

# **Balancing Management and Leadership: Preschool Principals' Responsibility for Preschool Teachers' Leadership**

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## **Abstract**

Following recent educational reforms in Sweden, preschool principals hold a special responsibility for ensuring that preschool teachers have the necessary conditions to take leadership for teaching and the work team. By drawing on Kotter's and Northouse's frameworks for management and leadership, this study explores how principals manage and lead this responsibility. The study employed a qualitative research design based on interviews with Swedish preschool principals. Findings reveal a lack of combination between management and leadership. The study shows that preschool principals rarely combine management and leadership in fulfilling their responsibility to ensure preschool teachers have the conditions to lead teaching. Some principals focused mainly on management, while others lacked both management and leadership, often constrained by a flat organisational culture and fear of conflict. This imbalance limits principals' ability to implement policy reforms and to strengthen preschool teachers' leadership. To achieve sustainable preschool quality, principals must integrate leadership, vision, motivation, and empowerment, with management. This requires moving from equality-based team traditions toward differentiated professional roles. Finally, systemic support and professional development are needed to help principals manage their complex, time-consuming mission and to translate educational policy into preschool practice.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Management, Education, Principal, Preschool