

# Leaders Growing Leaders

## Effective Early Childhood Leaders for Sustainable Leadership

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# Outline of workshop

- Brief overview of NZ ECE leadership research
- Theories of Action
- Leaders growing leaders – research methods
- Structures and processes that support sustainable leadership
- Implications



# NZ ECE leadership research

- Limited leadership research, professional learning & development in the non-compulsory education sector within New Zealand (Ang, 2012; Muijs et al., 2004; Ord et al., 2013; Thornton, 2011, 2014; Thornton et al.; 2009).
- Leadership – key factor in relation to quality of ECE services (Bloom & Bella, 2005; ERO, 2011; Grey, 2004; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 2013).
- Development of ECE leadership qualifications as a recent initiative (e.g., ECNZ).



# Effective leadership in ECE settings

- Is characterised by successful leadership (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).
- Creates minimal staff turnover, shared vision, and facilitates pedagogy and curriculum (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008).
- Creates a sense of community and high-quality services (Rodd, 2013).
- Has a significant effect on children's educational outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).



# An effective ECE leader is:

- Inspirational, enthusiastic and an innovative thinker
- Manages change
- Manages others to make change
- Focused on change that leads to improved quality

Source: NZ Education Review Office (2010).



# Learning to be a leader

## Leadership development is often limited to:

- role modelling
- on-the-job learning
- lack of formal ECE leadership programmes (Aubrey, 2011; Nupponen, 2005).

## Challenges include:

- leaders developing themselves as well as others
- sustaining and building leadership culture within organisations.



# Leaders growing leaders research project

- To provide a picture of current ECE leadership experience.
- To explore ‘on-the-job’ leadership beliefs and practices across diverse ECE settings.
- To develop further understanding of how to provide sustainable ‘on-the-job’ leadership development.

## Main research question

What leadership processes and structures do effective ECE leaders develop in their centres for the sustainability of the leadership culture?



# Leaders growing leaders

## Methodology and data collection tools

- National survey
- Multiple case study approach
- Interviews (designated leader, team members)
- Observations (shadowing)
- Leader's journal





# Theories of Action

Argyris and Schön (1974) argue that people's behaviour is guided by and can be explained by their 'theories of action'.

Argyris and Schön (1974) describe two types of actions:

- 'espoused theories' (the values and beliefs they *believe* are demonstrated in their practice) and
- 'theories in use' (the values and beliefs that are actually demonstrated in their practice)



# Espoused theory

Designated Leader explaining her key role:

*My biggest thing is to make sure everyone loves working here...I think when that's right they will teach well and therefore the children get great learning outcomes because you've got enthusiastic teachers who are well and happy and energised, so for me I think as the leader that's my key role. Because I want to the teachers to teach and be...that's their key role.*



# Theories-in-use

Teacher 1 describing the designated leader's role:

*She's also very professional, in the way that I think she keeps us safe within all of those policies and procedures and practices, and at the heart of all her decisions are what are best for the tamariki [children]. You know that's what we're here for and that's such a good firm foundation.*



# Structure and processes

## **Structure:**

the organisation/cultural leadership of the centre as a whole, rather than any single routine or process

## **Process:**

the independent pedagogical/team leadership procedures that support the daily routine running of the centre



## Example of structures and processes from case study one

Teacher 3 talking about the daily planning:

*And there's a process in the mornings, so if we're all together before we get on the floor, then Kathryn [the designated leader] will just go:*

*"Right, what are your intentional teaching strategies today? Who are we working with? Has anyone got anybody they want to focus on? Who do we need movies for?"*

*So she manages to focus us on to the day, so you go out knowing I want to video this child, I need to do this...It's a good way to kick start the day for me...we're all informed, and I think when everyone's informed, you know, we have a really good team.*



# Sustainable leadership

*I think delegation's the key...And providing staff with opportunities to lead...and being prepared for someone to do it their own way...and just learning that it might get done but it might get done differently.*



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# Sustainable leadership - the talk

*I really try to delegate most of the jobs up. All that happens here because I really want, I want to be kind of replaceable. I don't want to have to be here. I want the place to run as well when I'm away as when I'm here.*



# Sustainable leadership – walking the talk

*Yeah, working on their goals together. Yep, giving them opportunities to take responsibility, e.g., whether it's through doing risk analysis for an excursion... I really want them to be doing all of that and I'll oversee it but I try and get them to step up and take responsibility...*





# Making space for leadership

*I do try and encourage teachers to come to me with solutions not just questions or issues...get them coming up with what they think is best practice or the best strategy to use...That way it is not me making all the decisions, which can get really tiring and stressful. I also feel that when teachers are given space to come up with their own ideas, the team is more independent and not reliant on me making all the calls as I am not always at work and if away I want things to run smoothly.*



# Leadership – distributed, visible and 'intentional'

- Positional Leadership
- 'Intentional' leadership
- Focus on growing leaders/leadership
- Leadership processes foregrounded, but supported by robust and innovative structures
- Emphasis on sustainability



# Implications for you

Leadership is not something that just occurs – leadership needs to be purposefully grown, developed and sustained across the ECE setting.

How do you grow leaders in your early childhood setting?



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