

Creating teacher capacity in Early Childhood Education and Care institutions implementing an authoritative adult style

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INTRODUCTION

- Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) teachers play a key role in providing high-quality opportunities for young children's learning and development
- Accordingly, creating ECEC teacher capacity should be a constant priority area in promoting quality learning environments in ECEC systems throughout the world
- The aim of the Being Together (BT) program was to strengthen ECEC institutions' ability to prevent challenging behaviors at an early stage by implementing an authoritative adult style
- Baumrind's view of an authoritative adult style is adapted in this research. It promotes positive behavior and decreases negative behavior in children (Baumrind, 1991)
- Teacher-pupil relationships characterized by warmth and clear expectations influenced positively on the pupil's learning achievement and social adjustment (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Walker, 2008)

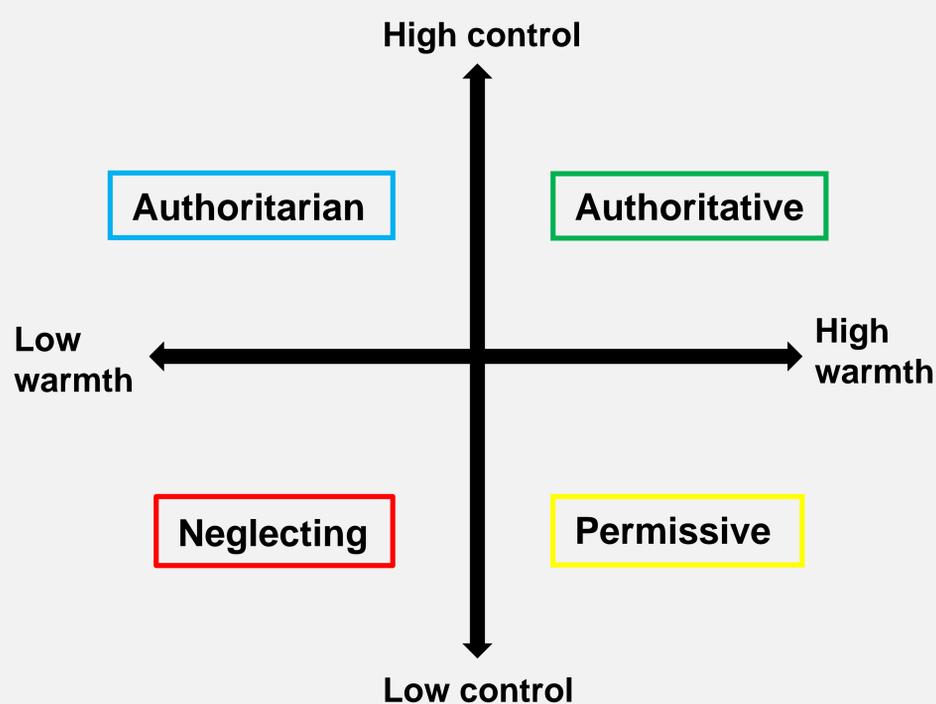


Fig. 1 Adult styles (from Baumrind, 1991)

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

- The innovation *Being Together* (BT) was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and has involved more than 1000 Norwegian ECEC institutions and around 3000 supervisors from 50 municipalities in Norway
- During the one year implementation phase, staff members from different ECEC institutions participated in four one-day seminars that covered the core components of the intervention
- All staff members regularly attended tutoring groups led by colleagues during the implementation period
- The supervisors were important driving forces in the innovation (Fixsen et al., 2005)
- A support system for participants includes both child and adult educational materials
- The aim of the research is to examine the conditions in seven ECEC institutions that helped to successfully phase-in the BT program principles during the one year of implementation (Omdal, 2018)

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METHODS

- The ECEC staff members of seven randomly selected BT institutions participated in focus-group interviews at the beginning and before the end of the first year of implementation
- Nine external supervisors who mentored these ECEC institutions were interviewed twice during the same period
- Three single in-depth interviews with three BT project leaders were carried out once
- Four areas regarding successful implementation were investigated at the end of the program period: (1) implementation; (2) collective orientation; (3) leadership; and (4) individual and organizational conditions

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- **Strong commitment to the authoritative adult style**
- The implementation of the authoritative adult style had resulted in less use of discipline and time-outs with the children
- The ECEC teachers emphasized how essential their discussions were during colleague tutoring in reaching a common understanding in the implementation process
- **Strong focus on the implementation process**

We've moved very slowly, because it's very important to move everyone together toward a shared understanding (ECEC teacher)

- A key to success in the BT capacity building proved to be the strong focus on implementation drivers (e.g. training and coaching) in the change processes (e.g. Blase et al. 2012; Domitrovich et al. 2012)
- Consequently, strengthening ECEC teachers' understanding of implementation processes is vital for their mastery of future innovations and should be emphasized in future ECEC research
- **Advanced support systems**
- The ECEC institutions needed a supervisor who would follow them up and motivate them to remain loyal to the intervention
- Institutions with a systematic project plan with clear objectives and measures, a time-scale and a structure for evaluation and adjustment, were more loyal toward the vision of BT than those who did not have a written plan to guide them through the implementation process
- **Highly involved leaders**

What is most important is that everyone feels they own the plan (BT supervisor)

- It had been crucial for the external supervisors to work from the bottom up with the staff members, taking each ECEC institution's unique context into consideration in the tutoring, instead of working top-down by giving expert advice to the staff groups
- **A collective orientation**

When people asked, 'What's special about your institution?' I used to wonder how to answer. But now we've got something special. This is the focus of our institution, these are our values. It's very specific (ECEC teacher)

- After the staff groups had acquired some common values, they were able to communicate their goals more clearly to the outside world, phrasing their values and practices in terms of the overall institutional plan
- The participants felt that there should have been more focus on staff members who didn't have formal professional training, ensuring that they received the same information the qualified ECEC teachers and leaders had received