

LEADERSHIP

**THE DRIVING FORCE FOR
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES**

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WHY THIS TOPIC?

- **Increasing recognition of leadership as integral aspect of early childhood professional identity and expertise by the sector, professional and government agencies**
- **Emphasis on leadership expertise as a critical function for implementing change and reform for enhanced quality improvement in early childhood services** (Urban et al. 2012)
- **Identification of a pressing need for increased numbers of early childhood leaders with the capability to transform EC services** (Sharp et al. 2012)
- **Growing awareness of the need for focused leadership development opportunities within the early childhood sector** (Ord et al. 2013)

THE CHALLENGE FOR IMPROVING QUALITY RESTS UPON

- **Active pursuit of excellence by all EC educators, who don't merely comply with and maintain mandated standards but diligently engage with the quest for quality**
- **The development of skilled EC leaders who recognize their professional responsibility to 'raise the bar' and drive quality forward through continuous focus on improvement, innovation and change**

THE NUB OF THE ISSUE

The diversity and complexity of improving quality through innovation and change requires significant investment and attention to the development of the leadership capacity in a professionally qualified early childhood workforce

(Campbell Evans et al, 2014)

AN AGENDA FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REQUIRES:

- **A re-thinking of core leadership competencies, roles and responsibilities for addressing change and reform agendas**
- **Shifting the emphasis from leadership-driven change to leadership-enabled change**
- **Promoting a culture of leadership and workplace conditions that maximize opportunity for sustainable adaptation, innovation and growth within educators and settings**

HOWEVER, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IS

‘ ... one of the most complex processes that involves leaders, followers, contexts, timing, technology, resources, history and luck’

Aviolo, 2005: 4

THE STATUS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TODAY

- **Many of today's graduates are underprepared to act as capable leaders of the current change agendas**
- **There are not enough competent leaders at all levels within early childhood provision**
- **Little evidence of increased leadership capacity within the early childhood sector over the past decade**
- **Pressure on training budgets point to the need to 'grow' leaders within settings**

A CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP

- **Culture (ways of thinking, behaving and working) is an intangible but highly influential element of EC services**
- **Leadership has a profound impact on the development of culture, including to what extent the leadership capacity of others is valued and encouraged**
- **The culture of leadership impacts on the improvement of professional standards and practice i.e. quality**
- **A culture of leadership influences values, norms, traditions, climate and ethics, and shape how early childhood services are structured and organized**

PROMOTING A LEADERSHIP CULTURE FROM WITHIN

- **Openly emphasize every educator's right and responsibility to learn about and embrace leadership roles and functions**
- **Encourage, expect and recognize innovative ideas and practice by educators**
- **Open up opportunities for potential leaders to offer ideas and influence other's learning, thinking and practice**
- **Value and encourage personal and professional growth in budding leaders with tailored training and development opportunities**
- **Celebrate achievements, milestones, successes no matter how small**

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **What qualifications, training and experiences best prepare EC educators to assume leadership roles and responsibility?**
- **How can lead educators create spaces and opportunities for others to recognize themselves as leaders and develop leadership potential and capability?**
- **How can lead educators support others in finding their feet as leaders within settings?**

APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Incorporation of knowledge about and skills for leadership into all levels of EC initial training and pre-service preparation, and an integral part of professional identity and responsibility**
- **Development of an integrated qualifications and professional development framework that offers varied, comprehensive and sustained opportunities for the development of leadership capacity**
- **Lead practitioners who enable and empower colleagues to aspire to, claim and realize leadership potential through a range of opportunities to lead from within**

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CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF MAORI LEADERSHIP

- **Having responsibility (designated roles, responsibilities)**
- **Being responsible (individual's attitudes and action e.g. being professional, acting ethically being open and positive)**
- **Taking responsibility (risk taking, having a go, taking up the challenge, trying new ways of working)**
- **Sharing responsibility (sharing power, relationships, roles and positions through positive communication, interaction and engagement with others) (Ord et al, 2013)**

BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Emphasis is on every practitioner's right and ability to lead, leadership becomes inclusive**
- **Distributed leadership is assumed as the norm in EC settings, it is not equated with 'being in charge'**
- **Highlights expectations about and types and levels of contributions made by practitioners**
- **Offers a broad view of what leadership entails and direction for how capacity might be developed within practitioners and settings**

STRATEGIES FOR OPENING SPACE FOR ASSUMING LEADERSHIP

- **Develop a culture where leadership is viewed as an interactive relationship (not as the responsibility of one person)**
- **Create the conditions that help and prepare others to claim their right to lead**
- **Open up opportunity to lead by shifting the relationship. For leadership to be shared responsibly and genuinely distributed, someone ‘steps back’ and someone ‘steps up’**
- **Communicate belief and trust in every educator’s capacity to exercise competent leadership**

AND ...

- **Recognize shifting power in shared leadership relationships**
- **Distributed leadership is not ‘granting power to lead to the powerless’. Rather, it acknowledges and supports’ the right and power to lead’ that educators already possess**
- **Support practitioners to re-frame or transform their professional identity as leaders within a setting and choose to step up and claim their leadership potential**
- **Be there as a safety net. Enable educators to step up as leaders and offer support if they feel out of their depth**

(Altvater et al, 2009)

HOW LEADERS CONTRIBUTE TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Act as a role model and openly support other's leadership aspirations, potential and efforts**
- **Use professional understanding about leadership theories, principles, concepts and personal experience of leadership practice to illuminate what it entails**
- **Take responsibility for improving their own leadership expertise and the encourage the development of leadership capability in others**

ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

- **Disseminate information about leadership as an experience open to all**
- **Engage in dialogue to stimulate thinking about assuming leadership**
- **Encourage story telling about what it's like to be a leader**
- **Openly respect and support those who step up**
- **Acknowledge feelings of anxiety and discomfort that can be associated with exercising leadership**
- **Acknowledge and respect the transient nature of leadership**

TO QUOTE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

(AMERICAN POLITICIAN BORN 1706)

TELL ME AND I FORGET

TEACH ME AND I REMEMBER

INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- **EC sector is sufficiently mature to grow its own leaders**
- **This begins by identifying and valuing the sectors own resources, working with and building leadership capability from within**
- **Leaders have a professional obligation to address the development of leadership capacity and succession within their daily roles and responsibilities**
- **Leadership is the right and responsibility of every educator that can be exercised in different ways, positions and accountabilities**

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