Building a Culture of Ethical Leadership

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Session Overview

• What is ethics?
• Quality in education and care
• Leadership and positive outcomes for children
• Guidance on ethical leadership
• Leadership in education and care
• Early Childhood Australia’s Code of Ethics
• Ethical decision-making and reflective practice
• Embedded ethical practice and leadership
• Clarity, communication and culture.
Ethics

• A reflection of our character.
• Our deeply held principles or beliefs that influence:
  ▪ how we think
  ▪ how we act
  ▪ how we respond.
• Developed through our personal and professional experiences.
• An understanding of ethics and ethical behaviour are fundamental to education and care leadership.
The NQF and Leadership

• The NQF is the result of all Australian Governments working together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children.

• Ethical leadership is embedded within the NQF including the:
  ▪ National Legislation
  ▪ National Quality Standard
  ▪ Approved Learning Frameworks
  ▪ Assessment and rating process.
‘In the twenty-first century, visionary and ethical leadership is proving to be a critical professional issue for early childhood educators around the world. Leadership continues to be of paramount importance for improving quality service provision for young children and families, and for early childhood to be recognised as a credible profession with unique expertise that is different from and yet equal to other professions’.

(Jillian Rodd 2013, p.1)
Ethical Leadership Qualities

- What qualities does a great leader have?
- How do they display ethical behaviour as they lead?
- Is there a leader that you admire?
- How do their leadership qualities build a culture of ethical behaviour?
The NQF Supports Leadership

Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership
- Quality improvement & administration
- Guiding and supporting staff
- Promoting positive workplace culture
- Creating collaborative and reflective communities of practice

Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
- Professionalism
- Provision of qualified and experienced educators
- Creating a collaborative and ethical culture, guided by professional standards

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
- Relationship with Quality Area 7
The NQF Supports Leadership

**Standard 4.2 Professionalism**
- Mutual respect
- Collaboration
- Challenging and learning from one another
- Recognising strengths
- Professional standards

**Standard 7.2 Leadership**
- Continuous improvement
- Educational leadership
- Development of professionals
Being a Leader

What attributes, knowledge and skills are required?

- Guide to the NQF provides guidance.
- Leadership can be a characteristic, not a title.
- Ethical leadership is a shared practice - responsibility lays with each of us.
- Distributed leadership is collective leadership
  - collaborative - one verses many
  - team approach
  - interactivity between people and positions.
- An ethical leader builds capacity and embeds a culture of ethical behaviour and leadership.
The Code of Ethics:

- details professional standards for education and care
- has a vision that professionals act in the best interest of children
- provides a framework for reflection & professional decision-making
- emphasises a commitment to action.
ECA Code of Ethics as a Practical Document

• Why have a Code of Ethics?
• What does it mean for you?
• What does it mean for your service?
• What does it mean for children?
• The Code recognises the professional responsibility of each educator:
  ▪ encourages qualities and practices of ethical leadership within our profession.
Ethical Leadership in Practice

The ECA Code of ethics invites us to:

• acknowledge and support the diverse strengths and experiences of colleagues in order to build shared professional knowledge, understanding and skills

• implement strategies that support and mentor colleagues to make positive contributions to the profession.
Ethical Leadership and Excellence

Bermagui Preschool has demonstrated Excellence through their ethical leadership:

- Individual educator ‘advocacy in action’ each week.
- Bega Valley Community Preschool Network
- Bega Community Forum.
Concordia Out of School Hours Care have demonstrated Excellence through their ethical leadership and reflective practice:

• **Mentoring** other OSHC services to improve the educational program and outcomes for children.

• **Challenging** other services to reflect on and improve their practices of behaviour management.

• **Seeking opportunities** to engage with the boarder education and care sector to *share their story* of improvement.
Ethical Decision-Making

- Who is involved?; Where did it happen?; What was said?
- Consider the perspectives of all involved.
- Respond using your knowledge of the ECA Code of Ethics.
- Discuss your proposed response with colleagues.
- Decide on the action you will take.
- Reflect on the outcomes of the process and re-plan.

Reflective Practice Builds Ethical Leadership

The ECA Code of Conduct and critical reflection:

Ethical leaders support educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work, to analyse their actions objectively and motivate them to reflect and explore new ideas and approaches as part of daily practice.

Ethical Leadership in Practice

**APPROACHES TO ETHICS**

**Foundational**
Practical strategies are used to bring the Code of Ethics to everyone’s attention.

**Embedded**
Ethics are explicitly embedded in all aspects of the work undertaken in the setting. Children, families and staff experience the Code’s commitments and principles in action.

**Transformational**
Ethics are embedded and there is genuine commitment to and action taken to ensure fairness, inclusion and equity in all aspects of policy and practice.

Embedding Ethical Leadership

Examples of embedded practice

• The Code of Ethics is available and regularly reflected upon.

• All staff understand and aspire to enacting the Code’s principles and commitments.

• The Code informs staff selection processes and is considered in performance review cycles.

• The Code informs the setting’s philosophy, policies and practices and the Quality Improvement Plan.

• The Code is a reference point for ethical decision making and regularly reviewed in staff meetings.
Ethical Leadership and Exceeding the NQS

Exceeding practice is demonstrated when each educator:

• seeks out and considers alternative ways of supporting each child
• reflects together
• considers and discusses social justice and the equity implications of their practice decisions to support and promote each child’s health, safety and wellbeing.
Clarity, Communication and Culture

How might we use the ECA Code of Ethics to support:

• Professional identity and clarity regarding professional roles and responsibilities?

• Educator’s capacity to communicate the intent of their practice?

• Collaborative, respectful and ethical relationships and the building of a positive organisational culture?
Key Messages

- Ethics: how we think, how we act and how we respond
- The NQF and ECA Code of Ethics provide guidance
- Leadership impacts education and care quality and learning outcomes
- Quality, ethical leadership creates quality workplaces
- An ethical decision-making framework is a key tool
- Collaborative, respectful and ethical relationships are a strong foundation to an ethical organisational culture
- A collaborative process builds ethical leader capacity
- Ethical leaders allow and inspire creative and innovative practices
The Quest for Quality is a trivia-style game developed for educators in education and care services to understand the requirements of the NQF.

- Explores the seven quality areas in the National Quality Standard (NQS) through sector specific trivia, knowledge questions, provocations and actions.
- Extension packs *e.g.* Family day care; Exceeding NQS, Inclusion, Environmentally Responsible, 24 hr movement guidelines
- Can be purchased online or you can download for free and print your own set.
Information and Resources

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