

# Educational leadership drives learning in Kindergarten: An examination of teacher strategies in different educational contexts

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# Early childhood educational leadership

- Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning (ACECQA, 2013)
- Early childhood educational leadership needs to connect to practice, and build professional capacity and capability (Stamopoulos, 2012).
- They need to create a space in which professional identity can be crafted through ongoing dialogue and reflection (Stamopoulos, 2012, p. 46).



# Early childhood educational leadership

- Boundaries of leadership are widened to consider individuals and groups who can be brought in and contribute to leadership (Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012).
- Capabilities and expertise are distributed across many in the organization and that, if brought together within a trusting and supportive culture, can lead to concertive action (Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012).
- Early childhood educators enact leadership as a means of ensuring responsive, high quality services for young children and families (Rodd, 2013)



# Foci of analysis (Rogoff, 2003)

## Cultural/Institutional



Figure 2.1. The cultural/institutional focus of analysis.

Focuses the contribution of everything around the teacher and learners - still acknowledges the contribution of the people involved – community educational goals

## Interpersonal



Figure 2.2. The interpersonal focus of analysis.

The interactions between the child and the adult – still acknowledges the cultural/institutional and the personal

## Personal



Figure 2.3. The personal focus of analysis.

The focus centres on the child - still acknowledges the cultural/institutional and the interpersonal



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# Everyday and Scientific Concepts

- Scientific concepts are adopted from the domain of adult thinking, and everyday concepts are embedded in children's life experiences and in natural conversational contexts (Vygotsky, 1987)
- Conscious realisation of the concept occurs when the two connect.



# Everyday and scientific concepts

## **Laissez-faire**

Ample play but without active adult support

*Predominantly everyday activities with limited opportunity for connecting scientific concepts*

## **Classroom rich in child-guided play**

Exploring the world through play with the active presence of teachers

*Opportunities created for everyday to connect with scientific concepts*

## **Playful classroom with focused learning**

Teachers guiding learning with rich, experiential activities

*Opportunities created for everyday to connect with scientific concepts*

## **Didactic**

Teacher-led instruction, including scripted teaching, with little or no play

*Minimal opportunities for scientific concepts to connect with the everyday concepts.*

(Miller & Almon, 2009)



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# Methodology

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>
<p>Ethnographic Case Studies enable in-depth descriptions of a group of people enabling an insight into their culture.</p> <p>...hence, facilitating an examination of 'people as they participate in and contribute to cultural activities that themselves develop with the involvement of people in successive generations' (Rogoff, 2003, p. 52).</p>	<p>Teacher Styles and Preferences Survey (adapted from the CPI, Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, &amp; Rescorla, 1990)</p> <p>Participant observations, vignettes and interviews</p>



# Analysis of data

- Process of question-discovery
- In analysing the data, two principles of pattern recognition were employed. The first, thematic analysis, was a preliminary to the second, semiotic analysis
- Theme to emerge was using play as a vehicle for learning





# Participants

	Mia	Kyra	Lucy	Olivia	Heather	Emily	Jess	Monique
experience	17 years	14 years	30 years	10 years	26 years	28 years	9 years	28 years
SES	High	Middle	Low to mid	High	Low	Low to mid	Low	Low
Community educational goals	Parent body	Largely supportive	High ESL parent body	Wanted evidence of more formal and academically orientated lessons	Largely supportive	Largely supportive	High ESL parent body	High ESL - Early exit from study
	School	Competitive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	supportive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	Supportive High focus on literacy due to Literacy fund	supportive	Supportive



# Two approaches to early childhood practice

Layer 1: Community educational goals



Layer 2: Teachers' perceptions on child as a competent and capable learner



Formalised early  
childhood programmes



Play based early  
childhood programmes



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# Formalised early childhood programs

- Community educational goals have a strong emphasis on formalised curriculum
- Not necessarily linked with socioeconomic status.
- Arise when teachers feel the only way to meet curriculum objectives is through them.



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# More formalised early childhood programs

	Mia	Kyra	Lucy	Jess	Olivia	Heather	Claire	Monique	
experience	17 years	14 years	30 years	9 years	10 years	26 years	15 years	28 years	
SES	High	Middle	Low to mid	Low	High	Low	Middle	Low	
Community educational goals	Parent body	Competitive – wanted higher NAPLAN scores. Wanted evidence of formal instruction.	Largely supportive	High ESL parent body	High ESL parent body	Wanted evidence of more formal and academically orientated lessons	Largely supportive	Largely supportive	High ESL - Early exit from study
	School	Competitive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	supportive	Supportive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	Supportive High focus on literacy due to Literacy fund	supportive	Supportive.



# More formalised early childhood programs

	Mia	Heather	Claire
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remained at teacher directed activities</li> <li>Controlled independent activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play</li> <li>Remained at literacy teacher directed activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play</li> <li>Remained at teacher directed activities</li> </ul>
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less responsive to children's ideas</li> <li>Some children unable to negotiate complex play scenarios at end of year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unaware of how children socialised with each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PATHS program</li> <li>Stilted play (in teacher's presence)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Minimal opportunities for scientific concepts to connect with the everyday concepts.</i></p>			



# Play-based early childhood programs

	Mia	Kyra	Lucy	Jess	Olivia	Heather	Claire	Monique
experience	17 years	14 years	30 years	9 years	10 years	26 years	15 years	28 years
SES	High	Middle	Low to mid	Low	High	Low	Middle	Low
Community educational goals	Parent body	Largely supportive	High ESL parent body	High ESL parent body	Wanted evidence of more formal and academically orientated lessons	Largely supportive	Largely supportive	High ESL - Early exit from study
	School	Competitive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	supportive	Supportive	Principal wanting more formal instruction	Supportive High focus on literacy due to Literacy fund	supportive



# Play-based early childhood programs

	Kyra	Lucy	Jess	Olivia
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulated around the room during activity time</li> </ul>	Circulated around the room during activity time	Circulated around the room during activity time	Tended not to circulate
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play consistent</li> <li>• Very responsive to ideas</li> <li>• Complex play scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play consistent</li> <li>• Responsive to ideas</li> <li>• Complex play scenarios</li> <li>• Coached children in taking responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play consistent</li> <li>• Responsive to ideas</li> <li>• Complex play scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play largely consistent</li> <li>• Complex play scenarios</li> </ul>
	<i>Opportunities created for everyday to connect with scientific concepts</i>			<i>Predominantly everyday activities with limited opportunity for connecting scientific concepts</i>



# Strategic processes

- Scaffolding peers
- Collaborative problem solving
- Ability to justify thinking and articulate thought processes
- Generation of ideas that effect the curriculum
- Complex narratives that engage and necessitate self-regulation



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