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**The journey of leaders.**

**Planned or unplanned?**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Master of Educational Leadership**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The journey of leaders. Planned or unplanned?**

According to Ren-ETTA Sullivan (2003) pathways that lead to career progression within the early childhood education sector are unclear. Furthermore it seems that there is a lack of research which underpins leadership theory in the early childhood education sector (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004; Rodd, 2006; Scrivens, 2003; Thornton, 2003). Due to the absence of research, early childhood education professionals have not formed clear opinions about leadership (Ren-ETTA Sullivan, 2003). This lack of opinion has led to leadership in early childhood education being under researched, undefined, undervalued and under-represented in dialogue, policy and practice.

This study is the investigation of how early childhood education leaders have come to be in positions of leadership. This study explores research that underpins theories of leadership in the early childhood education context. Through exploring the career path of 6 early childhood education leaders, this study gives an insight into the ideas, opinions and explanations of how the participant has come to be in positions of leadership.

The overarching research questions of this study are:

- How do early childhood educational leaders come to be in positions of leadership?
- What career path have early childhood education leaders taken in order to get to their position of leadership?
- What experiences do early childhood educational leaders come to leadership positions with?
- Is there a specific path which early childhood education leaders have taken in order to get into positions of leadership? (Is there a pathway to becoming an early childhood education leader?)

Arising from these stories were personal accounts of each participant's experiences, professional roles and varied career journeys. Through interviewing the six early childhood education leaders, many other insights into leadership within early childhood education became evident. Early childhood education leadership arena includes many different positions of leadership across a range of early childhood education services and departments. As Rodd (2006) states leadership is shown in different ways and means different things to different people. This study explores current ideas and perspectives about leadership in early childhood education.

This study tells the story of how early childhood education has been undervalued and women dominated which has led to different approaches and understanding about leadership and a lack of interest in this area by policymakers and authoritarian figures. In spite of this, strong leaders (and mainly women) have arisen through different pathways. These leaders are likely to view leadership differently and see models of leadership needing to be different for the context of early childhood education.

Early childhood education needs good leadership particularly in light of the significant growth and changes within the sector; therefore it is imperative that leadership professional development is provided, and discussions about leadership become part of early childhood contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I decided to complete my Master of Educational Leadership I did not realise the complexity of the task. When I started writing this thesis in 2008 I was inspired by being in a teacher education position whereby post graduate study was a major focus. After completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership, I felt committed to complete my Masters. I chose the Master of Educational Leadership as a qualification to work toward as I felt that leadership and education were transferable across many fields, sectors and positions.

In 2008, when I began this project I had little understanding of the inspiration, commitment and the huge personal insight I would have from my six participants. After reading the completed questionnaires, meeting with each participant individually, and transcribing their interviews myself, I came to realise how lucky I was to have been face to face with these instrumental, innovative yet real leaders in the field. After each interview I felt in awe of the personal views each participant gave me so readily. To each of them I am sincerely thankful.

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips, my thesis supervisor, has been influential in shaping the thoughts and data I have collected over the two years of this project. Jeanette has supported me with academic advice, readings, insights and discussion. I feel complete gratitude to Jeanette for her ongoing time, knowledge and commitment.

The students who I first started the discussions with back in 2006 have been the main driving force for this study. I hope that this thesis provides provocation, thought and discussion about who you are as a leader and as an early childhood education professional as much as the discussions we had in class inspired me to complete this project.

During the two years this thesis has taken to shape, I have been awarded a position as Manager, Professional Practice with the Central North Island Kindergarten Association, after moving from my position of Principal Academic Staff Member, Team Leader, and Programme Manager at Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec). In both places of employment I have been greatly supported with time, encouragement and professional dialogue. Thank you.

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This thesis has been a major part of my life. My family and friends have listened to me endlessly, while understanding the need to have books and paper spread over the dining room table for at least two years. Thank you to those who have listened read and questioned my work as I completed the thesis. Even when you did not have the same passion and insight for early childhood education as me, you always provided me with another perspective which has led to the end product that forms this thesis.

For me this thesis has been a journey of inspiration, personal learning, academic growth and professional understanding. I am sincerely grateful to everyone who has influenced my life and encouraged me to quench my thirst for learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **My interest in this topic**

During my career in early childhood education I have worked in a range of leadership positions. Through these lecturing, leadership and advisory roles, I have engaged with a diverse range of professionals who vary in age and experience. For the people I have worked with, both colleagues and students it seems a common perception that I am young for the leadership positions I have experienced and am in. I was often surprised at this perception and wondered if I really was young for my leadership role. The discussions I had with people regarding my age and my position were often also linked to being lucky and resulted in questions being asked about me being in the right place at the right time. This common discussion I found myself having with my colleagues and students inspired me to really reflect on my pathway into these leadership positions. I pondered whether one can truly have a planned career path or whether leadership in early childhood education is based on luck and opportunity. Many have said to me that I am lucky to have reached the lecturing and leadership positions I have had at a perceived young age (I started lecturing at the age of 27 and although I may not be the youngest lecturer I was perceived as young). So I started to really look around at people I deemed to be in positions of leadership in the field and I hypothesised whether these leaders who I look up to, fell into leadership roles or journeyed along a planned career path. This hypothesis lead me to question, was having a career path important? Therefore my initial interest in this topic was to document the journey of other early childhood education leaders, thereby investigating the pathway toward early childhood education leadership. This provocation and hypothesising made me think about the way the students who I was working with viewed leadership and how they saw the opportunities available to them. I questioned what aspirations they had as nearly graduating Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) students and whether they had access to any documented journey of leaders they aspired to, to feel inspired by. I really wanted these students to reach high and look far in terms of their career and not be inhibited by their perceptions of age or an assumed career path.

This documentation provides an insight into the career opportunities available to aspiring early childhood education leaders. Through my interactions within the early childhood education community it appears to be a common assumption that early childhood education relates predominately to early childhood education centres. When I was talking with students and colleagues about leadership, people assumed I was investigating leadership in early childhood education centres. I was surprised at this assumption as early childhood education provides so many diverse roles of leadership opportunity outside of early childhood education centres.

I asked the students who they deemed to be leaders in the sector. The people they named were all people who were in presenting, lecturing or teacher education roles. This made me question the definition of a leader in the eyes of an aspiring leader. I agreed that the people the students named were people who I would identify as leaders in early childhood education. In my eyes, these people were leaders because they were working to inspire, influence and develop the skills, attitudes and practices of teachers in early childhood education.

The people the students identified as leaders were not those in teaching positions working with children face to face. Therefore it would appear that leadership in early childhood education is viewed in two different realms. These two realms include those that teach and are in positions of leadership influencing teachers in their early childhood education centre and those that are seen as leaders in the field as they work to influence theories and practice across the sector. Part of this thesis looks at the definition of leadership in early childhood education and investigates how leaders define leadership and the perceptions they have of their leadership roles.

Because I wanted to document the stories of leaders that students aspired to most, this meant that I focused on leaders in early childhood education who were influencing the theories and practice of the sector. I wanted to show students through this thesis that while I may be perceived as young for my role in the sector, my position of leadership is attainable if the person has the skills and motivation to take on opportunities of leadership. I heard some students say that they could see themselves being head teachers, supervisors, centre managers in early childhood

education but that leadership positions in places like Education Review Office (ERO), lecturing in teacher education services such as University and Polytechnics were beyond their aspirations. It was almost like the students could see being a head teacher, supervisor or centre manager as far as they saw themselves going in reality. This view may be due to the stage of training these students were at as they were near graduation. One may assume the students themselves believed they needed to be head teacher, supervisor or centre manager first and then their career would evolve from there. Some students may have completed their qualifications with the vision of always being a teacher. However for this particular group of students they spoke of wanting to be leaders in the field. They spoke of wanting to know how “famous” people in the sector got to be where they are. These students had identified that the head teachers, supervisors or centre managers they were working with were leaders in day to day teaching in their centre, but the leaders in the field were those “famous” people who the students were quoting and discussing in the student’s course of study. The students also spoke of how they thought they needed to be head teachers, supervisors or centre managers before being able to become a leader in the field. This point became a question in this thesis. Does a teacher have to be a head teacher, supervisor or centre manager before they can be a leader?

Therefore for this thesis the identified leaders in early childhood education are those who are active in academic writing, or have been providing training or teacher education, or have a level of influence over the theories and practice of early childhood education in New Zealand.

Through this investigation I have documented the range of leadership opportunities available within early childhood education and I hope that through this thesis, teachers in early childhood education begin to see themselves as potential leaders and becoming a leader in the field is an attainable dream. I hope to provide the aspiring leader with an insight into the way that having diversity of experiences, motivation and self belief are more important in reaching their goals than following a perceived career path. I want readers of this thesis to see their own experience and skills as being valuable and to realise the unique qualities that they have to offer to be a leader in the field. I want to inspire those who do aspire to be a leader in the field to draw

on their own experience and knowledge and to take opportunities whereby they can influence the theories and practice of the sector. I hope that teachers reading this research gain an insight into the diverse range and scope of leadership that early childhood education has to offer and they feel inspired to go out and make their own career path in order to get to where they want to be. At the very least I hope this study inspires people to reflect on their career, regardless of where it is at currently, and feel excited about their future direction in early childhood education.

## OVERVIEW

This overview draws on literature relating to early childhood education in New Zealand and its present context. The topics explored in this overview help to shape a common understanding of the position of early childhood education in New Zealand, and highlights some of the issues relating specifically to early childhood education. In order to investigate how leaders have come to be in positions of leadership we will first need to look at the historical perspective of early childhood education in New Zealand and the place each service has in the early childhood education sector.

### **Early childhood education in New Zealand:**

Early childhood education was defined by the working party of the document ‘Education to be more’ as “education, care and learning that occurs in a safe and healthy environment, that involves parents to some degree (ranging from complete to a limited involvement), and that develops potential and quality of life of young children in the present and for the future” (Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, 1988, p. 26). Early childhood education in New Zealand encompasses a range of early childhood education services for children aged predominately 0-5 years. Services include Te kōhanga reo, kindergarten, home based care, Playcentre, early childhood education centres, daycares, crèches, Pacifica language nests, Montessori early childhood education centres, and Steiner early childhood education centres. All services are required by the Ministry of Education to implement and provide evidence of the national curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). The Education Review Office (ERO) monitors compliance and delivery in this area.

Early childhood education in New Zealand falls under the jurisdiction of the New Zealand Government’s Ministry of Education. Historically early childhood education formed part of the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education. In 1972 Child Welfare was transferred to Social Welfare. After much lobbying and political shifts, in 1986, early childhood education was transferred to the Ministry of Education (May, 2009).

Each service is unique in terms of the service philosophy and context and therefore offers children and families different opportunities.

Te kōhanga reo is an early childhood centre where children aged from birth to six can be immersed in the Māori language and culture<sup>1</sup> (Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2003). Kōhanga reo is translated as a “language nest”. The main purpose of the establishment of the kōhanga reo movement was to keep the Māori language and culture alive (Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2003). Family members and extended family members are the managers and teachers in a kōhanga reo. Kōhanga reo is founded on the expectation that only Māori will be spoken during the kōhanga reo session.

State funded kindergartens have a history in the New Zealand early childhood education sector starting in Dunedin in 1889 (May, 2007; Scrivens, 1998). Teachers in kindergarten have long been required to hold a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) and be registered teachers. Kindergarten teachers are employees under the State sector and this has enabled kindergarten teachers to receive pay parity with primary and secondary school teachers. Kindergartens are governed by kindergarten associations (Charitable Trusts or incorporated Societies) and are chartered and licensed in accordance with the Education Act 1989 under the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998 or the new Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008a) and Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008b). Kindergartens historically provided sessional education programmes for children aged 2-5 years without any cost to the parents, although fundraising and donations were expected (Bushouse, 2008, p. 5). Kindergarten committees made up of parents helped to raise funds, carry out maintenance and support the teachers and were essential to kindergarten function. However with Government reforms, changes to bulk funding, and societal changes where more parents had to return to work thereby requiring longer care hours for their children, many kindergartens have adapted by offering 6 hour sessions, charging fees and opening for longer throughout the year (Bushouse, 2008; May, 2009; Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, & Tamati, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Māori is the name that was given to the indigenous people of New Zealand (Barlow, 1991).



Home based care in New Zealand is often referred to as family daycare where children are cared for in the carer's home. This type of early childhood education has been around in New Zealand since the 1970s (May, 2009). Carers in a home based care setting are not required to be qualified and registered teachers; however a qualified and registered teacher works alongside the carer offering guidance, resources and support. Home based care services offer families the option of small group or one to one care options. Home based carers are regulated by the Education (Home-Based Care) Order 1992 as set by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 1992).

The Playcentre movement in New Zealand originated in the 1940s (May, 2009). Playcentre is based on parent cooperation and is parent run. Most Playcentres offer sessions to children aged under 5. Parents are encouraged to complete Playcentre training and courses. Parents are the teachers at Playcentre. Playcentres are governed by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (Meade, 1985).

Education and care centres (also referred to as daycare or childcare) in New Zealand are varied. One of the biggest variations is the ownership of the centre. This ownership may include private, corporate, charitable trust, or community owned. Regardless of the ownership of the centre, all early childhood education centres must be licensed in accordance with the Education Act 1989 under the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998 (Ministry of Education, 2009). The adoption of a ten year strategic plan for early childhood education *Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002) has resulted in qualified teacher targets. Under a Labour led government the requirement was for 100% qualified (Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education) staff by 2012, however in 2009 the current government has abandoned this goal, modifying the requirement to 80% qualified staff.

Crèches in New Zealand are usually registered as playgroups and are generally in shopping centres and fitness facilities. Hours of service are limited, for example, offering childcare in 2 hour slots. Carers are usually unqualified.

Pacifica early childhood education services in New Zealand offer Pacifica communities the opportunity to pass on and foster the Pacifica culture and language to children under 5 years old (Mara, 2006). Pacifica early childhood education centres may implement the Cook Island Curriculum which was developed in 2004. This curriculum is based on Te Whāriki (International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive, 2008; Ministry of Education, 1996).

Montessori early childhood education services were brought to New Zealand in 1975 (May, 2009). Maria Montessori, an Italian educationalist and doctor developed a programme of early childhood education which consisted of apparatus and teacher training based on her own philosophy (May, 2007). Montessori services in New Zealand usually offer the Montessori philosophy and apparatus alongside implementing the New Zealand national curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Montessori services vary in hours of operation and curriculum implementation.

Steiner services are based on the work of Rudolf Steiner, originating in Germany. The philosophy around the Steiner service (also known as Waldorf Schools) includes legends, music, rhythm, seasonal festivals, and art. Steiner services usually operate without televisions and computers. Children are grouped from birth to 7 years of age and carry on through primary and secondary schooling under the Waldorf School programme (Krogh & Slentz, 2001).

As can be seen from the above discussion, early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is diverse. Generally people who work in the early childhood education field are known to be passionate and committed to their work. Together with a growing under 5 year old population, low unemployment and policies encouraging participation in early childhood education (including 20 hours entitlement for 3-6 year olds), the sector is experiencing some pressure with regards staffing. Students are being offered leadership positions before graduation in many cases and this has caused some concern amongst the sector as many question the capability of these people to cope with the leadership position

when their experience as a qualified early childhood education teacher is limited. This offers a unique situation within education and is likely to influence the career pathways of early childhood teachers. It may be that this study provides some insights and suggestions for the sector in terms of leadership development.

Having described the context of early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I now wish to present some of the ideas about leadership in early childhood that have emerged from a variety of research and literature.

### **Leadership in early childhood education in New Zealand**

The lack of research in early childhood education, significantly in early childhood education leadership, has been identified across authors both nationally and internationally (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004; Rodd, 2006; Scrivens, 2003; Thornton, 2003). While much has been written on school leadership and principalship in primary and secondary education sectors it seems that written documentation of leadership within early childhood education is limited (Geoghan, Petriwskyj, Bower, & Geoghan, 2003). Recently there has been a national interest in leadership and a small but growing number of academics have researched aspects of leadership in the New Zealand context (Clarkin-Phillips, 2007; Thornton, 2009).

### **What are leaders called?**

Presently in New Zealand head teacher, supervisor, manager, centre manager, director, team leader are all titles used to define the leader of an early childhood education service. Titles used have implications for the career pathway of an aspiring leader. While in the school system the principal is widely known as the leader of the school, the changing titles given to people in positions of leadership in early childhood education has significant impact on the positions they may apply for next and be successful in the application. As an example if a leader in early childhood education is titled head teacher, the perceived level of responsibility and leadership may be different from that of a centre manager, however both roles may have had exactly the same level of responsibility and leadership roles. This issue has implications on the career

advancement opportunities that are available to the person thereby impacting on the journey into leadership positions. As the early childhood education sector differs from the schooling system in that early childhood education is non compulsory, governed in a range of ways, and not all teachers are qualified, can one title be assumed appropriate for any leader in the early childhood education sector?

Rodd (2006) suggests that the terminology used to define a leader has implications for who has the potential to become a leader. She implies that when a leader is titled manager, director or head teacher the title is tied to the position and thereby limits the leadership potential of anyone not in that position such as a teacher. For job opportunities the title of a leader will impact on the view of what that person does in their current role. As an example a team leader in one service may have the same role as the director or manager in another service, however because of the title given, may appear less experienced because they are called a team leader and the title appears less likely to include managerial decisions.

Furthermore Southworth (2002) states that we may understand what a leader does but may not understand the effects their actions have (Southworth, 2002). Therefore the title given to early childhood education leaders in their role of leadership could be better linked to the effect of the leader. For example if a leader is titled director, does that imply they are directive in their leadership approach? When looking at the titles used across the early childhood education sector, the question of whether the title truly represents the varied nature of the leadership role is highlighted.

With regard to the primary and secondary schooling sectors the title principal has little implication about a leadership style or hierarchal position whereas in early childhood education, supervisor (a common title given to teachers in positions of leadership within early childhood education services) may imply that they supervise as a leadership style.

## **Defining leadership in early childhood education**

The question of how leadership is defined in early childhood education seems to intersect many boundaries and elude a definitive agreement. Leadership in early childhood education is said to be an elusive phenomenon that is hard to define (Jorde Bloom, 1997). It is also evident that a shared definition of leadership in the early child education context has not yet been developed (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004; Hard, 2004). However it seems that ideas about leadership definitions are beginning to be explored.

It appears that leadership definitions have moved from traditional leadership theory where leadership was once defined as being about one role, carried out by one person (Kagan, 1994; Robertson, 2005). However recent literature seems to have shifted toward a leadership definition that reinforces ideas about shared, collaborative leadership (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004; Lambert, 2002; Robertson, 2005; Rodd, 2006).

This shift in thinking has seen leadership definitions start to promote the idea that leadership is no longer one person acting on their own (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Lambert, 2002). As suggested by Lambert (2002) leadership definitions are currently reported to be most effective when carried out by a range of people within a team or community. Leadership is about everyone taking leadership and working toward a shared goal. She states that leadership must be shared and communal to create better learning outcomes for children (Lambert, 2002). Lambert (2002) writes of the effective leader being one who works with others to inspire vision and one who invokes leadership opportunities and potential for all team members.

Pugh (2001) defines leadership as working collaboratively, having relationships with children and adults and creating an environment conducive to learning. According to Pugh (2001) leadership is about interpersonal relationships across multi-professional teams. This type of definition helps to move the idea of leadership away from traditional concepts of having one leader. The focus on relationships, collaboration and teams has supported ideas

that leadership is about people, not one person. These ideas further help to promote the idea that a distributed leadership model fits best in the early childhood education context.

Kagan's (1994) work supplements these ideas as she discusses how traditional leadership theories have created an assumption that leadership is about one person and that person is usually a male. She states that these assumptions have created situations where the leader is said to be a hero. Kagan (1994) highlights that this traditional view ignores the shared leadership style that early childhood education has adopted. Kagan goes on to say that this contemporary shared leadership style has been developed due to the collaborative leadership approaches of women (Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001).

From this body of research it appears that although there is no agreed definition of leadership in early childhood education, ideas about relationships, collaboration and teamwork are beginning to shape a shared definition of leadership. This developing definition may be influenced by the concepts of gender related leadership styles. Therefore we need to explore the relevance of gender and how that impacts on leadership more.

### **Gender and leadership**

Gender is defined by Shakeshaft (1993) as a cultural term. "It is socially constructed and describes the characteristics that we ascribe to people because of their sex, the ways we believe they behave or the characteristics we believe they have based upon our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female" (Shakeshaft, 1993, p. 52). It would appear that these stereotypes and gender characteristics can be ascribed to ideas about women's ways of leading.

Early childhood education in New Zealand is said to be predominately women dominated (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Ren-Etta Sullivan, 2003). In 2008 only 1.3% of early childhood teachers were male ([www.neon.org.nz](http://www.neon.org.nz), 16.12.09). These figures prove that early childhood education is a woman dominated profession.

Kagan (1994) draws attention to the long history that early childhood education has in working collaboratively and adopting a shared leadership approach. She links this long history to early childhood education being women dominated, alluding to the shared leadership style of women (Kagan, 1994).

In an English study carried out by Hall (1996), investigating woman leadership styles, it was found that women preferred to work collaboratively wherever possible (Hall, 1996). These findings are supported by Sergiovanni (1992). Sergiovanni (1992) discusses how women lead from a value-based, collegial perspective, where building communities and relationships are integral.

Collard and Reynolds (2005) discuss how gender stereotypes “have tended to simplify and polarise the way men and women lead” (p. xi). Court (2005) discusses how gender difference in leadership can stem from socially constructed gender roles for men and women. This idea is further explored by Robins and Terrell (1987), who state that the differences in leadership styles of men and women, are learnt through a socially constructed view. This socially constructed view is one where men and women have learnt to behave and be a certain way because of their gender. Robins and Terrell (1987) go on to argue that women have learnt to share and show compassion and to be caring and nurturing. Robins and Terrell (1987) believe that women have also learnt to co-operate through networking and the sharing of resources. However Robins and Terrell (1987) make the distinction that men learn to compete and win at all costs.

The dichotomy around feminist versus masculine leadership is discussed by Whalley (1999) as she emphasises the unique leadership style of women, being more of a facilitating than authoritative approach, thereby aiming for influence rather than authority. Similarly Thornton (2003) discusses that studies investigating leadership qualities of men and women have concluded that men often lead from a power and control style whereas women are concerned with group functioning. Court (2005) highlights that while focusing on feminist or masculine leadership styles, other significant factors which could contribute to the difference in leadership style such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, personality and

values are omitted. The implication of this is that leadership conversation has become focused on gender difference rather than the leadership style of individual people (Court, 2005).

Davis and Johansson (2005) were involved with a 1980 study investigating why women were so under represented as principals in Sweden. They investigated what could be done about this under representation. They highlighted the fact that by the year 2000, women filled 73% of principal positions in Sweden (Davis and Johansson, 2005). This study highlighted a dramatic increase in women taking up principal positions. Davis and Johansson (2005) found that this increase was due to the restructuring of the Swedish schooling system where more principal positions were created. However they also report that once formal leadership experience was no longer a requirement of the principal job, it allowed more opportunities for women to take on the role of principal. Of significance to the early childhood education sector, is that principals in Sweden are responsible for early childhood education services and after school care programmes as well as the school setting. Although many of these women taking on principal roles did not have the administration or formal experience, those coming from early childhood education centres “were generally well-qualified leaders who have proved to be school leaders” (p. 38). The implications of these findings are that formal experience may not be necessary to go into leadership positions. It may be that the skills, characteristics, traits and varied experience one already has when they come to a leadership position, is enough to take on a leadership role within education and be effective in that role. According to Davis and Johansson (2005) the influential and successful leader is able to use traits argued to be those specific to female and those specific to male characteristics in leadership positions. They refer to the “androgynous leader” as one who has both masculine and feminine traits (Davis & Johansson, 2005, p. 41). It reported that the androgynous leader is more effective in their role, in comparison to a leader who adopts a feminine or masculine leadership style (BI Norwegian School of Management, 7 November 2008). Therefore in order to be the most effective, a leader should be able to offer an empowering and collaborative leadership approach commonly described as women leader characteristics, and the directive and authoritarian traits associated with male leaders. The effective leader should be able to



apply any of those traits and characteristics to the situation at hand regardless of their gender (Davis and Johansson, 2005).

Research about leadership in early childhood education has also been affected because of the gender dominance. Rodd (2006) highlights that the literature available on educational leadership is informed by research that has been conducted on males in positions of leadership. She goes on to mention that because of this stereotype bias, the relevance of the research to early childhood education is limited as early childhood education is a largely female profession. Thornton (2003) also believes that the leadership literature focuses on males in leadership positions, written for men by men. However Thornton (2003) highlights that most of the research carried out where the focus on was on women has been in other educational sectors therefore does not truly reflect the early childhood education sector.

This section of research supports the idea that there may be differences in the way men and women lead. However the most effective leader is one the can apply both feminine and masculine leadership approaches. With this being the case, skills, characteristics and traits may also play a part in effective leadership.

### **Skills, characteristics and traits of a leader**

While researching current literature, it has become evident that certain skills, characteristics and traits contribute to a developing understanding of leadership in early childhood education

Espinosa (1997) identifies the importance that characteristics have in leadership. In her work, Espinosa (1997) discusses how a person's own values and principles help to shape their adopted leadership style. Espinosa (1997) stresses how it takes courage and optimism to trust team members enough, to then be able to share power with them. However, the benefits of doing so, such as consultation and collaboration, is rewarding and is said to improve outcomes for early childhood services (Espinosa, 1997).

Robertson (2005) talks of the educational leader as one who has the ability to work in a complex environment. She highlights the education arena to be one of fast changing political and social contexts (Robertson, 2005). As suggested by Robertson (2005), the educational leader should have the skills to focus on building leadership capacity and capability regardless of what level they are within the organisation. She further explores this idea of capability development as she talks about the leader needing to have the skills to develop organisational capability as well as leadership capability. According to Robertson (2005) learning opportunities should also be a major focus of the educational leader. Robertson (2005) discusses how all members of an education community can contribute to the vision and goals of an organisation thereby having a role in the leadership capacity of that organisation. The major principle underpinning the work of Robertson (2005) is relationships which encourage collaboration and a culture of continual improvement across the organisation.

The work of Rodd (1998), Covey (2005) and Jorde-Bloom (1997) highlight common skills, characteristics and traits a leader may show (Table 1). The ability to provide, communicate and articulate vision has been stated as a key a skill that a leader should have (Covey, 2005; Jorde-Bloom, 1997; Rodd, 1998). Effective leaders can motivate, role model, set goals, and can help organisations to achieve their vision (Covey, 2005; Jorde-Bloom, 1997; Rodd, 1998). Dispositional characteristics and traits have also been highlighted by authours and include those such as integrity and courage (Covey, 2005; Rodd, 1998).

Table showing the skills, characteristics and traits identified to be essential to a leader

Rodd (1998)	Covey (2005)	Jorde-Bloom (1997)
Provide vision Communicate vision Set goals and objectives Develop a team culture	Visionary Communicator People focused	Clarify values Affirm values Set goals Articulate vision - creating the images of what an organisation could be. Ability to create a healthy tension between the current reality and an imagined ideal. Chart a course of action
Monitor and communicate achievements	Model Motivator	Ability to help an organisation achieve the vision
Facilitate and encourage the development of individuals	Caring Decision making Dedicated Expert Integrity Courageous	

Table 1

Although Table 1 has helped to show commonalities of skills, characteristics and traits of a leaders, Covey (2005) goes on to say that a person must also have a sense of who they are as a character. He discusses the importance of these areas in order to be an effective person:

- “Be proactive – being responsible for your own choices
- Begin with the end in mind – a mental vision of the future
- Put first things first – organizing and executing your most important priorities
- Think win-win – a frame of mind and heart that seeks mutual benefit and mutual respect in all interactions
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood – listen with the intent to understand others, rather than the intent to reply
- Synergize – not my way, not your way but a third way that is better than neither of us would come up with individually. Respecting, valuing celebrating each others differences.
- Sharpen the saw – constantly renewing ourselves physically, social/emotionally, mentally and spiritually. This increases our capacity to live in effectiveness”.

(Covey, 2005, pp. 152-153)

Working alongside others appears to be a shared discourse of leadership in early childhood education. Robertson (2005) has emphasised the fact that relationships underpin leadership. This notion has been evident in literature as authours such as Covey (2005), Espinosa (1997) and Rodd (1998), report that trust, integrity, courage, and strong values support effective leadership. Robertson (2005) and Espinosa (1997) have highlighted the suggestion of collaboration, consultation and leadership being shared. While the work of Covey (2005) reflects the importance of being effective as a person in order to have the capacity of being effective as a leader.

The literature in this study has proven to contribute a range of skills, characteristics and traits that add to a definition of leadership. However it seems that most of these skills, characteristics and traits are supported by the leader being able to form positive relationships with the people they lead. Having personal values and a disposition for building connections with people appear to be integral to the effective leader.

### **Status and early childhood education**

It could be argued that early childhood education is perceived as low status because it is largely female dominated. The association of feminine roles and responsibilities with the care and education of children, alongside the strongly dominated female profession of early childhood education teaching, creates a typical understanding that early childhood education is about caring, nurturing, connectedness and relationality therefore providing an image of being women's work (Fasoli, Scrivens, Woodrow, 2007).

Anne Stonehouse (1994) discusses the relevance of status and being recognised as a professional. She outlines how status is linked to society's view of the perceived importance of a job. Stonehouse (1994) highlights how early childhood education has been closely linked to mothering. Because of this link to mothering it is presumed to not require formal education. Stonehouse (1994) points out that early childhood education training courses in the past have been short in duration and have not been a requirement of the profession therefore leading to an assumption that working with children is an easy job (Stonehouse, 1994).

Stonehouse (1994) explains that low status creates a poor image within a community as it provides little opportunity for professional development, promotes unqualified or inadequately qualified personnel, offers poor working conditions, has low salary, has limited career opportunities, is isolated, has a high staff turnover, greater stress, low morale, low of standards.. Therefore to be a leader in early childhood education has little recognition amongst the professional community.

Ebbeck and Waniganyake (2004) discuss how Australia and Finland early childhood education professionals, experience low status and poor image contributing to the

challenges of being in leadership in early childhood education. Ebbeck and Waniganyake (2004) state that the early childhood education sector needs to explore the wider view of leader roles and responsibilities, and initiate more discussions about leadership in early childhood education, if the sector is to increase status amongst other professions.

Hayden (1996) outlines another contributing factor for the low status of early childhood education as a profession. She discusses the 1950 publicity around the negative effect of childcare on children. In a time when childcare was often incorrectly thought of as a negative experience for children as it was thought to create separation and life long emotional development issues, being a leader in the sector would have been problematic. The need to advocate, be heard and have the strength to promote the positive and essential learning benefits for young children that early childhood education could provide, leaders in the profession were not only having to form their own style of leadership, with little or no early childhood education leadership theories to support them, but they also had to promote the concept of early childhood education as a profession.

Ren-Etta Sullivan (2003) reiterates the undervaluing of early childhood education in society, “the pay is low, the benefits are minimal or non-existent, the turnover is high, there are few entry requirements and even fewer opportunities for professional development or training, and the pathways for career advancement are unclear” (Ren-Etta Sullivan, 2003, p. 4). She notes that leaders in early childhood education do not have a formed opinion about leadership within the field.

It appears that early childhood education has been perceived as inferior or of lower significance to other education sectors. However with regards to New Zealand, the Governments’ commitment to early childhood education has increased over the last decade and the sector itself is gaining more and more recognition. The requirement of a three year Diploma and the qualified teacher targets, along with many other recent policies has certainly raised the status of early childhood.

Although the importance and benefits of early childhood education are becoming more widely debated, it seems that the early childhood education sector still has to contend with

historical and hegemonic assumptions. Being a leader in this undervalued field has implications for professional recognition and career opportunities.

### **Leadership style**

It appears from the literature that there are different styles of leadership and that early childhood leadership is no exception.

According to Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004) leadership cannot exist without team work or knowledge. It is said that a distributed leadership model comes from developing a culture of learning where knowledge is shared in collaborative ways (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004). Where traditional leadership approaches rely on one leader giving commands, the distributed leadership model decentralises leadership. The distributed leadership model locates leadership in many different areas of activity, where the person in the team with the most expertise in that given area, leads the others in the team (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004).

Southworth (2002) believes that leadership will vary dependant on culture and situation. For example, the leadership style of leaders in early childhood education will differ from the leadership style of those leading in a boy's school.

The concepts of culture are highlighted in Scrivens (2003) article as she promotes the cultural difference in leadership styles between Māori, Pacifica and Pakeha societies. She makes note of these differences stating that sometimes, a leader is working behind the scenes, in the background (as can be more common in Māori leadership), while Pacifica leadership may be based around the church (Scrivens, 2003). The implication of these differences is that leadership comes in many different forms (Scrivens, 2003). Adding to this complexity, Scrivens (2003) highlights that leadership within early childhood education will differ depending on the type of early childhood education service and the size of the service. For example a home-based care coordinators role will differ from the role of a manager in a kindergarten association which will differ from the leader in an early

childhood education centre. This makes the diversity of leadership in early childhood education even more wide spread.

Rodd (2006) concludes some teachers link authority with power over others and so are reluctant to call themselves a leader. Therefore a shared leadership approach eliminates any reluctance to identify with being a leader (Rodd, 2006).

It appears that a distributed leadership model best suits the early childhood education context. This leadership approach is becoming more widely used in early childhood circles, particularly in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Clarkin-Phillips, 2007; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Thornton, 2003). The distributed leadership model is said to focus on building relationships, is reliant on team work and is about sharing knowledge in collaborative ways (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004).

From the relatively small pool of literature about early childhood leadership it appears that shared, collaborative, distributed models of leadership are preferred against transactional, hierarchal, authoritative types of leadership.

The literature has provided ideas around leadership in early childhood education.

These ideas have assisted my study.



## **METHODOLOGY**

I first started a discussion with the year four Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) students who I worked with at Wintec in 2006. These students were in their final six months heading toward graduation. This discussion started after people in the class had asked how I came to be a lecturer of early childhood education at tertiary level. I discussed with these students the fact that after being part of the 120 licensing points and Diploma of Teaching qualification transition and after the experiences I had had in teaching, hospital play specialty, head teaching in kindergarten and head teaching in education and care centres, I had valuable experiences to share with students. I discussed that I had worked hard to get my Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education), Bachelor of Teaching and Learning and how I was studying for my Post Graduate Diploma of Educational Leadership with the ambition to move on to complete a Masters of Educational Leadership (since these initial discussions I have graduated with a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and this thesis completes my Masters of Educational Leadership).

These discussions highlighted to me that these students perceived me to be young for my role and experience, which led me to formulate a research question around the investigation of how people come into positions of leadership in early childhood education. It became evident in these discussions that actually these students did not know how people deemed to be important in early childhood education came to be in positions of leadership and held in high regard. This concerned me as I wondered how these students could aspire to be in leadership positions when there was limited information to document the way that present leaders got to be where they are today. I spoke about this concern with students who said that they would be inspired to know how people came to be in the positions they are in. So I asked the students to list the people they consider to be most influential in early childhood education. The students named approximately 15 people who they most identified with, most aspired to emulate and who were most interested to know about their career journey. From this list I developed an ethics proposal and then approached six of the participants and

asked if they would be interested in participating, providing information about the project (Appendix 1, 2, and 5) and worked with my supervisor to form a questionnaire (Appendix 3) and question prompts to use during the interviews (Appendix 4).

According to Gibbs (2006) narrative inquiry is a way of giving meaning about “teachers experiences through hearing their voices and the language (such as metaphors, phrases, and intonations) they use” (p.242). Because of the metaphors, phrases and intonations that do come through in narrative inquiry the researcher has to interpret the meaning behind what is being said. Throughout the discussions with participants I clarified any language that was being used to understand the true meaning of the conversation. Gibbs (2006) also suggests that the way narrative inquiry enters into the personal accounts of the participant and gives an appreciation of how an identity is formed and provides authenticity to the circumstances which are being discussed throughout the narrative.

Webster and Mertova (2007) discuss how stories provide insights into people which are often ignored or unheard and how stories form much of the way people learn. The fact that people enjoy hearing stories made narrative inquiry the best method to implement for this project(Webster & Mertova, 2007). I really wanted the reader to hear the voice of the leader (participant) as the participant’s story was the depth and inspiration for readers in this project. Narrative inquiry allowed me to work with the participant to document their career journey in a story form.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss the implications the researcher can have when using narrative inquiry as they highlight how threads linking incidents and experiences to each other can be missed in the interpretation of the story. However as Webster and Mertova (2007) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) further point out, these implications can become part of the narrative inquiry method as they help to set the scene of the story. This idea can be linked to that of Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as they discuss how the qualitative researcher stresses “the socially constructed nature

of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p.13). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) also discuss how the qualitative researcher looks to answer how social experience is created and give it meaning. This dialogue highlights the position of the researcher as the writer of the participant story thereby imparting meaning and insight of the participant’s narrative. Creswell (2002) discusses the process of “restorying” whereby the researcher gathers the stories, analyses them for key elements and the rewrites the story to put into chronological context. In some instances I have paraphrased or taken excerpts from individual stories however I have attempted not to use restorying as a technique as I wanted the voice of the participant to be a true representation of what the participant had said, and untouched by my interpretation. I wanted the participants to be able to tell their story, therefore this study is qualitative research where “a few people may be asked many questions or allowed to tell their own stories in their own way” (Mutch, 2005, p. 43). I felt that this was the best way to document the pathway each participant took to reach their current position and I did not want my voice to influence their story. Open ended interviews form qualitative research which aims to uncover the lived reality and meanings of each participant (Mutch, 2005).

### **Data Collection**

As Mutch (2005) suggests when deciding on the research topic, the researchers should consider the size, scope, time, resources, access, skill, previous knowledge and motivation when selecting the research topic. Therefore I chose to work with six participants, who lived in the North Island of New Zealand, using a narrative inquiry interview technique, alongside questionnaires.

For this project six participants were interviewed. The narrative nature of the interviews, whereby “individuals tell their personal accounts to researcher” (Creswell, 2002, p. 521) allowed me to ask impromptu questions as the dialogue between the participant and myself developed. Therefore the data collected and documented is the voice of the participant.

Due to my own interpretation, the transcription and interpretation of the interviews posed an ethical consideration for me as the researcher. I was particularly mindful that due to my interpretation and the personal lens I was using to tell the participant's story, I was actually transcribing the exact words the participant used which related their story appropriately to this thesis. I sent the transcriptions to the participants for proofing and editing to ensure they were being truly represented however how I used their story in the project has been a process of linking the participant's voice to this and other research.

Bernard (2000) talks about unstructured interviews. Narrative inquiry can be linked to unstructured interviewing as the interviewer is working to let the participant open up and share their story. Bernard (2000) speaks of this type of unstructured interview as most useful when the researcher has unlimited time and is able to revisit the participant. For this research I was unable to revisit each participant due to travel constraints so I used questionnaires to gain an insight to the participant's views before interviewing them.

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. Because I wanted to get certain information from each participant such as the participant's qualifications, sex, age, and what roles they had held during their career, a questionnaire (Appendix 3) was a data collection tool that could be used across the six participants which allowed me more time during the interview to hear the participant's story. The questionnaire also provided me with prior personal knowledge about the participant which I could expand on more during the interviews.

According to Mutch (2005) questionnaires are one way of conducting a survey. Although surveys are used to gather quantitative data the use of qualitative or open questions ask the participant for their ideas, preferences, and opinions in a narrative way (Mutch, 2005). Therefore I wrote the survey questions, in the form of a questionnaire, about topics which could be compared such as age, sex, qualifications, and positions held by the participants over their career journey. These types of

questions made it easier to draw comparisons and insights from each participant. Once I had collated the questionnaire information I was able to introduce the participants as real people in this thesis. By using both qualitative (a research approach where participants look at depth at a few subjects and share their opinion, views, ideas) and quantitative (a research approach that draws on numerical data to quantify explanations) questions within the questionnaire participants were able to respond to questions giving their own opinion and ideas (Mutch, 2005). Closed questions were used in this questionnaire which asked participants to rate their opinion on a Likert scale (giving quantitative data). This type of survey question is faster to answer for the participant and can be pre-coded to compare on analysis (Mutch, 2005). The Likert scale is often used in questionnaires “where respondents show their agreement with a statement along a continuum with a certain number of choices” (Mutch, 2005. p.121).

A survey is defined by Mutch (2005) as “a quantitative approach to gathering large-scale data that are able to be generalised (p.225). A questionnaire is defined by Mutch (2005) as “a written form of a survey based around a series of pre-set questions” (p.223). Given Mutch’s (2005) definition of a questionnaire being a form of survey, I feel it is important to provide more information about the survey as a research tool. The questionnaire I used in this research was a type of survey whereby both quantitative and qualitative questions were asked.

Zimmerman & Muraski (1995) discuss that surveys are used to gather information about people’s behaviours, opinions, attitudes and observations. This idea is supported by Fowler (1998) who believes that surveys gather “information about people’s experiences, what they have done, their current situations, their feelings and perceptions...” (p.81). It was the opinions, attitudes and experiences of the participants that I wanted to capture most. One of the purposes of this study was to document the participant’s journey into leadership. I felt that to truly reflect that journey I needed to capture the participant’s ideas their pathway into leadership and

their ideas about leadership. One of the useful ways to gain this insight into was to gather information through the questionnaire.

According to de Vaus (1991) the survey is used to examine variables across cases. These variables are linked by systematic analysis which looks at the variation of characteristics (de Vaus, 1991). As this research project was around describing people's opinions of leadership, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences during their career, the variation of characteristics across the participants was a challenging consideration in this project. Making comparisons about people's experiences and beliefs in this research was challenging due to the variety and amount of experiences participants were sharing. Therefore the inclusion of Likert scales and quantitative questions helped when analysing the information I had gathered. de Vaus (1991) discusses how surveys systematically investigate data in a structured way highlighting links, comparisons and conflicts of each variable whether they are people or objects. The questionnaire I used in this thesis gave structure to the data I was gathering allowing me to draw links and comparisons.

I wanted the participant's to share their journey and insights into leadership in early childhood education. I had question prompts (Appendix 4) which I used to get the conversation going throughout the interviews or to draw the conversation back to the main topics, however the questions did not have to be asked in a particular order nor did each question have to be covered at every interview. I had suggested to the participants that the interview would take approximately 2 hours and in most circumstances this timeframe was sufficient. In some instances the participant carried on the conversation although I had informed them we could end the discussion there. Bernard (2000) highlights the need to probe participants effectively in order to get the participant to produce more information. In no instances did I need to probe the participant for more information, however I often felt curious to hear about a topic, experience or viewpoint of a participant, so I would question more about that topic. In each interview the discussion took its own form, pace and excitement as the participant recalled their journey to get to where they are today.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe narrative research as being when inquirers tell of the experience of individual's lives and write narratives of the participant's experiences. In some interviews the participants were prompted to add more, clarify or elaborate on topics and conversations, while other participants shared a dialogue where topics of conversation took a slightly different direction. Because participants were telling their story I was sometimes faced with an ethical dilemma whereby participants were so willing to share their journey the information I gained was on a personal level about the participant's life. Although I wanted to gain as much information about the participant's career journey which in turn would bring up some of the personal tribulations they had faced, I found that through narrative inquiry I gained information which seemed too personal for me to submit throughout this project. I struggled with distinguishing the difference between personal milestones which increased that participant's leadership capacity and the personal life of the participant that came into the project through the style of narrative inquiry.

All of the data shared by the participant is as equally important to this thesis and the ideas, concepts, beliefs and aspirations of the participant are equally valued. Given the narrative style of the interviews, not all participants commented on every topic covered in this thesis; however each participant made comment to perspectives, issues and leadership discourse that were discussed during the interview.

For me the ethical consideration of omitting or including a personal account was one that remained throughout this project. Although the participant was fully aware of the intent of the narrative, the nature of narrative inquiry and the relaxed style of the conversations allowed more sharing of personal milestones and challenges than I had expected. Therefore participants were very open and gave a lot of very personal information. In some instances the complexity of the story being shared throughout the narrative did not offer anymore meaning to this research and I made the decision that I would omit that part of the discussion in preference for maintaining that participant's privacy.

The use of the participants' real names as opposed to a pseudonym was an ethical consideration of this thesis. I wanted readers of the research to be able to identify the participant in order to gain as much insight into the career journey as possible, however I did not want to risk the misuse of information and insight by any readers as they learned more personal information about the participant. In many cases the participant told their career story which also included much of their personal story as well. Some participants spoke of frustrations they had with different roles, employers and their positive and negative experiences of leaders. On one hand for me as the researcher these feelings, experiences and personal thoughts of the participant were essential to truly depict the journey into leadership through the eyes of the participant while on the other hand, posed some challenges around safety of the employers, participant and personal right to express views and ideas about their own experience. Therefore I came to the conclusion that the purpose for this thesis would be negated if real names of the participants were omitted as how can an aspiring leader find out about a leader of inspiration if the leader is not identified by name in research. I spoke to each participant about the use of their name throughout this research and ensured that informed consent was given before using the participants' real name was used. Throughout this research I have not identified any employers. Each participant has proof read their transcript and has agreed to the information used throughout this study.

I recorded the interview by using a tape recorder. Although this old style of recording humoured some of participants given that most recording devices can be transcribed through the use of a USB cable to a laptop, I found the playing, and transcribing of the tapes beneficial. Through the transcription process I was able to record exactly what was said thereby capturing the true voice and better represent the participant. Every time I played the tapes and wrote what the participant had said, I felt even more inspired to continue with this project. Bernard (2000) also believes that using a tape is an effective way to record permanent information that can be



archived. At times I interviewed the participants in busy places such as cafés however the tape recordings were always clear and easily heard.

The participants were sent the transcription of their interviews for proofing and editing.

## INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

**Pennie Brownlee** is a female who is Pakeha<sup>2</sup>. Pennie has been in early childhood education for thirty five years. She was first inspired to become an early childhood education teacher after her daughter was born.

Pennie's qualifications include:

1997 TEFL Certificate. Society of Arts and Cambridge University

1967 Trained Teachers Certificate, Ardmore Teachers College

Pennie's experience includes being self employed as Education for the Head and Heart, principal academic staff member, senior staff member and co-founder of Te Haeata, freelance tutor, three decades plus of delivering adult education, eleven years in primary teaching, Playcentre parent holding positions of education officer and president.

**Janette Kelly** is a female who is Pakeha. Janette trained at Hamilton Teachers college, after coming straight from seventh form at high school. Janette has been in early childhood education for approximately 30 years.

Janette's qualifications include:

Kindergarten Diploma

Bachelor of Social Science – majoring in Political Studies

Master of Education

Janette has had roles in kindergartens, she was a matron of a home for the elderly, preschool teacher in Australia, psychiatric assistant, relieving head teacher, union delegate for early childhood, Education Field Officer for NZEI Te Riu Roa, retail organiser and senior tutor.

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<sup>2</sup> Pakeha is a Māori word for foreigner, white New Zealander (Barlow, 1991).

**Arama Koopu** is a male who is of Māori ethnicity. He started Playcentre as a young child which his mother co-ordinated. During his first 5 years of life Arama says he experienced early childhood education from a student perspective. From the age of 5-13 Arama furthered his early childhood education experience as he watched and cared for his younger brother and other young children in a ‘whānau’<sup>3</sup> environment. This ‘whānau’ environment stretched from Arama’s home to his close relative’s homes and further into Marae or communal homes. From 12 years of age, Arama attended boarding school.

Arama’s qualifications are:

1991 Bachelor of Social Science (Waikato University)

1996 Higher Teaching Diploma (Waikato Teachers College)

Arama has had various leadership roles during his career including kōhanga reo kaiawhina (teacher), pouako (supervisor), parent educator, working with Māori groups in their quest to set up early childhood education centres and playgroups. He has worked with the Ministry of Education and as Pouawhina for a kindergarten association.

Other careers Arama has had include being a forestry worker and contractor (scrub cutting and felling) before he came into the early childhood education field. He has also been a care giver for adults in a home while he was working in early childhood education.

Arama has been on various education and sporting boards or within the governance of schools/Kōhanga Reo, whānau and sporting bodies (e.g. current Chair of the Māori Basketball Tournament Committee).

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<sup>3</sup> Whānau is a Māori concept referring to a family group, family and extended family (Mead, 2003).

**Jenny Ritchie** is a female who is Pakeha. Jenny Ritchie has been in early childhood education since the mid-seventies. Jenny was initially inspired to become an early childhood education teacher after seeing the work of her aunt in a child-care centre in Los Angeles, and working there in the mid to late 1970s.

Jenny Ritchie's qualifications include:

2003 PhD (Waikato)

1990 MEd (Counseling)(Hons) (Waikato)

1988 BSocSci (Waikato)

1981 DipNZFKU (Hamilton Teachers' College)

Since being in early childhood education Jenny Ritchie has had the role of Associate Professor early childhood teacher education, senior lecturer, lecturer, child-care worker in New Zealand and Los Angeles, kindergarten teacher, Playcentre parent, Parentline counselor, Kōhanga reo kaiako (Teacher).

Jenny has a Masters degree in counseling, which was achieved during her ongoing early childhood career.

**David Spraggs** is a male and Pakeha. David has been involved in early childhood education since he was sixteen and volunteered throughout his senior schooling years at high school, at the local Kindergarten.

David's qualifications are:

1983 - Diploma of New Zealand Kindergarten Union

1990 - Certificate in Adult Teaching

2001 – Diploma in Holistic Education

During his career David has been in roles including kindergarten teacher, kindergarten head teacher, early intervention teacher, and facilitator of in-service courses, guest lecturer, childcare educator and childcare supervisor, homebased carer, professional development coordinator, national coordinator for implementation of Te Whāriki, business development coordinator, teaching services manager for a kindergarten association and professional development facilitator.

David had no other career before early childhood education as he left school and went straight into teacher training.

**Jenny Varney** is a female who is Pakeha. Jenny has been in early childhood education for 20 years. Jenny was initially inspired to become an early childhood education teacher after having contact with the kindergarten her sons attended. Opportunities to work as an unqualified reliever in kindergarten interested Jenny in finding out 'why kindergarten teachers do what they do'. A teacher in that kindergarten encouraged Jenny to apply – something she had done after being a dental assistant.

Jenny Varney's qualifications include.

Diploma of Teaching

Higher Diploma of Teaching

Advanced Diploma of teaching

Bachelor of Education

Current: Master of Educational Administration student

During her career Jenny Varney has been in the role of Student President Kindergarten Teachers Association, teacher in kindergarten, head teacher in kindergarten, Acting Field Officer NZEI Te Riu Roa (New Zealand Education Institute – the union representing primary teachers, early childhood teachers, primary principals and support staff in schools), NZEI Te Riu Roa Early Childhood National

Caucus and National Executive member, NZEI representative to Ministry of Education, manager/supervisor in childcare centres, lecturer, manager member services of field based teacher education provider, New Zealand Teachers Council Representative for early childhood education, kindergarten senior teacher, New Zealand Kindergartens Incorporated Board Member, team leader of the senior teacher team at a kindergarten association.

Before entering the early childhood education profession Jenny Varney was a Hospital Laboratory Technologist.

Table showing the careers and qualifications of the participants.

Participant	Careers	Qualifications	Positions held	Present position
Pennie Brownlee	Primary school teacher Early childhood education Author	TEFL Certificate Trained Teachers Certificate	Playcentre parent and teacher Playcentre education officer Playcentre president and life member Author Workshop leader Mentor Adult educator	Adult education Author
Janette Kelly	Matron in an elderly peoples home Early childhood education Union official Early childhood education	Master of Education Diploma of Teaching	Teacher kindergarten Matron in elderly peoples homes Retail organiser Teacher preschool Psychiatric assistant Head teacher kindergarten Manager in kindergarten association Union field officer	Senior lecturer in a university
Arama Koopu	Forestry Carer of adults with special needs Early childhood education	- Bachelor Degree - Higher Teaching Diploma	Caregiver for adults with special needs Kōhanga Reo kaiawhina Parent educator Licensing coordinator Ministry of Education advisor	Pouawhina within a kindergarten association
David Spraggs	Early childhood education	- Diploma New Zealand Kindergarten Union - Certificate in Adult Teaching - Diploma in Holistic Education	Kindergarten teacher Kindergarten head teacher early intervention teacher Facilitator of in-service courses Guest lecturer Childcare educator Childcare supervisor Homebased carer Professional development coordinator National coordinator for implementation of Te Whāriki Business development coordinator (in early childhood education) Manager in a kindergarten association Professional development facilitator	Teacher education

Jenny Ritchie	Counselor Early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PhD</li> <li>- Masters in Education</li> <li>- Bachelor Social Science</li> <li>- Diploma New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior lecturer</li> <li>Lecturer</li> <li>Childcare teacher</li> <li>Kindergarten teacher</li> <li>Playcentre parent and teacher</li> <li>Counselor</li> <li>Kōhanga Reo</li> </ul>	Associate Professor early childhood education teacher education in a university of technology
Jenny Varney	Hospital Laboratory Technologist Early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diploma of Teaching</li> <li>- Higher Diploma of Teaching</li> <li>- Advanced Diploma of Teaching</li> <li>- Bachelor of Education</li> <li>- Current Master of Educational Administration student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student president</li> <li>Teacher kindergarten</li> <li>Head teacher kindergarten</li> <li>Acting field officer</li> <li>Caucus member</li> <li>Union: ECE advisory group (caucus Chair and Co Chair)</li> <li>Union representative</li> <li>Manger/supervisor childcare</li> <li>Union executive member, Lecturer</li> <li>Manager member services</li> <li>Union executive member</li> <li>Teachers Council</li> <li>Senior teacher</li> <li>NZK board member</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team leader senior teacher (management) team within a kindergarten association.</li> <li>New Zealand Teachers Council Board.</li> </ul>

Table 2



## CHAPTER ONE

### **The career pathway – planned or unplanned**

A key focus for this thesis was to explore the career pathways of early childhood education leaders. I wanted to find out whether there was a set path, which leaders had taken and were there commonalities across leaders that allowed them more opportunity to reach leadership positions? I really wanted to explore the idea of whether these leaders had been teachers, then head teachers, supervisors or centre managers before coming to be known as a leader in the field. Is there a set path to follow, before one can take up the position of a leader in the sector? Was this a perception or a lived reality that the participants of this project experienced?

In primary and secondary schooling the pathway into leadership positions such as principal are driven from experience and competence as a teacher. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the principal of a school has worked their way up through the hierarchal system of beginning teacher, experienced teacher, head of department, deputy principal and then principal. The only case where this evidence differs is in the hard to staff areas where teachers may assume leadership positions due to lack of teaching staff. This shows the difference between the compulsory schooling sectors and the early childhood education sector where the journey into leadership positions in early childhood education are less defined and planned.

The evidence from this study suggests that leaders in early childhood education do not necessarily come through a hierarchal system of being a beginning teacher, head teacher and manager to reach a position of teacher education within the field of early childhood education. Participants of this study highlight the fact that they did not have a planned pathway to leadership. This study shows the journey of each identified leader to be varied and not based on prior positions they have held in the sector but rather a variety of experiences across a variety of positions and situations.

Rodd (2006) talks about leadership not being about positional status but more about “open leadership opportunities to those early childhood education people who choose to take up purposeful activities aimed at improving quality and moving the field forward” (Rodd, 2006, p. 12) .

Comments from the participants reinforce the idea that being a leader within early childhood education is not based on coming up through the hierarchal structures of teaching. For example Arama was asked if his career path was planned to which he replied:

*“It was not planned at all but when I look back my life it wasn’t so much as falling into the position but my life journey has set me up to be able to step into this sector of education. For example in my family structure with a large extended whānau, with all our Uncles and Aunties living in a communal environment allowed me to develop an appreciation of the different age group levels. Before ten I knew how to change a nappy, for my brother, nieces and nephews around the place. It was all about life. Everybody took part and parcel in the childcare – so no it wasn’t a pathway it was a way of living I have never aimed to work in kindergarten, I have never aimed to work in Kōhanga Reo, and I never aimed to work with anybody I currently work with. I have never had a goal specific to that area so do I plan, do I have a career pathway? No my career is dictated solely by Māori children specifically and Māori children in general and what the need is for children and their parents. So I will shift to wherever the greatest need is and my ability to see where the greatest need is or the best position for myself to be in or be around.”*

When asked about whether David’s career path was planned, David said:

*“The beginning of it was. In the beginning it was a choice between kindergarten training and primary school training. I was accepted for both. I decided to go down the path of kindergarten where I felt teaching and learning was less constrained by the Department of Education, where as primary seemed a whole lot more constrained to me. I am not a goal setter as that is not in my*

*personality type but I decided I would get through training and see where that led”.*

Jenny Ritchie believes that:

*“Because I have never really been ambitious I just ended up a lecturer without planning it. When I finished my first degree I realised I had to keep studying to keep sane. A Masters in Counseling looked good as it built on my experience of working with families. At that time my friend with whom I was doing Treaty (Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi<sup>4</sup>) education was going for a job at the teachers college and wanted me to job share with her, so we both took the position and went part time each. I could have carried on with counseling or Treaty education but I ended up in early childhood education and I’ve kept up with counseling informally and the Treaty education stuff all the way through so I could go and do that if I wanted a change”.*

When asked whether she fell into leadership positions Jenny R responded:

*“I tried to avoid them. In a sense I didn’t want to be an administrator. I just couldn’t see my energy being poured into those positions. I see that leadership in a big institution could be demoralising where they do not care. Where you never have enough money to do the things that you want to do, and look after the staff the way you want to because of money must just be so frustrating. I admire people who can do that but in that sense I wouldn’t go into that type of leadership role”.*

Pennie Brownlee does not see herself as having a career path. She did not have a set plan in progressing through her career nor does she identify with having a “career” as such.

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<sup>4</sup> Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi: A founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand signifying the bringing together of Māori and British Crown in 1840 (Barlow, 1991).

Pennie wanted children in her class to do well, have fun and be happy. She believed that if the children in her class were not having fun and being happy then she did not deserve her wage each week.

Jenny Varney believes that her career was unplanned and even getting into teaching was unplanned. When asked “Do you think your career was planned” Jenny V replied:

*“Non planned and in fact even getting into teaching was a bit unplanned because I left school and I chose between teaching and a science career and I went to a laboratory, was a laboratory technician and then had children. I was getting older and I thought that I wanted to go back to work and I thought about how I would return to work, and then all of a sudden, the laboratory didn’t interest me as much and I was spending an awful lot of time helping in kindergartens. I had done a little bit of teacher aid work, relieving, and it fascinated me. I kept thinking these two teachers know more than I know about why these children are doing this and that need to know got me into teachers college. My youngest was 5 when I started my training. Also I had 2 kindergarten teachers, in a kindergarten that I was working in quite a lot, and they encouraged me. And the dental nurse had gone to teaching and made me think – ok so you can do another career. So I went to teachers college and I found our class was interesting. We were in thirds, a third was return to work people, second career, a third were younger woman who had had a change of heart, and a third were school leavers. So it was a fabulous class. It was interesting. I had people around me who were doing the same thing as me. It was good. That was not planned. Not to that degree. I didn’t leave school and plan a career in teaching – I followed my interest”.*

I asked Jenny Varney if the opportunities were presented to her or did she seek them out:

*“Yes and no. You have to realise that something is an opportunity and then you have see your fit with it. In my current position I saw it and I saw the fit,*

*whereas my position before that someone else suggested it to me, and I saw it as an opportunity and I also saw it as a fit. You have to see your fit and sometimes if you don't see it someone else can suggest it for you, sometimes you see it for yourself. Just because someone says you should do it doesn't mean you will – it's about you recognising the opportunity and seeing your fit with it. If you've thought about it enough and you have done the work and you have the skills, then you are going to see that mesh”.*

Janette Kelly spoke about her journey into leadership.

*“It was a decision to leave Wellington and come back home. When I was doing my Masters as part of my professional development, as part of the teachers union I had taken time out to finish my thesis. I didn't end up doing my thesis because I did papers in the end so I worked part time in an early childhood centre. After a 15 year break I went back teaching for about 6 months fulltime and a year part time just got to see and do all the stuff in practice so I was studying early childhood education (ece) at Masters level at Victoria University. I tutored a couple of papers at Victoria one semester while I was a student and I was in a centre 3 days a week. All the work I had been involved in doing in terms of paper parity and in terms of the strategic plan, under Labour Government was like I was getting to see what it felt like when you worked in amongst it and I had never taught under Te Whariki even though I had been privy to a whole of drafts to the exemplars, all the curriculum initiatives in the Ministry and all that kind of stuff. So being out there in amongst it all was really cool. I thought that when we moved back up here (Waikato) that I would get a job at the local kindergarten or community based early childhood education centre and plod along – you know and have a simple life. Then this job came up at University and someone said – you've got a Masters, you've got the experience - why don't you come here? I took seventeen years to get my first degree and five to get my second and I still had that thing from my teachers at high school that you don't have what it takes to go to university. So yes it just happened. Coming back to Waikato was not planned”.*

For the participants in this study none of them deliberately set a career path in motion that would result in them being in positions of leadership. It was through situations where others encouraged them or opportunities were offered that allowed these participants to become leaders.

Perhaps this unplanned pathway to leadership is due to the ideas these participants had about leadership. As the participants became leaders after encouragement or opportunities being offered to them it may be that early childhood teachers do not identify as having leadership potential due to the low status of the profession. As Rodd (2006) points out, early childhood professionalism will improve when early childhood teachers define themselves as leading professionals. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004) suggest that the reluctance of early childhood teachers to identify with and engage in discussion about leadership is to do with the way early childhood teachers link leadership to ideas about power and aggression. This creates a reluctance to identify as a leader due to the collaborative nature of early childhood education where there is not a strong hierarchical structure.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Perceptions of leadership

Rodd (2006) talks of leadership being displayed in different ways and in different forms. This was evident when I asked my students who they believed to be leaders in the field in view of choosing participants for this research project. One of the insights I gained from the conversation with these students was that, in their opinion, there appeared to be two types of leaders in the sector. There were those leaders who worked in the early childhood education centres. According to the students they were viewed as leaders who influenced the day-to-day teaching practice within their own centre. The students saw these people as leaders of the people they worked with. These leaders were seen by the students to have a lower level of influence compared to those leaders who were in a position to influence the theories and future teaching practice of the early childhood education sector. It was the leaders who were working in teacher education and/or writing articles for the academic arena that were seen as having influence over the theories and future teaching practice of the early childhood education sector. I wondered if these people were seen as leaders because, in the eyes of these students, one has to have influence over the sector in order to be a leader.

Due to this perception of the students, I was interested in hearing the participants' ideas about leadership.

As each participant spoke about leadership and being a leader it was apparent that each person had ideas about what is important or not important for leadership. Life experience, having values and an understanding of one's self were ideas shared by some of the participants. The opinions of what defined a leader were explored. Collaboration, team work, power and authority became part of the discussion relating to participants' ideas around leadership.

According to Rodd (2006) effective leadership is about creating a community through offering inspiration to others and sharing ideas. It includes being a role model and setting an example. Rodd (2006) believes that leadership is about influencing the behaviour of others so they contribute to a creative direction of the early childhood

education service. Leadership is being able to articulate direction and work with a team (Rodd, 2006). Rodd (2006) identifies collaboration and the inclusion of staff as important aspects of a leader's role. She states that providing opportunities for professional development and progress, as well as planning and implementing change are all important in the work of an effective leader. Guiding parents in a way that enhances personal growth and empowerment were other aspects which Rodd (2006) highlighted linking to effective leadership.

The participants in this study have identified a number of these ideas in their discussions about leadership and the following examples illustrate this.

Pennie emphasised the necessity for a leader to make team agreements. Pennie encourages agreements in her classes whereby a shared meaning of integrity is explored and the expectation is that all people will act with courtesy, integrity and behave well. Pennie believes that by creating a safe place for people, barriers are dismantled - temporarily at first - but very often permanently, and "real and true" relationships can develop. Pennie discussed that when these leadership skills are obvious the group will work together effectively. *"Without the safe place for relationships to develop, the team members will continue to work with the fight/flight part of their brain engaged and no one will get anywhere productively"*. Pennie Brownlee highlighted her belief that a leader must be honest and moral whereby the leader does not do things "because someone tells them to". She also believes that leaders need to be courteous, respectful and have integrity. Furthermore Pennie believes that leadership within early childhood education is no different to any other leadership model, in any other sector or business.

Jenny V spoke of the importance of working collegially.

*"Leadership is a practice which can be concurrent, collective and collegial, links team members through a network of interpersonal relationships and trust. Through leadership organisations become sustainable. I think it's an activity action based thing that is undertaken by a collective. It is concurrent; it can happen at the same time in different ways to different degrees. I know the word concurrent and collective pops up in lots of literature about leadership but I think you cannot avoid using them really as they satisfy my sense of team, collectivity"*



*and that it can happen concurrently, that people can pop up and down. It's a team and an action and activity. But there is another word – deliberate. I think you might find yourself accidentally in a situation but think people intentionally pursue it. Leadership for me is that distributed notion and its intentional that is how I see it happening in my worlds. I know it happens in lots of different ways in lots of different worlds. Those are my key words. It's not accidental, that leadership happens in that way. I think its hard work, it adds an extra layer. You have to be really trusting of other people that distributed and shared leadership does not mean that every body has to do everything and everyone has to make a decision about every thing. I think that is just hard work. I think you have to have trust. Then you let other people get on with it, and then you come back you are informed and you hear about it and you say well done. Fantastic even though you didn't have a hand in making that decision or implementing it. You have to trust so trust is a big part of it".*

Arama highlights the importance of a leader being sure about their values. He spoke of the leader as a mentor. Arama discusses the importance of knowing oneself and being comfortable with who they are as person in order to know the direction they are heading to.

*“Leadership to me is not as important as being a mentor; as someone who is comfortable with their lives, sure about their values and how values play an important part in their life. So I don't look at leadership as the key, I look at the person who has been able to live their life and be comfortable living it and know that there is a direction that the person is heading to. So if leadership does come into the play it's about leading myself only so that I am more of a mentor for other people so that others can follow. I look at a leader as a person who has followers behind them and that is not my choice that people follow me – that is their choice and for me leadership is a personal thing. If you can lead yourself and be sure about where you are going based on your values and other aspects of your life then maybe you area leader – maybe not depends on the individual and how you see it. Again I'm looking forward so leadership to me is that I need to*

*know where I am going, my direction and I need to lead myself and if other people find that my journey has got some value for them, whether they think they can relate to the values I have then I may be a leader but I think you need to ask them. I think that leadership relates directly to 'purpose'. Those with a purpose in life have a clear pathway. Those with a clear pathway know where they are going. Those who know where they are going can make informed choices. Those who are aware that they are making conscious choices are generally happier because they are in control of their destiny. In Māori we say "Kia mohio koe ki a koe i te tuatahi- You must know who you are first (then you can identify your value in society)".*

Like Arama, Pennie Brownlee contributes another perspective toward the definition of a leader in early childhood education as she discusses the importance of teaching from the heart and inspiring teachers to become more of who they are. Pennie Brownlee defines leadership as

*"To be able to work alongside someone, believing that they, like me, want the best. My job is to work with them so that they are inspired and they lift their game and become more of who they are. When they (like me) are inspired, (in spirit) their eyes shine and their heart sings, and our children deserve nothing less".*

Jenny Ritchie spoke of the perceptions of leadership from a cultural perspective.

*"Leadership is situational and transactional. It's not about a person but a context. Also it's about knowing how to lead. People assume one is a leader so one person has to create the space for the other. Leadership is a very western thinking view. Leadership should be about creating spaces for other voices to counter the dominance of Pakeha voices. The power dynamics in a team need to be visible. I think that often leaders try to make the hierarchical power dynamics invisible as if they do not exist. But they do exist so should be made visible. By making power invisible it creates power struggles".*

Arama also presented ideas about leadership linked to culture.

*“I need to answer that in the different areas of my life. When I look at my job which is leadership around strategic planning, governance, management and administration, the leadership style is well defined and when I look at my life and my home where I was brought up I wouldn’t say totally different but it has similar values but different ways of being carried out. For example whānaunatanga in my job means that in my manager’s team I have a relationship with my work mates which is based on our jobs. Everything we do and the values, and the way we undertake the values of whānaunatanga is around maybe something like “hello what how are you today. What did you get up to yesterday?” When I go back to my family it’s a hug and a kiss. So the value of whānaunatanga is slightly different and it has more extreme value with my family that it would with my colleagues. The actual traits in leadership are something that needs to be analysed in different areas. But if you’re asking me about my work, leadership that is following a leader where governance is prevalent and common in the main stream sector - following one person who gets paid more than you, who has a job description that says you must follow them. Or a job description which I have says that that person I must follow and respect. Again respect will be defined in a different way with my Kaumatua than my general Manager”.*

Arama goes onto identify how cultural views of leadership can result in conflict that needs to be managed.

*“I guess a conflict early on in my life as the way that those values were carried out collided at the same time and I guess there is a conflict and I wouldn’t say the conflict is negative. I think the conflict is positive because it allowed me, similar to the positive and negative role models, allowed me to see what was worth following and what wasn’t. So the balance for me is to find what type of value is happening in those kind of areas. My desire is to follow the person that has a similar way of carrying out their value whether they are in their workplace or in their home so what I want to see is a person who has their family values and can apply them in their workplace. That is the foundations*

*that have kept me alive. So the person needs to be able to live that value at home and at work and maintain some relationship with that. If it is too different so the person does something at work and is this type of person at work, and is this type of person at home I think then they have conflict and I look at that as something that I need to be aware of so I don't step into that. So is there a conflict for me. I don't think there is a conflict for me now because I am able to analyse that. But that has come later in life".*

Scrivens (2003) emphasised the idea that leadership style may vary based on the culture of the leader, stating that Māori leadership may look very different to other leadership models. Scrivens (2003) added that Māori leaders may prefer to be less visible in leadership as they may choose to lead from the back of the team, working behind the scenes. Arama and Jenny R have identified tensions they feel from a Māori perspective further highlighting that leadership may change based on culture.

David Spraggs discussed his beliefs about leadership in our interview stating that

*"Serving others within early childhood education and providing provocations that support others "pondering" defines leadership in early childhood education".*

David sees his role as a leader thus:

*"It is the ability to get inside other people's heads, play a little and allow them to reflect on their own thinking. Because I can't change someone else's thinking only they can. But if I can tilt their world out of balance for a moment and give them something else to tilt their thinking. So my job has always been to get people to ponder their own assumptions, their own world views, particularly around teaching and learning and children. And if I can get into someone's head and make them ponder their own thinking and at the outcome of that they walk away going oh he's a lunatic, or oh I hadn't thought of that, then my job is done. It doesn't matter what they thought so long as they thought. So to provoke disturbance in the minds of teachers fits.*

The issue of power and authority is believed to be the reason why early childhood education teachers shy away from the discussion about leadership. The discussion of power and control was also highlighted by Jenny Ritchie when during my interview with her as she was asked to define leadership.

*“I don’t use the term much – early childhood education for me is characterised by non-hierarchical relationships and networks. The term ‘leadership’ has associations for me of hierarchical, elitist, power dynamics, although I am aware that it, like any other terminology, may be resurrected, reclaimed, reconstructed.”*

Although the participants all had ideas about effective leadership and the necessary traits and characteristics, it was less obvious whether they saw them selves as leaders. There was a variety of thoughts in relation to their respective roles David Spraggs spoke of how he sees himself as a thorn in the side of organisational structure when referring to Government agency and the expectations Government organisations, policy and national interests place on teachers.

*“but mainly a thorn in the side of organizational structures that stop teachers from thinking and expect them to be automatons. I find that “thinkers” don’t get lots of support in our sector if they don’t think the same way everyone does. It’s a little sad when we espouse difference as important”.*

I asked about where Pennie sees herself fitting into the current early childhood education sector she replied :

*“I do not fit into it. I exist doing what I do alongside the sector. That way I can offer education regardless of budgets, NZQA, faculty machinations...Alongside the sector I see myself as a mentor who works to inspire practitioners to lift their understanding and their game so that it is more respectful, more developmentally appropriate, and emotionally safe and inspiring for the child. Most importantly, I hope that I can inspire people to work from their heart space as that is the key to ‘educare’ the leading out. (Educare is italicised*

*representing the Latin root of the word and not the word that Magda Gerber coined in English short for education and care)”*

Jenny Ritchie was asked how she saw herself fitting into the current early childhood education sector. Jenny discussed how the need to fit into the sector is not of importance to her.

I spoke with Jenny Varney and asked where how she sees herself fitting into the current early childhood education sector,

*“I am now a team leader of a senior teacher team, my focus is supporting and to enhance teaching and learning in kindergartens, but every day I find that the knowledge and experiences I have in all the other roles I hold /have held (job positions, volunteer positions, professional organisations, masters student) support me and my decision making”.*

However when I asked Janette how she sees herself fitting into the current early childhood education sector Janette said she felt like she fitted in.

*“Absolutely I fit in. Like after years of teaching, 10 years of teaching and 5 years as an official, I was looking for a change and I kind of steered on this path and so now I see my role in preparing teachers for the profession and having had a whole lot of kind of historical and industrial knowledge that I can contribute so it was a sideways move”.*

So although the students identified these people as leaders because of their influence, none of the participants were strongly identifying themselves as leaders. The participants, overall, saw themselves as having a role in the early childhood community and in the case of David, Janette, Jenny V and Pennie, felt they had opportunities to influence.

## **The importance of being a leader**

I became interested in whether leaders see themselves as leaders and whether they identified as being a leader in the sector. If students identified leaders as being those who were in academia and teacher education then how did the leaders see themselves?

Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) highlight that teachers/educators may resist being referred to as a leader in early childhood education due to the “link most early childhood education teachers have to leadership, power and control therefore implying aggression” (p.27).

According to Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) this way of thinking about leadership comes from a view that early childhood education teachers are and see themselves as “nice ladies” and not associated with power, control and aggression.

In my interviews with participants I asked how important it was to them to be identified as a leader and to be in a leadership position. Participants were asked to give rating of 1- 10 (1 be least important and 10 being most important) indicating where on the scale did they place the importance of being in a leadership position.

Arama was asked if he saw himself to be in a position of leadership, “*Yes because others do find a purpose for themselves in what I do and say.*” Arama believes other people do consider him to be in a position of leadership. Arama was asked “on a scale of 1- 10: how important is being a leader to your work satisfaction?”

*“Kare he korero to te kumara mo tona reka*

*The kumara can't tell you how sweet it is.*

*Actually to me being a leader is at about a 2 or 3. I don't want to focus on being a leader. That's a waste of energy because it could cloud my journey.*

*Rather I am focused on finding the best ways to be a Māori male in early childhood. If I do then others will benefit. Others may rate me higher or lower.*

*Their opinion is more important of a gauge of my worth in society.”*

Arama was asked “How do you feel about being a leader in early childhood education?”

*“If others get a buzz out of what I do then it’s worth staying in the front. I feel great when that happens. I get a buzz when others achieve and even better when I have influenced that positive shift for them. But what scares me is whether I am actually leading them onto a path that will not give them what they need. That is a scary prospect and keeps me focused on who is important and usually that isn’t me”.*

David was asked to rate how important being a leader is to his job satisfaction, on a scale of 1-10. David rated a level of 8.9.

When asked how he felt about being a leader in early childhood education David responded *“It’s not something I set out to be, but I have always found I have to “prove” myself in early childhood education as I am a male and many people are suspicious of motives of men in early childhood education. I suppose as I have become older it has just been a natural progression”.*

When asked whether other people consider Jenny Ritchie to be in a position leadership Jenny replied *“You would need to ask them.”*

Jenny Ritchie was asked to measure on a scale of 1- 10: how important is being a leader was to her work satisfaction? Jenny replied: *“I don’t measure these sorts of things.”*

Jenny Ritchie was then asked “How do you feel about being a leader in early childhood education?” to which she replied:

*“To be honest I don’t really think about it at all. Within the wider early childhood education community, I have slowly become aware that people were finding my writings useful and I felt pleased that they were readable and meaningful. This is a form of ‘leadership’ I guess. Within my institution, I have a particular role to support the research of colleagues, and this is another form*



*of leadership, and one which I enjoy. For me it comes down to relationships whereby my colleagues trust and value my support and suggestions. I also work collaboratively with colleagues outside of my institution, within our research projects. Again, the key to this process is in establishing and maintaining relationships and all the components of this process”.*

The view of Jenny Ritchie can be linked to the reluctance that Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) refer to, in that the identification of being a leader is associated with power and control. Jenny Ritchie speaks of not seeing herself as a leader. For her, the importance is about building relationships and being useful. The correlation between seeing oneself as a leader (identification) and then defining leadership is evident as Jenny explains that the focus for her is on relationships and completing useful work and that may be a form of leadership.

Therefore the lack of a definition within early childhood education may be due to the fact that leaders identify with and define leadership in different ways. As Rodd (2006) highlights the isolation and autonomy of the early childhood education sector from other educational sectors may contribute to this lack of identification. With the culture of early childhood education being strongly about working together, collaboration and team work, identifying oneself as leader is irrelevant for some leaders such as Jenny Ritchie. For her it is not about being called a leader (which means different things for different people) but forming relationships and being useful.

Jenny Varney considers herself to be in a leadership role. She believes others see her as a leader. When asked: “On a scale of 1- 10: how important is being a leader to your work satisfaction?” Jenny replied “10”. Jenny was asked “How do you feel about being a leader in early childhood education?” to which she replied: *“I feel OK, its important to take a lead when you are the right person and encourage others when you are not. I believe in team work the impact of a team is far greater then the sum of its parts”.*

Janette Kelly was asked on a scale of 1-10 how important is being a leader to your work satisfaction?

*“It is less important now to what it has been in the past and I suppose because my concept of leadership is changing. When I was young and first involved in the union people kind of pegged me as a leader and put me up there and talked about my future”.*

From these discussions it is evident that the usefulness and effectiveness of the participant as a leader proves to be more important than the identification of a leader. Janette Kelly has highlighted the point that how leaders see themselves relies on how the leader understands leadership. When leadership in early childhood education becomes more understood and better defined, the way a leader sees themselves in leadership will also change. This notion links to the work of Etta-Sullivan (2003) who states that the early childhood education sector has not developed a clear opinion of leadership. These discussions tell us that the identification of a leader may change in the future, however to these participants it is irrelevant. The participants of this study want to be effective, useful people in their roles, who have positive and collaborative relationships. It is this focus on positive and collaborative relationships that further promotes the distributed leadership model where relationships and working collaboratively are the main focus (Clarkin-Phillips, 2007; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Thornton, 2003).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The status of early childhood education**

Thornton (2003) points out that from her personal experience supervisors and managers in centres do not often identify themselves as leaders. The supervisor and manager rather see themselves as part of a collaborative team who are equal. The fact that people in early childhood education leadership positions do not identify with being a leader may be an historical response to the stereotypical role of a mother figure. The role of an early childhood education teacher is commonly perceived to be of care and nurture rather than based on pedagogical and theoretical underpinnings (Scrivens, 2003).

Thornton (2003) contextualises the lack of identification of leadership in early childhood education mentioning the low profile and lack of acknowledgment in guiding documents used in early childhood education. Thornton (2003) suggests that leadership is under represented in early childhood education legislative documents such as the Desirable Objectives and Practices (Ministry of Education, 1998) and Te Whariki, the New Zealand early childhood education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). The implication of leadership being omitted from legislative documents is that leadership is not greatly discussed in early childhood education environments. As legislative documents help guide the sector, the fact that leadership is not in them, means that leadership gets forgotten. This means that the sector does not talk about how leadership is defined in early childhood contexts, or what being a leader looks like in practice. In order to better understand leadership and improve the recognition and status of early childhood education, legislative documents need to highlight leadership as having a presence in early childhood contexts. In doing so, dialogue about leadership will be more purposeful and leadership will become recognised in a variety of forms, by a range of professions.

Rodd (2006) discusses the reluctance of early childhood education leaders to see themselves as leaders. Rodd (2006) links this reluctance to the high levels of autonomy and independence early childhood education teachers display. Early childhood education has been isolated from other education sectors. The job of an early childhood education

teacher includes completing many tasks. Most early childhood teachers take on a range of leadership tasks during their day. Significantly to the low status of the profession, most early childhood education teachers do these tasks without recognising them as leadership tasks. It appears that due to the collaborative nature of the sector, those leadership tasks are carried out without teachers necessarily thinking about them as leadership. This may be due to the fact that early childhood education teachers work in teams and have a strong focus on working together. This collaborative nature means that tasks become the responsibility of the team, not one person.

It became clear in my interviews that while the literature portrays a lack of status that being an early childhood education teacher has in terms of society, to the participant's low status was not an issue for them, nor was it something that the participants felt was important.

Linking to the work of Stonehouse (1994), Janette Kelly spoke of the professionalism of the sector during her interview with me and how she has worked to improve the recognition of the early childhood education sector amongst the professional community.

*"I have spent most of my life's work getting them (early childhood education teachers) pay parity with primary and secondary school teachers and I don't want to think that they don't deserve it or that sector is not up there. It's trying to constantly improve our status – even what we call ourselves, parents call us kindy, daycare but you don't have to".*

Furthermore Janette spoke of the fact that when she first entered into the early childhood education teaching arena she believed, as did her parents, that early childhood education teaching was a career equal with other educational sectors. However Janette highlighted the need to build on the professionalism of the early childhood education sector.

*"When I went teaching, and I might have called it a job earlier, my parents absolutely knew it was a profession. I also got the idea that I never thought that I was any less than a primary or secondary teacher, we were completely equal. I was really clear that this was my chosen profession and that it had some kudos and responsibilities about professionalism. One of my lecturers, a great leader in professionalism, and*

*maybe that stuff got drummed in at an early age. Kindergarten teachers have had to be qualified and registered to all intent and purposes since the 1950s and that is not going to happen for the rest of the sector until well after 2012, under the current government. There is still a divide between the services. I am relieved to see a diverse range of students coming into the early childhood education programmes. The professionalism in the sector is something we need to focus on”.*

Arama Koopu shared his view around status in our discussion articulating that because he is a male and how that is a rarity; the male point of view he brings to his work strengthens the team and is valued. Arama spoke of how the value of Te ao Māori is higher today than yesterday and how his Māori perspective allows Arama to advise the best way for mainstream educators to tap into this important resource. Arama believes that being male and Māori gives him an ability to see things in a way that no one else does therefore increasing his value.

The status of the early childhood education sector continues to improve as advocates and proponents of the early childhood education sector work to explain what early childhood education means for children, parents and the society. The professionalism of the sector has developed through milestones such as pay parity and benchmarking of qualifications resulting in further recognition from other education sectors, the general public and professionals. Professionalism within the early childhood education sector needs to be further developed in order to gain better recognition from Governments, public, communities and educationalists about the value and importance of early childhood education. This recognition will only be strengthened through the advocacy of leaders, mentors and influential people within educational realms. Rodd (2006) suggests that there is role for leaders to play in this awareness raising but “the concept of leadership as a means of advancing the field still appears not to be as well understood by practitioners” (Rodd, 2006, p. 24)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The place of a mentor or influential person in leadership**

One of the focus questions of this study was how have people come to be in the positions of leadership within early childhood education that they are in – how did people get to where they are in their early childhood education career? One of the perceptions I have faced is that I have come to be in leadership due to being shoulder tapped. This is not the case, however it made me ponder the question of whether people attain leadership positions due to who they know, or who they are mentored by. I also wondered how important it was to have a mentor in this career. With the teacher registration process requiring a tutor teacher and teacher education training requiring practicum supervisors, I wondered whether a mentor was valuable to an aspiring leader. This has made me investigate further the role of a mentor or influential person in a leader's journey.

The term “mentor” is often used to describe a person of influence in ones life. According to Callan (2006) the term “mentor is a role specific, formal advisory relationship with practitioner (teachers)” (p.5). In dictionary terms the phrase mentor has been linked to “the passing on of wisdom” (Callan, 2006, p. 8). Callan (2006) highlights the attributes an effective early childhood education adult mentor may need to offer guidance, support strategies and to nurture and challenge a teacher. Callan (2006) suggests, among a number of attributes, that an effective mentor should be enthusiastic, inspirational, a problem solver and supportive, however Callan (2006) also points out that such a “perfectly formed person may be hard to find” (p.8). Callan (2006) then links this lack of an effective mentor with the importance of ongoing training and professional development for mentors.

There appears to be a lack of formal mentors in the early childhood education sector. As the number of early education students has increased the need to have more mentors has also increased. One of the requirements of gaining an early childhood education teaching qualification is to have the advice and guidance of a mentor (or

person acting in a mentoring role). Alongside this issue, the New Zealand Teachers Council requires teachers to be undergoing advice and guidance programmes as part of their teacher registration process, resulting in the job of a mentor being intensified in both time and responsibilities. The implication of having more early childhood education students, yet no more mentors, is that existing mentors are being overwhelmed with mentoring jobs thereby increasing their workload. It also means that early childhood education students are not as able to get the advice and guidance of an experienced mentor because there are just not enough experienced mentors to cater for the number of students. What appears to be happening as a result of this issue is that less experienced teachers (less experienced in teaching and mentoring) are taking on the role of mentor.

Some in the field of early childhood education say that as the staff shortage increases the typical mentor person, who offers experience, knowledge and maturity is no longer available. This may be attributed to a growing number of newly qualified teachers taking up leadership positions.

David Spraggs alluded to this concept in our interview discussion.

*“...we are losing a mentor phase within the service, within the structure. When I trained there were people around, probably of my age now, who weren't seen as leaders but were knowledgeable, wise, probably because of the times and the amount of change that teachers grappled with, they taught me my job. The reality is we don't have the wisdom being blended in”.*

Like David Spraggs, Janette Kelly also spoke of the concerns she holds for the sector.

*“I worry about the sector. I worry about how fast it has grown about how there is not strong leadership. One of things in the strategic plan is that it would develop leadership programmes in the sector and the Teachers Council has started to think about that. A few people have put ideas on paper but back when I first started my Masters I did a paper on leadership and I was writing about the kind of initiatives that were happening in primary schools to improve the leadership in schools. Things like the principal's development programmes and*

*professional development, and all these leadership programmes helpful ideas and hints - I think how do you grow leaders in the early childhood education sector? I think that there are students who are going to go straight into leadership and I think it's sad".*

Janette was asked if and why early childhood education was lacking strong leadership:

*"Because it is not compulsory – it's because it's been allowed to grow in a haphazard rather than planned fashion because anyone can own a centre and set themselves up as the professional leader. It's hard to not draw on your own kind of experience but I have a really clear sense about different parts of the sector having very different cultures and we grappled with this when we first amalgamated in 1990 with Kindergarten teachers and childcare workers and then the early childhood education sector and the primary teachers. Many come to early childhood education as a job. Some of my students ask to move centres because there are contradictory things happening from what we teach and practice but I say that those experiences will develop the students philosophy but there are not enough centres to move them to, there are not enough associate teachers and mentors to be able to move the students. Those things make me feel that there is the lack of leadership in early childhood education and professionalism is tied into that as well. I'm in a good place to talk to students about those things and their work ethic and that this is not a job but a profession of huge importance. If they are here to have a job is that the right place for them to be".*

With the workload of teachers ever increasing and the pressure placed on qualified and registered teachers to fulfill leadership duties, some declare that there is no time anymore for mentoring to occur.

For the purpose of this thesis I wanted to find out if people actually do have a mentor or have a person that has influenced their career.



David Spraggs had a mentor. Although David does see himself as a mentor he hopes that he is seen in the same way that he sees his own mentor - not knowing everything but knowing a few things. He believes he is able to give people courage to challenge and investigate more.

I asked Arama whether he had a mentor as a role model:

*“Yes. I think that every person in my life when I look at them was either a positive role model or a negative role model. People who I look at now who when I was growing the mentors I respect are those I respect as positive role models. There are positive and negative role models and the ones I choose are the ones I have as positive role models. The mentor is the person I want to hold onto”.*

I prompted Arama to explain the difference between a positive mentor and a negative mentor.

*“Because sometimes from a negative role model I can see how not to behave – so are they a mentor. Probably not a mentor but a person or value I want to shift away from to a positive side. Is there any one person? No everyone in my life I can use as a role model – everybody who I meet today, I can use as a role model because I can judge whether they are a mentor or not or someone worth following or a leader. If they are worth following then they will be a role model/leader for me”.*

I asked Arama if, in that way of living did any one person take a leadership role to which he replied,

*“Not any one person apart from my uncles who gave me educational sense related to childcare but not exactly childcare but giving me advice, support and guidance around living. Watching my mother care for children as well and watching my father. So I guess there is not just one person where there was a clear career or role but there were a multitude of people that all combined to do*

*a similar thing. We could look at that now and it was actually childcare but when I was amongst that and when I go back into that environment it is not childcare it is living it is whānaunatanga”.*

When asked whether Jenny Ritchie was influenced by something in her career she replied:

*“One of the kindergartens I worked in was high percentage of Māori children. It was in Māori community and I knew there was some really interesting things going on there and I got Rangimarie Rose Pere who was working in the Education board as a Māori advisor to come because I wanted these teachers to understand what they were missing – it was so sad to watch the damming of these Māori families by this racist lens of not understanding and not wanting to understand this classic thing that when children would do stuff, teachers wouldn’t understand it. It wasn’t until I read Judith Simon’s article “Good Intentions but (around 1990) - when I read that article it was like “this is what is going on.” These teachers would say “I treat all children the same” but they were treating them in a way that was according to their expectations and they weren’t seeing or valuing what the children brought. It was not visible to them – they couldn’t value it because they didn’t actually have the cultural experiences that would enable them. So I think the frustration of trying to get these teachers to understand but because I was just a lowly teacher they didn’t hear me and trying to get people in so they could understand.*

Pennie Brownlee also spoke about having a mentor in her life. Pennie’s mother is her role model and an influential person in Pennie’s life. Pennie feels that her mother gifted her, and her sisters, the ability to connect with their heart and know who they are. The leadership qualities which Pennie feels have been passed on from her mother include the ability to be honest. Pennie discussed the skill of being able to “call a spade a spade” and believes this was a skill inherited from her mother. A “love of life and having fun while living it” is a philosophy which Pennie believes to have

come from her mother. The ability to build a community, come up with good ideas and then inspire people to join on those ideas are what Pennie sees as the strengths her mother had as a leader. Another influential leader Pennie had in her career was a leader Pennie worked with at an educational institution. Pennie enjoyed her leadership style because Pennie was allowed to exercise autonomy, was able to try new things, make decisions, and always felt supported by this person. Pennie discussed the way that this leader would allow team members to make their own decisions but would also give guidance when needed. For Pennie this leader was the most capable and influential leader she has worked with. According to Pennie, the leader did not manage but inspired the team members.

Jenny Varney spoke about the role models she had in her life.

*“Role models, mentors. One of them had done what I was wanting to do. I also had a new entrant teacher, while I was helping out at school, who encouraged me to go primary teaching. So I had to choose between primary and early childhood education. The primary teacher said you need to come to primary because you have more contact with the children over a longer period of time. My friend who was a kindergarten teacher said you need to come to kindergarten because you get to know the families and the parents as well as the children. So I chose kindergarten because I got to know the parents and the families and their backgrounds”.*

These discussions I have had with the participants highlight the mentor as someone of influence in the person life. In some cases, such as Arama Koopu, and Pennie Brownlee the person of influence they spoke most about was family. Jenny Varney, Jenny Ritchie and Janette Kelly spoke of people in the teaching profession who influenced them in their career. Rogers (2002) in his book about colleague support, frames colleagues as “a host of moral support, professional support and structural support” (p.xv).

Like Ritchie, Varney, and Kelly, Rogers (2002) highlights the significance of a person in one's professional life to whom one unites with or binds with, who offers support. Although throughout the interviews with the participants, our discussion focused on the influential person in the participants' life, the importance of developing sound mentoring and role modeling professional development programmes was significant. Tomlinson (1995) highlights that people's ability to be an effective mentor varies, based on their interpersonal skills. Tomlinson (1995) also states that mentoring can be an informal process which is about helping people without doing it for them.

Dr Christine Chen, in an interview with Ebbeck and Waniganayake, discusses the fact that in her studies, the mentees did not discuss what area of expertise the mentor came from (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004). Chen speaks of the mentor not needing to be from the same field or have sector knowledge. Likewise the participants of this study also signified the fact that mentors do not have to be working in the same job as the mentee. Chen states she has mentored people in her centre however the relationship between the mentor and mentee is not about whether the person is in the same field of expertise or is your boss (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004). This discussion links to the fact that not all of the participant's mentors were working alongside the participant in early childhood education. Some of the mentors were family members, while some were early childhood education teachers and some were friends or people the participant knew. The work of Tomlinson (1995) further strengthens the need for the early childhood education field to provide professional learning opportunities for early childhood education teachers and leaders to develop skills in mentoring.

The fact that, for the participants, having a mentor was important and helped their journey into leadership highlights the need for skillful mentors to be available for early childhood education teachers. Therefore professional development opportunities for mentors are imperative to the progression of teachers and the growth of the early childhood education sector.

Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) discuss the term mentor to be the “most powerful means of effecting change” (p.23). Like the work of Tomlinson (1995), Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) link the mentor concept to be built on relationships which extends a persons understanding and knowledge. Furthermore Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004) state that mentoring gives the opportunity to practice social skills which have to be learnt. This view is similar to Sergiovani’s (1992) idea of professional socialization where by teachers learn from each other, as well as highlighting the need for further professional development around developing social skills of the mentor as discussed by Ebbeck & Waniganayake (2004).

Through the voice of the participants and the literature I have found, it appears that having a skilled mentor is hugely beneficial to the career advancement of early childhood education teachers. As identified by Tomlinson (1995) and Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004), professional development opportunities are needed to help the mentor develop the skills required to be a mentor. As Chen (cited in Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2004), Tomlinson (1995) and the participants of this study point out, mentors do not have to be in the same career, be the mentee’s boss, or be working within the early childhood education sector to be an effective mentor.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Leadership style in early childhood education

I wondered whether people were identified as leaders because of the way they led. I wanted to explore an idea that these students had identified these participants as leaders because they enjoyed the leadership style they had experienced by this leader. As an example I knew that some students enjoyed attending a workshop run by one of the people they wanted to be in this project and had identified as a leader because they were inspired by them. So I wanted to look into whether leadership style and approach helped to identify a leader in the eyes of others. I pondered whether the context the student was in when they felt inspired by this leader influenced the way the student viewed the leader. I also pondered whether the context, situation and leadership style influenced how others viewed them as a leader. Was it their style that made people identify them as a leader in the field? Is it what they do or how they do it that makes them an acknowledged leader?

An idea similar to Rodd's (2006) was explored in our interview as Arama discussed that his leadership style was not about teaching adults but more about mentoring thereby highlighting that his leadership style is not linked to a position of leadership or expectations of a leader.

*“Being myself, being a Māori male, being a father, being a brother, being a colleague, being a friend, and basically living my life the way I have been brought up. And making sure the values that I was brought up with are positive and are helpful to my life so that other people can look at what I am doing and find some sort of guidance. As for me working with adults, very rarely do I work and teach adults although it could be perceived as that. In my mind it's just a mentor. Positive aspects of early childhood education currently, when I'm working in my job and my mentor - Māori -maleness when I'm with my whānau; when I'm with my children, my family and my partner it's just being a father and I guess if I look at my life it's not just compiling that into an early childhood education work related its 24/7. It's something that I do whether I'm*

*at work or at home. With my mates its slightly different role but the values are the same”*

Jenny Ritchie also highlighted these ideas as she shares her views of leadership style and she also highlights the role of a mentor in leadership.

*“Are there recognised styles? I have not read the literature about that but it does not matter to me. I do not use that terminology it’s not part of my dialogue. But I would say that the kind of ways I was mentored by some of my mentors in my early teaching career was collaborative. There wasn’t necessarily... even though there were designated leaders it was more about role modeling and collegial dialogue.*

*Leadership to me is laden with hierarchical top-down associations. When you work collaboratively people show leadership in different ways at different times and are recognised for different skills and knowledge’s that they bring.*

*Leaders need credibility but everybody brings something so it is really an ahua – a way of respecting others, a genuine way of recognising others that enables emergence of a genuine collaboration that draws on all the agendas or all the needs and the attributes of peoples strengths. A lot of it is about creating spaces for others really”. I see early childhood educators as working collaboratively in partnerships and teams, where any ‘leadership’ is shared and collective agency expressed towards common goals and purposes”.*

Further to the ideas of Rodd (2006) and Varney, Janette Kelly discusses the notion of distributed leadership and its relevance to early childhood.

*The best kind of leadership in early childhood education seems to be distributed leadership. It is influenced by some strong early childhood education theory and some humble pioneering early childhood education woman. Generally leaders in early childhood education seldom see themselves as doing it alone and that there is always that sense of those who came before us, those who were there with us and that kind of team stuff. Socio cultural theory strongly influences it I think. That whole collectivism way has been a part of life for a long time, with church,*

*family, union so it doesn't feel like it is foreign. We might be living in a Western society and that influence is around us but it is also Maori, Celtic, socialist stuff. It all contributes to it and that influences how I see things and education”.*

The idea of distributed leadership was explored by Jenny Varney in our discussion. Like Jenny Ritchie highlights, terminology around leadership style does not have to be used in order to understand the type of leader you are. Jenny Varney discusses her understanding of distributed leadership as a leadership style that resonates with her.

*“I really believe in distributed leadership. I really believe that we are more likely when all those things are aligned like philosophies, goals and you have sufficient resources with the right people in the right jobs, leadership will just be distributed. The right person will stand up to do the task. And then the next person will do the task. I really think that happens but I don't think that happens when things are really difficult, when times are really hard, and you have to make decisions that are really hard and you have got to make some decisions that are departures from what you would naturally do, resources are incredibly scarce. That's when you need that management strategy to come in to management”.*

From this study, it is obvious that a distributed leadership model underpins the participant's ideas about leadership. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004) have defined distributed leadership as being built on relationships, through recognition of existing knowledge, competence and understanding. Through the voice of the participants and the definition of Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004), it is clear that a distributed leadership model fits with the collaborative nature of the early childhood education sector. This fit may be due to the strong focus on teamwork and relationships that exists throughout early childhood education environment.



## CHAPTER SIX

### **The significance of gender in early childhood education leadership**

Although through this thesis I wanted to highlight leadership journeys of both men and women it became apparent throughout my research that you cannot discuss leadership in early childhood education without discussing gender difference and the influence gender has understanding leadership. I wondered if gender influenced who became a leader. In such a women dominated field I wanted to investigate further the difference in leadership style and capacity that gender played.

In the course of my interviews the thoughts of gender were explored. It became apparent that to the men in the discussions, gender was not a factor.

Arama spoke about gender issues in leadership in early Childhood

*“How I was brought up – gender issues are not a factor in te ao Māori. There are understandings of where genders cross over and the relationship with gender roles. They are well defined in te ao Māori. Where I see a lot more conflict is in the mainstream sector where the gender roles have become unbalanced. I think that has a lot to do with industrialisation and modernisation and the changing way in which families are living. A combined role in agriculture or two hundred years ago in agriculture where based industry was important that everyone was valued in the roles they did but today with industrialized towns and cities the roles of males and females are different where commonly in the last 100 years the man was the main wage earner and I think what happened is the issues for woman have become eroded – the value of women have become eroded to belong only in the home. I think woman have just as much value as men in the work place but it’s just defining where and where woman and men can work together”.*

Arama was asked does he think woman have a different leadership style than men?”

*“No. I think that there are some women who have similar values and ways of betraying those values, and I think that it’s a personality trait and how you as a person communicate your values does not depend on whether you are a woman or not. So I find it difficult to talk to some people whether they are man or woman but I know certainly in the current early childhood education sector it does reflect more opinions from females but I don’t see females alone. I don’t see men and woman in early childhood education I see people but I do notice that there is an imbalance in the early childhood education sector of men’s opinions and I wouldn’t say that is a gender issue I would say that is more of an employment or philosophical view of where men and woman think that they need to work in. For example myself working in the early childhood education sector I don’t think that I am working with women. I know there are more women about and when I do see a man I do notice him more – especially when you are in a room with three hundred women and I see a man I will obviously have more in common with him. But there are women who I gravitate to who reflect a value and a way that I would expect from a man. I’m not saying that a woman has to be masculine or be a male, what I’m saying is that some of the traits of a woman can reflect a male’s perspective or a perspective that is more inclined to be felt or communicated with a male. You don’t have to be a male to be a male. For example when I am with teachers mentoring I say “you don’t have to be a male to be able to kick a ball or throw a child on your shoulder – that is not just a role that males have to take”.*

Jenny Ritchie spoke about gender and leadership,

*“early childhood education being a women-dominated sector is one of the reasons why early childhood education is political and it’s not just gender but other oppressions as well, where it creates solidarity and a sense of being the underdog so it’s social justice for inclusion for issues we feel very strongly about. Knowing the history and where we have come from in early childhood education as being the most lowly paid profession and things we’ve had to fight*

*makes it instantly political really. Even recognising that the drivers of the sector in terms of social and economic policy are not because it's good for children but it's good for the economy. I think woman have a maternalistic leadership style where they nurture and care which makes it not transparent*

According to Pennie gender and leadership cannot be isolated, and while egos have a part to play in leadership, both men and woman show their ego differently. Pennie believes that leadership style may alter based on gender however the capability of the leader depends on the person and is not linked to the gender of that person.

Jenny Varney believes,

*“That there are women's preferred ways of working. There is research about that and there are women's ways of working that absolutely influences the way we prefer to do things. Sometimes we have to work in another way. In the early childhood education sector there are less of those types of constraints and requirements. That's my belief. If I was working in the primary sector there would be more of those constraints on me. I have a feeling that the more men there are in an area the more constraints there are. But in early childhood education it's because we have all the contact with families and very young children. It does influence the way we work with people. The way we work with children influences the way we work with each other as adults. It's hard to put your finger on that one. Obviously there are woman who make really hard decisions, are autocratic, have styles that really don't let other people in but I don't think that's the usual way that that works. And often they are people that are removed from the teaching roles and roles that include teaching responsibility. There is women's way of working – it's about wanting to care, caring about and for people. If you care about people then you care how you work with them and how you treat them.*

Later Jenny added:

*“I think that women got into leadership in a far more haphazard way, and shoulder tapping plays a really big part of it. More so in early childhood education. In previous roles I spent a lot of time outside of my centre and I prided myself that I could not be there and it did not matter. It was not that I did not contribute anymore; I think it was that I had nurtured people and let people shine. I think that when I was out I did not have to ring up and check up on them I knew that if there was anything I needed to know, they would let me know. If there was a problem they needed my help with then they would let me know. I think women do that quite well. A word I haven't used much is ethical but I think that there is an underlying ethical nature to women's leadership, and I know that is a sweeping statement but I think that women do really care about people. We don't deliberately do things to hurt each other. I don't think men do either but they have different ways of leading, women network and that works for women. If women have a problem then they go for a coffee, men don't seem to work like that and its much more casual”.*

Janette also touches on ideas surrounding gender difference.

*“Because I have done some study around leadership I have a bit of a sense about leadership in education theory generally but know that women's leadership and early childhood education leadership are different to the typical masculine main stream education ideas”.*

Participants of this study have talked about ideas relating to women having preferred ways of leading and literature adds another perspective. Davis and Johansson (2005) as well as the BI Norwegian School of Management (2008), have highlighted the androgynous leader, who can apply both typical feminine and masculine traits, as the most effective leader. The leader who can adopt an empowering, collaborative (typically thought of as woman traits), directive and authoritarian (typically thought of as male traits) leadership style is an androgynous leader (Davis and Johansson, 2005). This means that leaders should aspire to be working from both and male and female leadership perspective. As the androgynous leadership style takes shape, the discussion about male versus female leadership style may become redundant as the most effective leader applies both in leadership practice.

As more males participate in the early childhood education sector it will be interesting to observe how this impacts on the leadership style, culture and functionality of the early childhood education sector. In what is viewed as a women dominated arena, male presence in the sector will most likely bring changes to the way leaders work because a male presence will add difference to the early childhood education profession – not because they are male but because this will present and shape a different culture for early childhood education. However many other influences such as policy, legislation, leadership understanding, and teacher education will also inspire movement in thinking around what makes an effective leader which is non gender related. As these changes manifest, the early childhood education sector will observe new leadership theories which will challenge the documented view of some, that women and men have set traits specific to their gender such as women leaders lead in an empowering collaborative manner while men lead in an authoritative, directive manner. As a leadership discourse continues to develop in the early childhood education sector the issue of gender difference in leadership may lessen as we come to understand leadership qualities of a leader rather than those attributed to gender.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Qualifications, professional development and leadership in early childhood education**

Early on in my career I was caught up in the political confusion that surrounded qualification transitions, where the benchmark qualification in early childhood education changed from being 120 licensing points, to the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). This experience caused much stress and frustration as teacher education providers came under scrutiny of the Government and the New Zealand Teachers Council. This resulted in the closure of some teacher education providers. Redundancy of qualifications from these teacher education providers made gaining recognition within the sector and getting New Zealand Teacher Council approved qualifications a long process. Since this time I have graduated with certificates, diplomas, post graduate diplomas, and this study completes a Master of Educational Leadership qualification. Because of my own journey I have become interested in the qualifications of leaders in education, and feel it is important to explore the relevance of qualifications and how they link to leadership.

Epstein (1993) discusses the popular myth that anyone who has experience with children or raising their own children is able to work effectively in early childhood education (p.8). However Epstein (1993) discusses that this myth is not supported by research and actually job experience holds little value to the work of early childhood education. Epstein (1993) further states that it is formal education and specialised tertiary level early childhood education training that are the strongest predictors of job performance.

Ongoing professional development has been highlighted as imperative to influence teacher beliefs and greater agency for teachers (Clarkin-Phillips, 2007). Rodd (2006) explains that limitations in professional development contributes to the difficulties that the sector experiences around professional dialogue, low credibility and the lack of status in other professions.

The notion of sharing ideas and having the opportunity to discuss perspectives coupled with access to professional development allows staff to develop confidence and leadership capability. According to Rodd (2006) this opportunity would help to build capacity to advocate and promote the early childhood education sector.

Arama was asked how important education and qualifications is in his mind to leadership:

*“Depends on the person and what they are doing. I think as a policy analyst your qualifications are important because it allows you to apply for a job, get a job, based on face value. Other than that it’s more about common sense. I would say that the qualification is the ticket to get you somewhere, once you are in that door and what you do with that knowledge may or may not apply but it does get you in the door. If I was looking at qualifications I would say that yes attain it so you have the ability to step into that arena but once you get it don’t forget who you are and your values, don’t let the qualification erode what you know is important”.*

When questioned about the importance of qualifications in leadership David Spraggs replied,

*“In my last position we had a conversation about how do you grow a teacher, and what was critical for a teacher. Many people perceive qualifications are critical to being a teacher. Then I remind them of a whole group of people who are outstanding and not qualified – so how does that fit”.*

When asked how important Jenny Ritchie feels qualifications are in leadership within early childhood education Jenny replied:

*“I think if qualifications are quality qualifications then they are worth doing and they are very important. One of the things we see as a mantra is integration of theory and practice. I think field based teacher education does that so much better. It allows the application of the theoretical stuff during your qualification with reflection being the*

*key to that. Collaborative reflection - giving challenge to peoples thinking I think is a really important thing that happens during a qualification and what a skilled lecturer will model is that integration of critical reflection within yourself and with others”.*

On the topic of education Pennie Brownlee has a strong belief that education in New Zealand has a long way to go in terms of catering for children’s needs and inspiring learning. Furthermore Pennie stated:

*“Education is not only the formal recognised with degrees, though, of course it is that. I have followed my interests into many varied fields of learning, fields which I believe have 'educated' me (led me out) in more appropriate ways for the tasks which I wanted to undertake. I do not say that that is true for everyone, but it is true for me. I often quote Dorothy Heathcote - the brilliant British drama educationalist (with whom I have done a week's intensive training), "Spare the mind of a University education". Ironic since she ended up with a chair at the Newcastle-on-Tyne University, but what she was at pains to point out is that education should be an internally directed adventure. It should not be just to get a paper qualification unless every paper toward that qualification 'turns you on'. Or as Joseph Campbell the comparative mythologist put it; "Follow your bliss”.*

When asked how Jenny Varney sees qualifications influencing education Jenny replied:

*“Qualifications are important. What qualifications do is they give you a base on which to develop a shared understanding, shared philosophy, a rationale for doing what you are doing. It is the qualification that let me feel like I have come into teaching. As an unqualified teacher I think people liked having me because I did a good job for them but I felt like I had no understanding of why I did what I did. I was doing it because I saw it working. It was knowledge that worked but I had no understanding therefore I couldn't vary the way I did things because I had no other ways of doing things so qualifications gave me a knowledge to develop my own style, to develop more of one thing, and to ask*



*questions about why we keep doing things that way. It gave me a basis to critique my own practice and the practice of others. So without that knowledge how would I have ever developed? I would have had to have kept doing the same thing based on what I saw other people doing – and that would not have been good for me or good for anybody around me I don't think. It absolutely needs that knowledge so you know what questions to ask. I think leadership is about asking questions – to yourself and other people. I think it's about continual evaluation. Keep asking questions about why we did it that way, is there a better way. The answer is not always yes is it? Sometimes it is what we are doing now is great. Let's keep doing more of it but you know, if you are asking why we do it that way, there is probably a little alarm going in the back of your head that says there may be something you don't know that we need to find out. Unless you have got some knowledge to start ask questions, that questions is never going to rise to the top is it".*

Janette was asked if education and qualifications were important for leadership:

*"Yeah but they are not enough on their own. That heart emotional intelligence is really significant".*

So what the participants indicate is that qualifications are important as they are a prerequisite for many leadership positions. The quality of the qualification is a consideration so providers of qualifications should be sought carefully. Qualifications can give a person confidence to apply for a leadership position; however it is the application of knowledge gained throughout the qualification that is critical. The participants show that the experience, skills and relationship building abilities you bring to a leadership position are just as important as the qualification itself.

## FINDINGS

As a result of this thesis the following findings have been made:

### **Did the participants plan their pathway to leadership?**

The participants in this project spoke of mentors, role models and people of influence in their own life as key reasons for applying for, accepting or attaining a position of leadership. When asked, the 6 participants were able to discuss how they came to be in early childhood education, however the way each participant came to be in a leadership position was less evident during the interviews. None of the participants said they had deliberately planned their career so that they ended up in positions of leadership. According to Ren-ETTA Sullivan (2003) career advancement in the early childhood education sector is unclear. The participants have also highlighted that career progression is unclear. As the participants shared their journey, they spoke about motivators which got them into early childhood education, however they were not so specific with how they came to be in leadership positions. This lack of clarity impacts on developing an understanding about career progression. Future discussions about leadership should therefore include dialogue relating to the leadership opportunities that may exist within the sector in order to gain some clarity about career advancement for aspiring leaders.

The role of a colleague, mentor or family member who encouraged and supported the participants of this study was highlighted in interviews as all 6 participants spoke of a mentor who inspired them to fulfill a leadership position.

Callan (2006) highlights the lack of formal mentors, a view shared by David Spraggs and Janette Kelly. The findings from my research indicate that mentors have helped to inspire, support, develop and encourage the participants of this study. Mentors are people who have an influence in the life of others.

Arama Koopu, Jenny Ritchie, Pennie Brownlee and Jenny Varney spoke of the importance of having a mentor in their life and the personal and professional growth they gained as a

result of having the support and encouragement of a mentor. For Arama and Pennie this mentor was family linked, while the other participant spoke of professional mentors. Regardless of whether the mentor is professionally or personally linked to the mentee, professional development for the mentor is required. This is a view shared by Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2004); Tomlinson (1995); and Callan (2006). The mentor is such a key component to the career path of a leader, it is highly evident that a professional mentor needs the knowledge, attitude and communication skills to be effective in the role of a mentor. Future initiatives for leadership in early childhood education should therefore include professional development for mentors. The New Zealand Teachers Council has an induction and mentoring pilot running for provisionally registered teachers and tutor teachers which includes early childhood and may be useful in further strengthening mentoring within the sector.

### **What career path have early childhood education leaders taken in order to get to their position of leadership?**

The career path that each of the participants in this study have taken is varied. All participants have had a range of early childhood education positions including teaching and roles outside of teaching in an early childhood education service. Early childhood education teaching experience is common to leaders in the field of early childhood education; however the type of service each leader has taught in varies from kindergarten, childcare, Playcentre, kōhanga reo. Some leaders have taught in all services while other leaders have taught in one of these services. Significantly none of the participants had gone into a leadership role from another career. This proves that although they had not planned their pathway into leadership, their journey into leadership has grown from a foundation of teaching. All of the participants had at some stage been in teaching positions in early childhood education. This concludes that early childhood education leaders do come from an early childhood education teaching background. However the participants of this study prove that although teaching experience does support a journey into leadership, a teacher does not necessarily have to be a teacher, then head teacher, then manager, then move onto teacher education or into the public arena. Furthermore in relation to a set career path

into leadership, this study highlights that career journeys into leadership positions come in a variety of forms. Teaching in early childhood education supports a strong base for future leadership capacity. It also appears that the experiences from other careers or occupations provided skills that have been useful to the participants in their early childhood leadership roles.

Adult education is a common experience across early childhood education leaders throughout the leaders' career. All of the leaders (participants) in this study are now in teacher education in some form. The students of this study identified leaders in the sector to be those who were in academic or teacher education roles. This view has signified an understanding about leadership being in two different realms. This study has highlighted an understanding shared by students where leaders in early childhood centres have influence over the daily teaching practice and function of that centre, while a leader in the sector has influence over the policy, practice and theories across the wider early childhood education sector.

Qualifications are relevant to the position of leadership however range in level. Common discussion across leaders shows that the qualification helps to get you the position of leadership; however it's the application of knowledge and commitment to ongoing learning that is most important.

### **How is leadership defined by leaders?**

One could also argue that early childhood education is advancing in professionalisation of the sector where leadership is becoming more evident in conversations, dialogue and research, therefore creating new perspectives of leadership concepts including gender related concepts. As the early childhood education sector advances in recognition, qualifications and leadership, understanding the relativity of gender to leadership style may become less visible. Therefore leadership style will belong to the individual leader and their ability to apply the skills, traits and attributes in order to better lead the educational setting, rather than

the leader being recognised for the skills, traits, and attributes of their gender. The majority of the participants felt that women had different leadership styles and this is supported by literature (Kagan, 1994; Robins & Terrell, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1992; Thornton, 2003). This study shows that although men and women may have gender specific leadership traits, it seems that the most effective leader is one who can apply both feminine and masculine leadership traits (BI Norwegian School of Management, 7 November 2008). The implication of this is that gender may become irrelevant in future leadership literature and dialogue as leaders start to focus on effective leadership traits rather than gender specific traits. Particularly relevant to early childhood education is the strong collaborative and distributed leadership model identified by participants and literature (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2004; Lambert, 2002; Robertson, 2005; Rodd, 2006). As highlighted by all of the participants and further supported by literature it is evident that relationships form the basis of leadership definitions and style (Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Lambert, 2002; Pugh, 2001). This means that the early childhood education sector has started to form a shared understanding about preferred leadership models. It seems that a distributed leadership model is one identified by participants as being the ideal model to suit early childhood education. Therefore future directions in leadership should include more discussion about what a distributed leadership model look like in practice and how relationships are fostered, maintained and promoted by leaders.

### **Do leaders identify as being a leader?**

It appears that leaders in early childhood education identify as leaders on different levels. One of the reasons I have found this to be so, is due to the fact that the early childhood education sector does not have a shared understanding of who is a leader.

In my interviews most of the participants mentioned the importance of being identified as being a leader as irrelevant. The importance they placed was more on having a team approach, working collaboratively and inspiring others. When asked to rank the importance they placed on being a leader on a scale of 1-10, the results varied between 2-10, however all participants spoke of the effects of being a leader in their reasoning behind their ranking. For the participants the relevance of being a

leader was in the work they did with people, not how people viewed them as a leader. This finding can be linked to the work of Rodd (2006) who speaks of the reluctance leaders have within the early childhood education field to identify as a leader due to the fact that leaders within early childhood education work collaboratively and see themselves as equal with the people they are leading. I conclude from these findings that leaders do not focus on the recognition of their work but rather, focus on the effectiveness of the work they do with people.

### **Conclusions**

In order to support, develop and continue to work on the recognition and professionalisation of leadership in early childhood education, professional development strategies and professional learning opportunities are required.

The 6 participants of this study have come from diverse backgrounds into early childhood education. They did not intentionally seek out or plan pathways to leadership positions but have nevertheless through their skills, and attributes ended up being regarded and respected within the early childhood education sector. The participants have all had an impact in some form on the shape of early childhood education in New Zealand. This shows that there is a range of opportunities for leadership in early childhood education. The sector needs support and encouragement from initiatives and policies to allow teachers to develop skills and attributes of effective leaders that can continue to influence and shape the future of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 3: Initial Questionnaire

Appendix 4: Question Prompts to use during Participant Discussions

Appendix 5: Consent Form

## **Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation**

Nicole Ryan,  
School of Education.  
Private Bag 3036,  
Wintec,  
Hamilton  
New Zealand.  
Phone 027 232 4189

I am currently studying toward my Masters in Educational Leadership at University of Waikato. I am the Team Leader of early childhood education at Wintec, Hamilton. I have been in early childhood education in a range of positions ranging from childcare, kindergarten, play specialist and am now a lecturer of early childhood education.

My Masters thesis is about how early childhood education leaders have come to be in positions of leadership. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research project.

I am interested in this topic because as I have come to be in a position of leadership within the early childhood education field I am often presented with the question “how did you get to be in your job?” In my lecturing and leadership role I am working with a diverse range of students and staff who vary in age and experience. For the people I work with, both colleagues and students it seems a common perception that I am young for my current position of team leader (of a team of 15 lecturers in early childhood education and lecturer). Therefore my initial interest in this topic is to document the journey of other early childhood education leaders, thereby investigating the pathway toward early childhood education leadership. I hope that this documentation will provide an insight into the career opportunities available to aspiring early childhood education leaders. Through my interactions with students it appears that it is a common assumption that early childhood education relates predominately to early childhood education centres. I am hoping that through this documentation that I will help students and other readers to see that the early childhood education leadership opportunities are much wider than early childhood education centres, and that current leaders are in positions of leadership by their following a career path.

This research project will be supervised by:

Jeanette Clarkin - Phillips,

University of Waikato.

Email: [jgcp@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:jgcp@waikato.ac.nz)

Phone: 07 838 4875

I know that time is precious. If you feel you would like to know more, please see the attached information sheet. I will be in contact with you shortly,

Thanks

Nicole Ryan

## **Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant Information Sheet.**

**The title of the research is:** The investigation of how early childhood education leaders come to be in positions of leadership.

**The research aim is:** to document the career path of current early childhood education leaders. I aim to document the qualifications and experience of current leaders and highlight commonalities between leaders.

One of the objectives of this study is to provide evidence to aspiring leaders, the possibilities and career paths that current leaders have explored.

Another objective of this study to highlight the diverse environment early childhood education encompasses and highlight to any reader that the early childhood education leadership arena includes many different positions of leadership including a range of early childhood education services and departments.

Hopefully through this documentation readers will come to understand the experience, qualifications and motivation current leaders of early childhood education bring to their position of leadership.

### **The overarching research questions are therefore:**

- How do early childhood educational leaders come to be in positions of leadership?
- What career path have early childhood education leaders taken in order to get to their position of leadership?
- What experiences do early childhood educational leaders come to leadership positions with?

- Is there a specific path which early childhood education leaders have taken in order to get into positions of leadership? (Is there a pathway to becoming an early childhood education leader?)

**Participants will be involved in the project by:**

1. Agreeing to participate.
2. Signing the agreement consent form.
3. A questionnaire will be mailed or emailed (depending on participant preference) to the participant. This questionnaire will be looking at how I can best work with the participant in terms culture, meeting with the participant, and will ask participants to give a basic outline of what their career journey looks like to date. (Time commitment from participant: 1 hour)
4. As a follow from the questionnaire I will contact participants and arrange a time to meet with them for an interview based discussion.
5. The interview discussion will take place at a suitable location for the participant. The aim of this interview is for the participant to share their own professional career journey. I may ask questions in order to gain enough information in order to transcribe the information into a narrative of the participant's career pathway into leadership. I am wanting to audio tape this interview so I can use the interview in my teaching of leadership, at conferences and presentations. The taping of this interview is completely optional and any participant can decline being taped or can decline the use of any use of the audio tape to be used in public. (Time commitment from participant: 2 hours)
6. Once I have completed my interpretation of the transcript I will forward it to the participant who will have the opportunity to change, add and adjust the transcript in order to best represent their career journey.



7. Once I have completed the interviews and narratives, I will then draw any commonalities between the leader's narratives and identify the experience, qualifications and motivation current leaders of early childhood education bring to their position of leadership.

**Right to withdraw:**

If at any stage during the interview, narrative writing, or drafting of the participants career journey, the participant feels they want to withdraw they will have the right to withdraw all information up until March 2009.

The participant has the right to not answer or discuss any part of their career journey which they do not want to. The participant also has the right to decline answering any questions throughout the interview which they do not wish to answer.

Once the research project has been drafted, and commonalities and findings have been drawn from the raw data, then participants will be unable to withdraw.

Any participant who does not wish their information to be included in any publications, presentations and teaching that may occur as a result of this research project is able to state this in their Consent Form, and all identifying factors will be removed.

**Confidentiality:**

All information used will be done so with the participant's permission. This will be managed by the participant and myself, whereby participants are able to edit and change their own narrative.

Throughout the narrative, the story will be written as a representation of the participant's career journey. Names may be used, however participants are

able to request pseudonyms to be used on the given Consent Form. Any risks associated with the use of names in the project will be discussed with the participant at the initial meeting. No organisation or place of work will be identified, as the role of the participant will be the focus.

A potential problem is that the journey may include identifying indicators of organisations and places of work. The research is about the career journey and how the participant got to where they have, therefore it is not about the place they work at. Any organisations names will be removed and the role of the person will be used. This may include ideas such as “the participants role as a Kindergarten teacher, then moved into a role as a Play Specialist and now is a lecturer” (this example is given as a summary and not indicative of how the research data will be written.)

Throughout the commonalities and findings any information will not include specific names of people, places of work, organisations, or personal details.

Questionnaires, interviews and any audio tapes will be kept in locked filing cabinets in my locked office at work. I will keep this information indefinitely.

**Use of information:**

This information will form a Masters thesis for a Master of Educational Leadership. Information may also be used in future leadership teaching, conference presentation, and publications on the topic.

**Contact Details:**

**Researcher:**

Nicole Ryan

School of Education

Wintec

Private Bag 3036, Hamilton

**Research Supervisor:**

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

School of Education

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105, Hamilton.

### Appendix 3: Initial Questionnaire

#### Initial Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. In order to better understand you and your career path, I would appreciate you filling in this questionnaire.

Name:

.....

Sex:

.....

Ethnicity:

.....

Age:

.....

- How long have been in early childhood education ?

- What initially inspired you to become an early childhood education teacher?

- How do you see yourself fitting into the current early childhood education sector?

- What are your qualifications? Please provide all qualifications and approximate dates of gaining qualification.

- What roles have you had during your career? Please try to write these in an approximate sequential order.



- Have you had another career before early childhood education? What was the prior career?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- If so do you consider yourself to have been in a position of leadership in that career?

- Where do you see your career in early childhood education heading in the future and does it involve you being in a position of leadership?



- On a scale of 1- 10: how important is being a leader to your work satisfaction?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

- How do you feel about being a leader in early childhood education?

Thank you for your time. Please forward this questionnaire to me via the supplied envelope. I am looking forward to working with you and getting to know your career journey better. I will be in touch shortly to discuss an interview discussion time and place.

Thanks again,

Nicole Ryan

## **Appendix 4: Question Prompts to be used in Participant Discussions**

### **Question Prompts to be used in Participant Discussions**

What first attracted you to beginning your work within the early childhood sector?

When undertaking your career in early childhood education did you have a clear career aim and goal in mind? What were these goals?

What were key influences on your decision to take on roles of greater responsibility within your work?

Can you explain how your career development may have followed a logical, inevitable progression?

At times within your career pathway did you adopt areas of responsibility extra to your role description? If so what were these and do you feel that these helped shape your career decisions and development?

What were significant blocks to your career development?

What strategies did you employ in order to develop yourself in order to accept roles of leadership within the sector?

Do you feel that over the course of time your career aspirations became more focused and if so how did this manifest itself?

If you currently have goals and aspirations for future career development are you implementing a plan in order to attain these and if so what do these plans look like?

When adopting a new role did you consciously seek out the next level of career development and how did you do this?

How did your areas of responsibility develop leading to career enhancement?

Do you believe there to be a clear developmental pathway for professionals within the sector and if so what does this look like?

In order to achieve higher levels of career development does the practitioner have to venture outside of the realms of early childhood education and if so into what?

What advice would you provide someone with aspirations of leadership within the early childhood sector?

Was the motivation to develop a leadership pathway within your roles intrinsically motivated or was there considerable guidance provided by others?

Where do you see your future career path taking you?

What do you believe to be the significant barriers to career development within the early childhood sector?

What are contributing factors that have led you into the role you currently occupy?

## **Appendix 5: Consent Form**

### **Consent Form (for participants)**

I have read the attached research proposal and covering letter and agree to be a participant within the research project on Education Leadership within the early childhood sector.

I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained and that any information I share will be used only for the purpose of the named paper and any presentations or publications that may result from this research.

As a participant within the research project should I so choose in order to protect my identity and the service in which I am involved I may nominate myself to be identified by a pseudonym.

I consent to the discussions being recorded and transcribed

I understand that I will have access to all recorded material and that as a participant I will have the opportunity to amend or edit anything contained therein.

I have read and understand the Ethical Issues identified by the researcher and how these will be managed both during the course of the research and post research.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participation within the study up until March 2009.

If I should choose to withdraw from the research study before this date I will contact the researcher at the earliest possible date.

Signed:

Name (*please print*):

Date:

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