

## EDITORIAL

Michele Morrison

*Editor*

As New Zealand contemplates wholesale review of the formal schooling system and the leadership implications thereof, the winds of educational change begin to swirl. Not the persistent, yet gentle flutter of change that evolves the educational landscape in almost imperceptible ways, but tumultuous paradigmatic gales that potentially change it beyond all recognition. Heralded by politicians, economists and capitalists, there is little doubt that the 1989 neoliberal tempest wrought havoc on notions of community and profession. The whirlwind shift from social democracy to market competition, managerialism and performativity saw critical voices silenced and educators disparagingly positioned as self-interested providers. In the rush to legislate *Tomorrow's Schools*, 18,000 submissions remained unanalysed and therein lies a crucial lesson: we ignore research at our peril. As educators, we have a moral obligation to generate, disseminate and critique understandings of leadership, policy and practice; to remain open to counter perspectives; and to contribute positively and hopefully to research that empowers and emancipates. Consistent with JELPP's commitment to honouring diversity in leadership focus, setting, and authorship, articles in this year's general edition offer fresh insight into topics of interconnected and perennial importance: native knowledge, instructional leadership, indigenous teachers, appraisal, professional values, and safe schools.

The opening article, by Hawani Negussie and Charles Slater, draws on Yosso's community cultural wealth theory to explore the integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in early childhood care and education in Addis Ababa. The authors show how international policy intervention has discounted the "sense and essence of Africanism" in Ethiopian education, thereby creating "two sets of citizens". They urge the adoption by UNESCO of Education For All (EFA) goals that prioritise local language and tradition, and uphold parents' cultural aspirations for their children. These findings illuminate Ethiopian early childhood education for the first time in JELPP and will surely resonate beyond national borders.

In *Culturally sustaining instructional leadership: Perspectives from Native American public school principals in Montana and Wyoming*, Toby Holmes and Suzanne Young examine the principal's role in supporting teachers to enact culturally sustaining pedagogy. Synthesised from professional experience and literature, their model of culturally sustaining instructional leadership (CSIL) identifies six instructional and five cultural elements necessary to "incubate", empower and democratise classrooms, schools and communities. Testing this construct with principals in Montana and Wyoming, Holmes and Young found that a distinct preference for instructional elements limits principals' ability to serve students "most in need of cultural leadership".

Despite compelling meta-analyses that confirm a powerful correlation between instructional leadership and student attainment, research also suggests that time, expertise, and role expectation constraints mean school principals exercise instructional leadership far less frequently than expected, and that much of this responsibility is delegated to curriculum leaders. Exploration of the role that middle leaders play in instructional leadership forms the focus of the third article by Carol Cardno, Joanne Robson, Arun Deo, Martin Bassett, and Jo Howse. Their survey of 185 primary and secondary middle leaders reveals a degree of consensus over role expectations but considerable gaps in performance confidence, particularly around teacher appraisal and challenging professional conversations. Evaluation of the researchers' initial hypothesising adds robustness to this empirical research.

New Zealand readers will be only too familiar with the burden of responsibility placed on Māori teachers who, in addition to their teaching commitments, are expected to perform powhiri and other rituals,

act as a conduit between school and whānau/iwi, mentor colleagues in te reo and tikanga, and awahi (support) troubled and disruptive Māori students from other classes. In the fourth article, Toni Torepe, Angus Hikairo Macfarlane, Sonja Macfarlane, Jo Fletcher and Richard Manning share the voices of six Māori teachers in mainstream settings so that readers might begin to understand and support “the weight of culture” on Māori colleagues, work that is vital to student belonging and wellbeing, yet often unrecognised and unrecompensed.

*Transitioning to a meaningful appraisal process* documents one principal’s determination to dispense with compliance approaches to appraisal and develop a community of practice in which teacher growth *and* learner achievement are equally prioritised. Bilinda Offen and Susan Sandretto show how the principal in their study navigated conflicting mandatory accountability and professional development criteria to enhance the quality and worth of teacher inquiry, and transform teacher attitudes towards appraisal. This principal’s leadership proved instrumental in teachers gaining ownership of inquiry goals, leading appraisal discussions and valuing appraisal as a means to enhanced practice.

In the sixth article, Susan Lovett reports on the piloting of an online tool commissioned by Te Ariki Trust. This tool seeks to establish the strength of collective commitment to dimensions of “professional discretion”, “collegial obligations”, “reflective inquiry and discourse” and “evidence-based professional practice”, the four core values underpinning the work of the Trust. The intention is that data from this survey provides the basis for disciplined dialogue between school colleagues that generates avenues for school improvement. Preliminary findings suggest that the survey instrument provides a useful discussion starter that can be employed in various ways.

Finally, Sally Boyd and Elliot Lawes analyse New Zealand Wellbeing@School survey data to suggest powerful ways in which schools can make a difference to bullying behaviour. Given the incidence of bullying and aggressive behaviour in New Zealand schools, this article is of pressing concern. Rather than focusing intervention on individuals and perceiving bullying as a stable personality trait, the authors emphasise the importance of systemic responses that promote a culture of care. Drawing on data collected from 58,337 students and 3,416 teachers from 400 schools, they identify strategies that together constitute the multi-faceted, holistic whole school approaches most likely to make a difference.

As we reflect on the important matters raised in this issue and research still to be done, it is appropriate that we pause to appreciate each author’s contribution to leadership scholarship, the participants who supported their empirical investigation, the reviewers who critiqued their work, and the production team who brought this general edition to fruition. While participants rightfully remain anonymous, we thank:

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NZEALS has some exciting news on which to conclude the 2018 journal year: JELPP is going global! Mā te huruhuru ka rere te manu (adorn this bird with feathers to enable it to fly). Following consultation with members, Volume 34 will see us dispense with print editions and partner with Exeley, New York, to provide an open source publishing platform. This collaboration will bring a number of

benefits to readers, authors, and NZEALS members, including anytime anywhere access to journal contents, timely online publication of accepted articles, digital object identifiers (doi) and article metrics, international promotion of NZEALS and New Zealand research, and reduced production and distribution costs. We invite you all to join us in this significant new chapter in the journal's history.

*Mere Kirihimete me ngā mihi o te Tau Hou ki a koutou katoa*

## EDITORIAL

# Leading in the early years – Who leads and how?

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Michele Morrison

*Co-Editors*

Leadership has remained a complex and contested aspect of early childhood education (ECE) for well over a decade. Following publication of the then Teachers' Council's occasional paper *Conceptualising leadership in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Thornton, Tamati, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken & Wansbrough, 2009), various theories and approaches have been written about. This research has enhanced understanding of leadership in the sector, yet many practitioners struggle to find a "fit" between theory and practice. Last year's release of the revised edition of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) and this year's Education Council's consultation for a leadership strategy make timely the focus on the manner in which ECE leadership is being conceptualised during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century timely. In this editorial, we situate the special issue in the Aotearoa ECE context, signal the potential for *Te Whāriki* to inform the development of an ECE leadership framework, and provide a brief synopsis of the articles contained in this edition.

In 2009, Thornton and colleagues identified six issues and dilemmas facing leadership in ECE: low profile; lack of an accepted definition or common understanding of leadership; confusion between leadership and management terminology and emphasis on management over leadership; newly qualified, less experienced teachers taking on leadership positions; lack of Ministry of Education recognition and support; and a dearth of leadership development programmes in ECE.

Gains made through the implementation of *Ngā Huarahi Arataki: Pathways to the future* (Ministry of Education, 2002), the ten-year strategic plan for early childhood education (2002-2012), meant that the 2009 Teachers' Council publication was highlighting significant priorities to be tackled in the latter years of the plan. Sadly, a change of government at the end of 2008 led to abandonment of the strategic plan and, as a consequence, leadership in ECE remains largely devoid of policy direction and resourcing initiatives. Despite lack of progress in strengthening ECE leadership at a national policy level, there is a willingness and commitment by many in the sector to continue to conceptualise and enact leadership in ways that enhance their practice and endeavour to fulfil the aspirations of their communities. The articles in this special issue provide evidence of this commitment.

Thornton et al. (2009) argue that one of the challenges facing leadership in ECE is the historical, social and political evolution of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. The diversity of provision, which includes parent-led and teacher-led ECE services, has generated emergent and collaborative leadership models that make the conceptualising of leadership complex. We suggest, however, that this complexity is also a strength which enables an openness and willingness to embrace multiple interpretations of "who leads?" As teachers and leaders continue to grapple with the complexities of a fast-changing world, including theoretical perspectives and a national curriculum that promotes democracy, uncertainty and inclusiveness, not having fixed ideas or structures that lend themselves to particular practices opens up spaces for all members of an ECE community to be leaders.

Distributed leadership and its multiple iterations of definition, nomenclature and practice has often been used to best explain leadership in ECE. International literature and the small but growing body of Aotearoa New Zealand leadership research would suggest that distributed leadership still provides a strong theoretical underpinning for leadership practice in ECE. It is this concept of sharing leadership coupled with the weaving metaphor of *Te Whāriki* that appears to help validate teachers' interest in and exploration of widening the leadership circle to place leadership in the hands of children, families and communities. The permeable and

integrated nature of the principles of *Te Whāriki* provide a useful framework for conceptualising leadership in ECE and supporting democratic, distributed practices. The four principles: empowerment/whakamana; holistic development/ kotahitanga; family and community/tangata whenua, and relationships/ngā hononga can be regarded as a curriculum for leadership.

The principle of empowerment/whakamana encompasses notions of agency and growth. This principle is founded on the premise that the curriculum empowers children to learn and grow, that recognising and enhancing individual mana as well as supporting individuals to enhance the mana of others is paramount in the implementation of the curriculum. This suggests that leadership must ensure there are opportunities for growth and that interactions and decisions need to be sensitive to and cognisant of the mana of both the individual and collective. As Pound (2008) suggests, distributed leadership “assumes that ‘everyone can be a leader’ and that ‘you can learn to be a leader’” (p. 79). Leadership that empowers will recognise and encourage leadership learning.

Holistic development/kotahitanga is closely linked to empowerment. In a curriculum context, kotahitanga reflects the holistic manner in which children learn and grow. When applied to leadership, this principle takes account of the unique ways in which adults and children learn and provides multiple opportunities for learning. Ord et al. (2013), in their study of leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE centres, argue that “the most effective leaders are those who promote the learning of their teams” (p. ix) and support the development of knowledge, skills and attributes to enhance learning across the ECE community.

The principle of family and community/tangata whenua recognises that individuals cannot be separated from their contexts and that the wider world is an integral aspect of curriculum. This principle requires leadership to share power, to give up control and to trust others to take on responsibility. Harris (2009) writes about distributed leadership suggesting that “distributed leadership...requires power sharing” (p. 4) and is a “form of leadership that is more organic, spontaneous and ultimately more difficult to control” (p. 7). Encouraging families and the wider community to take on leadership roles requires courage and a strong commitment to empowering others but can bring a richness to learning and development not otherwise achievable.

At the heart of the curriculum is the principle of relationships /ngā hononga. This principle encapsulates the significance of people, places and things to learning. Much is written about the relational nature of effective leadership (Aubrey, Godfrey & Harris, 2013; Harris, 2009; Pound, 2008) and the significance of strong respectful relationships between leaders and their communities. Relationships are crucial for building the trust necessary to relinquish control and enable others to use the people, places and things at their disposal to realise community aspirations.

The unique bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand is at the heart of the curriculum and must, too, be evident in leadership practices, hence the suitability of adopting the curriculum principles as a leadership curriculum. While internationally the struggle to theorise and conceptualise leadership continues, the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE community may do well to consider its own local and time-honoured curriculum framework as appropriate for guiding ECE leadership practice in this specific and unique context.

In the opening article, Nikki Klevering and Rachel McNae highlight the inability of current leadership theorising to adequately account for the situated and multifaceted activities undertaken in diverse settings, thus echoing the challenges and dilemmas articulated by Thornton et al. (2009) almost a decade earlier. Drawing on the voices of five experienced ECE leaders, they detect amidst uncertainty the emergence of an embodied leadership grounded in an ethic of nurture and care. While further research and theorising are needed, this paradigm appears to sit well with the youthful clientele and gendered nature of the profession.

Clear alignment with the principles of *Te Whāriki* can be seen in the second article: *Dispositions of a responsible early childhood education leader: Voices from the field*. Arising from a larger study, Gwen

Davitt and Debbie Ryder explore six specific dispositions that support early childhood leaders to grasp the complexities of leading and respond appropriately: *kōrero tahi* (skilful communication), *whanaungatanga* (relationships), *manaakitanga* (care), *kotahitanga* (team unity), *whakamana* (leading growth and change), and *hoa arohachae* (being a critical friend). They conclude that these dispositions are not necessarily innate but cultivated, thereby underscoring the importance of leadership learning that is robust, ongoing, and dialogic.

Focus in the third and fourth articles shifts to the youngest and often least experienced leaders in the ECE community. Vicki Hill investigates the leadership opportunities afforded children and teachers through formal nature-based education, in the process explicating an often overlooked aspect of distributed leadership. She describes how children participating in an outdoor programme for one full day per week, over a ten week term, negotiated and co-constructed their learning through authentic planning, decision-making, risk taking, and rituals. This case study research found that not only did immersion in a local bush environment enhance children's independence skills and physical development; the blurring of power relationships, reciprocity and "apprenticeship of observation" also enhanced teachers' leadership confidence and competence.

In a similar vein, Linda Baxendine widens the leadership story, moving beyond a focus on the individual to theorise leadership as a social and democratic process that emerges through concurrent, collective, collaborative and compassionate practice. A kindergarten excursion within the local community forms the context for this study, as Sharkman (pseudonym, aged 4yrs) and her/his peers inquire into the history and geography of their surrounding landscape. Their fact finding mission quickly involves children, *whānau* and teachers in meaningful participation, transforming dialogue, and power sharing experiences that reinforce interconnectedness and turn knowledge into understanding.

Insights into contexts beyond Aotearoa New Zealand invite reflection on taken for granted ways of thinking and being. In the fifth article, Maria Cerrato and her colleagues highlight important differences in the way New Zealand and Honduras teachers conceptualise and enable young children's leadership. Contrasting *Te Whāriki's* child-centred play-based curriculum with the more prescriptive and academic focused *Currículo Nacional de Educación Prebásica (CNPB)*, the authors examine the implications for young children's leadership identification and development. Findings from this small-scale study suggest that whereas *Te Whāriki* encourages the fostering of leadership potential in all children, *CNPB's* focus on subject competence leads Honduran teachers to determine leadership potential in certain children and allocate leadership roles accordingly.

The importance of data- and research-informed practice is reiterated several times throughout this special issue. In the second international perspective, Line Skov-Hansen expands research parameters from small-scale studies, to a broader system approach to improvement work in Denmark. She shows how a national policy commitment to "professional and strong leadership at all levels" is enshrined in legislation and deemed essential to high quality ECE provision. While the pedagogical and practice shifts required of Danish ECE leaders are, in many ways, similar to challenges facing their New Zealand counterparts, commitment to coherent leadership development at a municipal (regional /national) level is something Aotearoa has yet to see.

Returning to New Zealand shores and coming full circle, Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips converses with Emerita Professor Margaret Carr, co-author of the foundational *Te Whāriki* early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) and expert advisor to the 2016-17 *Te Whāriki* writing panel. Having posed the question, "What does this have to do with leadership?" Professor Carr eloquently articulates a philosophy of leadership that privileges shared authority and the readiness, willingness and ability to act, regardless of age or position.

As you read the examples of ECE leadership outlined and theorised in this special issue, we hope that you, too, will be inspired to weave your own interpretations of leadership within the context of your setting and to see the curriculum principles as a curriculum for ECE leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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