Iceland. The researcher also consulted The National Archives of Iceland (obtaining meeting minutes from Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf), and the internet (collecting steering documents and reports from Iceland's Ministry of Education and academic journal articles) to respond to the research questions: *How has professional development been carried out in Icelandic preschools from 1946 through 2019 for preschool teachers and principals?* The sub question is: *How have preschool teachers and principals influenced their own professional development?*

From the very beginning, the goal of preschools in Iceland was set: to save the children from the tuberculosis epidemic and help families (Sigurðardóttir, 1998). The first pioneers working with the Barnavinafélagið Sumargjöf were idealists and wanted only the best for the children. They were driven by a vision

for caring and educating children in Iceland after having saved them from the harsh conditions of war. This can therefore be interpreted as a necessary social resource and in harmony with the international environment (Karila, 2008; Gotvassli, 2017). The findings reveal that parents do not seem to make any demands on the preschool (Jónsdóttir, 2004) and they, as well as politicians, do not recognize preschool professionals as experts, seeing them as caregivers (Jónsdóttir & Coleman, 2014) and not educators.

The findings reveal that preschools have had an effect on Icelandic society (Jónsdóttir, 2004) and are entwined with the women's rights movement and women's job participation. Preschool teacher education was seen as a woman's job and remained that way for almost 30 years, perhaps having the effect that it is still, to this day, considered by some as 'women's work'. The working hours of the preschools were in accordance with those of the workforce in society, whether it was in the capital or in smaller towns. In spite of research, children spend more hours in preschools today than before. It can therefore be interpreted that the preschool principals and preschool teachers do not have time for PD and have not influenced the development of the work environment of the preschools, and they are still managed and steered by the needs of parents and policymakers despite research and reports suggesting that this is not beneficial for the child (Njáls, 2004); therefore, preschools provide a service.

It was detected in the findings that increasing demands on preschools throughout the decades—especially external factors such as laws, rules, and social practices—have led to changes in the work environment (Jónsdóttir, 2012; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Barton, 2013; Hansen, 2013; Stefánsdóttir, 2014). When the first managerial course was held in 1966, topics included increasing demands from policymakers in the form of managerial requirements, as well as human resource issues. Going through the timeline shows that these demands seemed to have increased even more over the decades; the calls for principals to become more professional became louder as well, but time for PD seemed to be limited as funds were managed by municipalities. These two factors seem to be interwoven in PD in preschools, which can affect the PD of the profession.

The global financial crisis critically affected the PD of preschool teachers in Iceland. Staff meetings were cut so that the scope of PD became limited; the data and research (Stefánsdóttir, 2014; Hreiðarsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2017) suggest that they did what they could with the limited funds and resources they had. What is interesting is that these demands came from 'above', and it was up to the

principals to implement them without having the two-thirds preschool teachers that the laws demanded. So, it can be interpreted that preschool principals were socially compliant with the authorities. Even though the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011) specifies that time should be allotted for PD, the municipalities seem not to have been making it a priority; this harmonizes with the stakeholders' view on the need for trained teachers in preschools (Jónsdóttir, 2012; Stefánsdóttir, 2014). All these laws and regulations were adapted into the preschools, and it seems that the principals did not have the means to stop the changes. So, the direction of the preschools in Iceland has in some way been steered in the wrong direction, affecting the working conditions of the profession, with more children per teacher and longer days for the children (Jónsdóttir, Garðarsdóttir, & Einarsdóttir, 2013). Research shows that it is not only Icelandic preschool principals and preschool teachers who call for change in their work environments, but also foreign studies that claim this results in lack of time to fulfil their professional leadership roles adequately (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002; Collinson et al., 2009).

According to Richter et al. (2011), two important elements in teachers' PD are the importance of education and the workplace. Going through the findings shows that the two elements (Richter et al., 2011) of PD were clear, however, arguments can be made that the importance and the effects of society can constitute a third element in the historical development of PD in preschools in Iceland. The findings exposed how much influence society has had on Icelandic preschools throughout history and that it still plays a vital role. The demands by society on preschools and their role still seem to be the same, with the emphasis on the social role, thus, preschools being a service providing care rather than education.

To answer the second research question, the teachers and the principals have been involved in their PD by pushing for more education and acknowledgement, but at the same time they have been steered by society and its laws and regulations, even though this goes against their better judgement as it affects the work environment of children, teachers, and themselves. The formal and informal PD of preschool principals in Iceland has coincided with changes in the historical context in a mutually influential relationship. Findings show that in the PD of preschool leaders, changes that happen over time are in a way like a toothed wheel that works together to alter another by closing the knowledge

gap that occurs when the demands change (Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengston, 2014). Preschool leaders play a key role in schools, and as such they have a great impact on school development (Craft, 2000).

Findings reveal that preschool teachers and principals seem to have been compliant to the needs of parents and policymakers as well as society, and this has affected the working conditions of the profession that are linked to PD, maintaining the care image of the profession rather than the education. It is important to acknowledge these factors when designing PD for teachers and leaders in preschools. Using Richer et al.'s (2011) definition of important elements of PD and adding the third pillar — the impact of society — can be an effective way to work further with these findings.

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