DISTRIBUTING THE LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips
(née Wills)

University of Waikato
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the question of what might be a model of effective leadership for pedagogical change in early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Drawing on a framework of gateways for personalising learning constructed by Hargreaves (2004a) and Engestrom's (1999) Activity theory, a case study of a professional development programme is analysed. Entrypoints or gateways for teachers in three early childhood centres to the professional development programme are identified, as are gateways for sustained involvement and continued learning opportunities.

The study uses unstructured interviews with a narrative inquiry approach to hear the teachers' stories and the findings of the study are presented in a narrative style in order to capture these voices.

The major findings from the study indicate that professional development is a complex interweaving of voices and intentions. There are three key elements of the ongoing personalising learning as a result of involvement in the professional development programme: distributed leadership, teacher voice, and community. The context of early childhood provided unique definitions of the gateways and common elements were found in identifying the entrypoints and features of sustained involvement.
The study implies that effective leadership is distributed across the community and the sustaining features of the professional development programme need to be elements of any provision of professional development intent on personalising learning for pedagogical change.

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This thesis has not happened in isolation – although at times it has felt like it was the only thing in my world.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the rationale for this thesis and to introduce the topic.

Interest of the researcher

Teachers engage, on a daily basis, in a complex conglomerate of "noticing, recognising and responding"[1] to childrens' learning. Amongst the complexities of this conglomerate is the opportunity for noticing, recognising and responding to their own learning. This attention to their personal learning can result in changes to practice, doing things differently and more effectively noticing, recognising and responding to their learning and childrens' learning. During my twelve-year career as an early childhood teacher, I have taught in a variety of teams. Some of these experiences have been with teachers who were reflective, motivated and enthusiastic, not only about childrens' learning but, also, their own ongoing professional learning. Other teaching situations have caused me some frustration as teachers have resisted exploring ways of doing things differently. My current position as a lecturer in an initial teacher education programme offers me opportunities to engage prospective teachers in positive learning experiences, and to foster their disposition for on-going learning. These experiences have made me often reflect on how to encourage teachers and student teachers to continue on a personalised learning pathway.

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[1] 'Noticing, recognising and responding' is a definition of formative assessment in *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2005a). The definition comes from research by Bronwen Cowie (Cowie, 2000).

Professional development focus

My time as a teacher has also been coupled with a national involvement in the industrial and professional union representing early childhood teachers, primary teachers, primary principals and support staff in schools. In this role I have attended a wide range of fora with teachers and engaged in many professional discussions. It is apparent that within groups of teachers there is a wide variety of attitudes and beliefs about ongoing learning and a range of responses to opportunities for professional development.

Many times I have wondered about what might constitute effective professional development, I know that as a teacher I wanted to be valued for the skills and knowledge I had. An approach that indicated I needed to undergo professional development because my skills were inadequate or where somebody else had made decisions about my learning was generally unsuccessful in motivating me to engage in the learning.

Leadership focus

In furthering my studies, I also began to form an interest in leadership. There appeared to be much written about leadership and many programmes and initiatives focussing on developing leadership. Delving deeper into the complex world of leadership I began to think about what a model of effective leadership might look like in the context of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It soon came to my attention that there had not been a great deal written about leadership in early childhood, in general, and, in particular, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There have been some recent calls for research and development of early childhood leadership from teachers and academics. This call has been in order to assist the implementation of a number of significant changes facing the sector in the past ten years and into the future. Some of these changes are outlined in this thesis. New types or understanding of leadership appeared to be emerging and the term 'distributed leadership' was occurring in more conversations and literature. The indication, that has been emerging that for

leadership to be effective, it needed the shared skills and knowledge of the total organisation. This was an interesting concept to test within the early childhood context.

Learning opportunities

Over the past twenty years early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand has seen some very positive and innovative developments. We are in a privileged position of knowing that the sector is being valued and supported as a crucial part of childrens' lives. It has always been my view that for teachers to be able to effectively enhance young children's learning they need opportunities to engage in their own learning. These opportunities and experiences need to recognise and build on the strengths and expertise of the teachers and positively affirm their contributions so that they feel valued and allow them to continue to engage in ongoing learning.

This study

In the light of this personal and professional context, it seemed appropriate to commence some research that explored a model of professional development with a view to ascertaining from teachers what factors had provided motivation and engagement and had any shifts in practice been sustained or opportunities for leadership occurred. The question I was interested in exploring is: what is effective leadership for pedagogical change?

Chapter 2

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTEXT AND A LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter reviews the literature around the thesis topic. The first section outlines the cultural historical context of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The second section is centred on aspects of leadership such as: change and leadership, effective leadership, types of leadership including distributed leadership. The third section is about professional development and its relationship to distributed leadership and the final section outlines literature on entry points for professional development and distributed leadership.

Part I - Cultural historical context of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand has had a chequered career in its fight to be recognised both as an integral part of children's educational entitlement and as a profession. A number of significant events and developments have occurred over the last century that provide an historical and cultural context. It is from my own experience as a practitioner in the field and involvement in a variety of national fora that I lend my own voice to this discussion.

The beginnings of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand are rooted in the social construct of rescue and reform where philanthropic upper class individuals saw it as their responsibility to save children from working class morals, educate parents in child rearing practices and reduce child mortality (May,

1997). The early establishment of kindergartens based on the metaphor of Froebel's 'child's garden' in the late nineteenth century (Froebel, 1967) soon grew to be the prominent and favoured form of childcare and /or education outside of the home.

Kindergartens initially depended on charitable donations and support from local organisations both religious and secular. Post-war provision, funding and training of teachers became state controlled. Kindergartens were very much seen as education based institutions and the Education Act of 1948 ensured only trained teachers could be employed in state funded kindergartens. Unlike in other parts of the world where Froebel's kindergarten philosophy had become established, kindergartens in New Zealand remained separate entities from schools, with a particular play-based pedagogical philosophy (May, 1997). It is likely that this difference has allowed for the rise of leaders determined to secure equivalent status for early childhood within the teaching profession and that the underlying philosophy of the kindergarten movement within New Zealand has had space to develop its own identity.

Another unique provision of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the Playcentre movement. Playcentres involve local collectives of parents providing the supervision and programme through shared leadership in state and locally funded facilities and has been, and is, a preferred option of early childhood education for many families since 1941 (Densem, 1980: Somerset, 1987). The importance of parents as partners in their children's education has remained a strength of the Playcentre movement, and this principle has been carried through to other provisions of early childhood education and influenced the development of curriculum.

A noteworthy example of doing things differently in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the story of the revitalisation of language through the founding of language nests (Te Kōhanga Reo) by Māori (Reedy, 1995). This concept of total language and cultural immersion by infants, toddlers and young children supported by their

family/ whānau[2] became the foundation for the survival of this culture and today Kōhanga Reo are a strong component of the early childhood sector, offering opportunities for all New Zealanders to embrace our bicultural heritage. The Kōhanga Reo movement in establishing language nests needed strong, defined and shared leadership for its success and many of the concepts of this movement have had wide influence throughout early childhood within Aotearoa/New Zealand (Ritchie, 2003). Parent/whānau partnerships with teachers are vital to the health and well-being of kōhanga reo with decision making being shared amongst the community.

Childcare, crèche and daycare have all been different labels for the provision of care for children whose parents are in paid employment. This provision has had to struggle against the political and social hegemony that decreed that mothers should stay at home and care for their children (Davies, 1984; May, 1992; May, 2003). It has been through the staunch, persistent advocacy and lobbying of determined women, both inside and outside of the political arena, that has seen full day, full year services slowly come to enjoy similar conditions as the flagship kindergarten movement. The integration of care and education, through the shift in responsibility from Ministry of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Education, occurred in 1986, and in 1988 Colleges of Education began teaching a national three year diploma which integrated childcare and kindergarten. Previously, a two year kindergarten diploma had been the recognised qualification for kindergarten while the wider early childhood sector languished under minimum standards or untrained status; this Diploma of Teaching was equivalent and parallel to the qualification for primary teaching. Through the work of the teachers' union, NZEI Te Riu Roa, the New Zealand Childcare Association/ Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa and many remarkable women (and a few men) significant gains have been made in recognising early childhood education as a crucial and integral part of children's learning and development ensuring that teachers have gained status and that learning outcomes for children have been enhanced. This struggle has been eloquently captured in Helen May's book 'Concerning Women, Concerning children' (May 2003).

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[2] Whānau is a Māori term that encompasses the concept of extended family including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins etc.

Two other very important events that have shaped early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and continued the tradition of doing things differently are: the development, publication and implementation of *Te Whāriki; He Whāriki Matauranga mo ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa, the early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and the development of a long -term strategic plan *Pathways to the future: Ngā Huarāhi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Curriculum

The curriculum *Te Whāriki; He Whāriki Matauranga mo ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was developed at the behest of a neo-liberal right wing conservative government in 1991. The imperatives of this government were to ensure education was equipping students for their place in the sustainability and efficiency of the economy. Yet in the midst of these imperatives an early childhood curriculum emerged that recognised and in fact stemmed from the bicultural heritage of the country, had pedagogical foundations in sociocultural theory and a strong socially critical, progressive view of children (Mutch, 2003). *Te Whāriki* is the Māori word for a traditional floor mat woven from harakeke (flax) and it is this weaving metaphor that is clearly evident in the integrated and interrelated approach to curriculum, linking principles, strands, goals and learning outcomes so that each is dependent on the other. The aspirational statement of *Te Whāriki* outlines the basis for the curriculum:

> for children to grow up as confident, competent learners and
> communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense
> of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued
> contribution to society.(Ministry of Education,1996.p 9).

The framework of *Te Whāriki* consists of four principles and five strands - each strand has a set of goals with indicative learning outcomes. This framework allows for a distributed approach to implementation in that local centres can weave their own programme according to their context while still demonstrating adherence to the principles and strands. The curriculum was launched in 1996 and

the ensuing ten years have seen teachers beginning a journey of implementation that has been characterised by professional development opportunities, trial and error of programme planning evaluation and assessment, varied understandings of the theoretical underpinnings, and different approaches to the interpretation of implementation and practice (Dalli. 2003; Nuttall, 2003). This shift from a traditional developmental, Piagetian view of children's learning to a constructivist, sociocultural framework has provided opportunities and impetus for changes in practice and identity for teachers.

A programme of professional development was developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education to assist teachers with the implementation of the curriculum during its trial phase while it remained in draft form from 1993-96 (Te One, 2003). This provision consisted of a variety of in-service courses for teachers and some years later a series of videos were produced to support *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003). Current provision of professional development from the Ministry of Education is awarded through a contestable fund to providers who are required to support centres in implementing *Te Whāriki.* There has been some documentation of research that illustrates the different ways in which teachers have responded to this call for changes in practice and identity (Carr, Hatherly, Lee and Ramsey, 2003; Dalli, 1999; Nuttall, 2003). Although not legislated (this is imminent for 2007) *Te Whāriki* has become the basis of programming in early childhood centres and its principles and goals have been mandated in other compliance documents such as the Desirable Objectives and Practices (Ministry of Education, 1998). It is the existence of the curriculum that has fostered further developments about assessment and with this has come innovative and creative ways of capturing and documenting children's learning (Carr, 2001; Hatherly and Sands, 2002; Lee, Hatherly and Ramsey, 2002) including a far greater use of ICT within early childhood centres. The development of narrative assessment and in particular, Learning Stories (Carr, 2001) has resulted in the publication of a resource for teachers to support their knowledge, understanding and implementation of formative, narrative assessment entitled *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2005a). This resource has more recently (2005) been

supported with professional development contracts to provide opportunities for teachers to engage more meaningfully with the resource.

The success, or not, of these changes can be largely located in the effectiveness of the professional development provided for teachers. These opportunities have formed a significant part of the story of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and they are the topic of this thesis.

A strategic plan for early childhood

A second significant event for early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand that has provided an impetus for many other initiatives, and demonstrated a commitment to early childhood education by a Labour led government, was the development of a ten year strategic plan, encompassing regulations, funding, qualifications, teacher supply, children with special needs and transition. The three overarching goals of *Pathways to the future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002) are increased participation, increased quality, and collaborative relationships. Over the past three years the sector has experienced an unprecedented amount of consultation and change as the plan has been implemented, policies changed and funding released.

Some of the new initiatives developed and implemented through *Ngā Huarahi Arataki* include: an overhaul of funding, a comprehensive review of regulations for licensing of early childhood centres and new requirements in teacher qualifications and registration. The designation of Centres of Innovation, where funding is awarded to centres to research and disseminate information about an innovative practice within their centre, and the implementation and resourcing of an ICT strategy have increased opportunities for teachers' professional development and changing beliefs about children's learning. The ICT strategy, in particularly, is regarded as innovative and even luxurious in comparison to other government's prioritising of, or commitment to, early childhood education.

Local projects to increase participation and, more recently, contracts for Parent Support and Development initiatives where early childhood centres are

endeavouring to integrate social and public services, are initiatives under the increased participation and collaborative relationship goals.

Hence, the combination of a national curriculum and the strategic plan has meant enormous change for the sector and there is a sense of early childhood education 'coming of age' and having tangible recognition for the sustained impact it has on children's learning and future success in education (Wylie and Hipkins 2006). At a regular meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Education in November 2005 the Secretary for Education emphasised that it was essential that the sector be supported through the unprecedented change it was experiencing and would continue to experience in the coming years (Ministry of Education, 2005b). Over the last twenty years the sector is at a place where embracing change is the norm and this research explores some aspects of this change.

Part II – Leadership

The next part of this literature review explores theories of effective leadership, its relationship to managing change and some of the types of leadership. The final section explains a more recent theory of leadership – that of distributed leadership.

Change and leadership

If change is to occur and to occur successfully, it can be assumed that some form of leadership is necessary for managing and leading this change. There is much written and discussed about managing change, the differences between centrally imposed change or self-determined change and the role of the leader in managing the change (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford, 2000; Fullan, 1993; McInerney, 2003; Stoll, Bolam and Collarbone, 2002). Returning to the initial question posed at the beginning of this study I am more interested in exploring

what kind of leadership is likely to motivate or be a catalyst for change - essentially, what is effective leadership for pedagogical change?

Before exploring ideas about effective leadership, this section looks at some contextual specifics of early childhood and leadership, in particular the hierarchical structure of early childhood services. Early childhood teachers operate in teams. This is largely due to the requirement for certain ratios of teachers to children and also because in early childhood services children are expected to be able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment. Within these teams there is a hierarchy, and the size of the team and the service[3] determines the structure of this hierarchy.

In traditional state funded kindergartens there are usually three teachers, one of whom is a Head Teacher, while in all day education and care centres there is likely to be a manager (who may not be a trained teacher), a supervisor or 'person responsible' (Ministry of Education, 1998) who holds a benchmark qualification and a category of registration awarded through a process by the NZ Teachers Council. In some large centres there may also be an assistant supervisor, or two, in some large centres and then a required number of teachers according to the number of children at the centre. There is currently (2007) a requirement that fifty percent of these teachers must be trained and registered and funding is provided to reflect the number of trained teachers employed in a centre. Of those teachers not trained some of them may be 'in training' with their employment counting towards their practical experience.

So within a large education and care centre there may be eight to fifteen staff comprising: a manager, a supervisor (perhaps two if the centre caters for under two year olds and over two year olds and these age groups are housed in separate buildings or sections of the same building), one or more assistant supervisors, trained teachers, in-training teachers and untrained staff. Some untrained staff may have been working in the field for many years while some supervisors,

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[3] The term 'service' refers here to the different provisions of early childhood education, e.g. education and care, kindergarten, kōhanga reo

assistant supervisors and trained teachers may have very recently completed a qualification and graduated from an initial teacher education programme.

It is therefore possible to think that although traditionally we might assume the leadership to play out according to position in the hierarchy it is likely that competition for the leadership may occur through claims of status, qualifications and/or experience. A study by Aitken (2005) provides evidence for these diverse claims for leadership.

Team teaching involves collaborative planning, rotating responsibilities (a teacher may be responsible for the outside environment one day and then the inside the next) and often the sharing of administration tasks. Although it is more likely that a teaching team would use a staff meeting or special planning meeting to co-plan the programme for a week or term, with teachers taking turns for formal group times and setting up of activities, there has been an increasing use of administrators or support staff to take on many of the tasks associated with central administration or compliance requirements to enable teachers to concentrate on curriculum, assessment and planning. This has been a more recent development since the publication of *Te Whāriki* and a growing emphasis on formal documentation of children's learning. Kindergartens have traditionally operated on a sessional basis with one or more sessions being 'child–free' to allow teachers to attend to administrative, domestic and resourcing needs of the centre. This non-contact time has been closely guarded by teachers in the negotiating of their pay and conditions and is regarded as vital to maintaining quality learning and teaching for children. Within education and care centres it is now becoming an expected condition of employment that staff will have some non-contact time particularly for documentation and assessment for learning.

There are many discourses that could be explored within early childhood teaching teams that might reveal the tensions and working out of leadership but that is future work and not the within the scope of this study. However it may be possible to surmise that because of the rostering of responsibilities and the day-to-day team dynamics, leadership could be more likely to be dispersed across the

teachers within the centre and that leadership may cross the boundaries of traditional hierarchical structures.

Effective leadership

What kind of leadership might then be an effective catalyst for change, and for early childhood education is this likely to be different from 'effective' leadership in other contexts?

In the face of the changes in the early childhood education sector outlined above it is important to explore definitions about what effective leadership might look like, how it can be sustained and how this leadership correlates with educational improvement (Day et al 2000; Fullan, 1992; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbeck, 1999). In more recent years there has been an emphasis on redefining leadership, as policymakers, academics and practitioners grapple with implementing major changes affecting organisation, accountability and curriculum (Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Stoll and Fink, 1996). The importance of effective leadership in capacity building for educational improvement has been the dominant theme when attempting to ascertain 'what makes a good leader?' A large proportion of this literature examines types of leadership with an emphasis on effectiveness and managing change. Models of effective leadership are developed and discussed generally in relation to principals and head teachers as the primary motivators of change (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001; Smyth, 1989). In most instances theories are espoused, and there are a proliferation of these, but without a consensus being reached about effective leadership. It would appear that a reflection made by Bennis (1993) more than a decade ago still rings true: "of all the hazy and confounding ideas in social psychology, leadership theory undoubtedly contends for the top nomination. Probably more has been written and less known about leadership than any other topic in behavioural science" (p 259).

Traditional views of leadership: transactional and transformative.

It is clearly evident that traditional views of leadership have undergone major restructuring and rethinking in response to organisational change occurring as a result of new political reforms and the influence of neo-liberal tendencies (Moos, 2003; Southworth, 2002).

Traditional views of leadership have largely come from a construct where the leader is viewed as the 'hero' who rescues and saves the nation, displaying traits of aggression, competition and independence (Blackmore, 1989; Watkins, 1986; Sergiovanni, 2001). Think of the great warriors and statesmen portrayed as the world's great leaders - Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Churchill, Te Rauparaha - these leaders held the power, made the decisions (albeit with advice from others) and generally 'led the charge'. This view of leadership is based very much on a *transactional* model prescribing to a top-down hierarchy involving an exchange of rewards for services or outcomes (Leithwood, Begley and Cousins, 1992). To use the heroic leadership example- if you served well in the armies of Alexander you were likely to increase your wealth, harem and slave ownership. Burns (1978) an early proponent of leadership theory saw transactional leadership manifested in contractual arrangements and the pursuit of self-interest. Studies of heroic or transactional leadership have attempted to identify the characteristics of a 'manager' responsible for the 'outputs' of subordinates and through this identification or definition outline a 'recipe' for being a great leader (Sergiovanni and Carver, 1980).

Burns (1978) continues to theorise about leadership and its ability to sustain improvement or stimulate long-term motivation, suggesting in his analysis that a *transformative* rather than transactional approach is likely to motivate others to change and for that change to endure. Transactional leadership according to Burns is about *getting things done* whereas transformative leadership is about being *visionary and inspirational* through a process whereby "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (1978, p 20). This discourse has been taken up and explored by other leadership theorists and researchers (Leithwood et al 1992; Sergiovanni, 1996) who have seen

transformative leadership as attending to the intrinsic values, beliefs and motivation of those within the organisation. Transformative leadership is about charismatic individuals who motivate through clear articulation of a vision and realize the importance of the culture of an organisation in contributing to achieving the vision.

Although the research of Leithwood et al (1999) demonstrates the effectiveness of transformative leadership in managing and sustaining change they argue that transformative leadership builds on transactional leadership. In motivating 'followers' to be involved in developing and working toward a shared vision there still needs to be some exchange of services or rewards for efforts made in securing the vision or different way of doing things. This reverses Burn's (1978) differentiation - an inspiring, visionary leader (transformative) needs a way of achieving the vision (getting things done) and this is more likely to happen when the 'followers' are involved in a positive transaction between themselves and their leader. Returning to the Roman conqueror, Alexander, it could be argued that although his leadership subscribed to the rules of rewards for efforts, he, too, was transformative, in that he inspired his subjects to work toward a common vision of ruling the world. And although Sergiovanni (1996) would insist that true transformative leadership takes account of the principles of social justice, with each individual valued as an integral part of the organisation, a clear differentiation between transactional and transformative leadership is in fact blurred and perhaps muddied.

The majority of leadership theories tend to focus on an individual with the role of the leader being embodied in a person rather than perhaps a process or community and how this person (the leader) operates within an organisation determines their style or model of leadership. The concept of *distributed leadership* questions this focus.

Pedagogical and/or administrative leadership.

As has been suggested earlier, education has not escaped the scrutiny of 'what makes an effective leader?' and has perhaps been more vulnerable to the debate

and discussion because of its perceived impact on a productive, economically viable society. Political parties, governments and policy makers have a vested interest in ensuring that the resources assigned to education are well spent and that society benefits from the effective leadership of educational institutions (Southworth, 2002).

Within education a dichotomy appears to have developed in the separating of management and leadership and the differentiating between administrative leadership and instructional or pedagogical leadership (Day et al, 2000; Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Southworth, 2002). Administrative leadership tends to be about systems, processes and organisation whereas pedagogical or professional leadership is about the practice of teaching and learning, curriculum knowledge and the interpretation of research into practice (Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Lambert, 1998). Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck (1999) in their review of six approaches to school leadership identified instructional or pedagogical leadership as leaders attending to the "behaviours of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (p 8). However it may be argued that effective pedagogical leadership also requires effective administrative leadership in order to ensure the smooth running of the organisation in assisting teaching and learning. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) suggest a necessary interrelatedness between administrative and pedagogical leadership with administration being a supporting framework that holds the organisation together. On the other hand the debate can rage about whether an effective leader needs to have highly developed administrative or managerial skills as well as the motivating and visionary flair that will inspire others (Law & Glover, 2000).

Pedagogical leadership is not just about systems. Because of the nature of educational inquiry, it will be interpretive and influenced by researcher values and intentions. Katz (1997) for instance comments that it is essentially ideological. This may be particularly true for research on pedagogy with very young children. Fullan (2001) suggests that pedagogical leadership is about motivating and convincing practitioners to do things differently, producing evidence that the change is worthwhile and beneficial to children and their learning.

Political and social accountability can also dictate responsive pedagogical leadership. For instance the Desirable Objectives and Practices mandated for early childhood (Ministry of Education, 1998) were just such a public document for accountability. Such laudable tenets adopted by policy makers in public documents for accountability can send schools and early childhood centres into a flurry of reviewing and assessing in order to ascertain how they are fulfilling such a vision thus dictating the shape of pedagogical leadership (Day et al, 2000; McInerney, 2003).

As has been discussed earlier with regards to early childhood education in New Zealand a new national curriculum has indeed meant teachers considering doing things differently. Leadership that requires the implementation of centrally imposed or self-determined reform brings with it a multitude of variables and potential barriers and it is largely the response to reform or change that has forced a greater analysis and theorising of leadership.

There does however seem to be emerging a groundswell of support for a new kind of leadership which is promising to have positive effects on pedagogy, institutional culture and educational quality (Harris, 2002b). This *distributed* or shared leadership deserves closer scrutiny particularly bearing in mind the concept of leadership in early childhood.

Distributed Leadership

While the term distributed leadership may conjure up a very clear method of operation for some people, the literature indicates that a wide variety of interpretations exist within a range of contexts. The following two studies provide both a cross-cultural and non-educational context that may add to the definition of distributed leadership.

Kets de Vries (1999) and Bryant (2003) have examined leadership within non - Western cultures and presented some ideas about decentralised leadership. Kets de Vries (1999) investigated leadership within a pygmy society where egalitarian

principles of trust, mutual protection and support were held, with respect being based on expertise and knowledge. This way of operating is seen by Kets de Vries (1999) as effective teamwork through distributed leadership - no single individual has ultimate authority and challenges to authority will be made if it appears the team effort is jeopardised. Bryant (2003) conducted his research amongst different Native American tribes to ascertain their perception of leadership. The idea of decentralised leadership where leadership is seen to be located not in one person but a community and that everyone can have the opportunity to be the leader at different times, depending on situation and context, is very much inherent in the practices of this society. These two studies link closely to the sociocultural context of the community and as Kets de Vries(1999) comments it is through the socialisation of children at a very young age that this discourse of leadership evolves and is part of the cultural context of this society. A similar thesis, too, has been endorsed by Bryant's (2003) study.

Leadership within education has until more recently still tended to focus on the 'principal' or 'head teacher' and their effectiveness in leading schools generally through some reform or centrally imposed restructuring (Day et al, 2000; Fullan, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994). The assumptions that: the principal or head teacher is the leader, that others are followers and that the ability and skill of the leader is paramount in effecting change and ensuring a quality teaching and learning environment, continue to be reinforced in the literature and frame the discussions around this discourse. Challenges to these assumptions of the 'principal' as the necessary leader have been issued (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Goddard, 2003; Gronn, 2000; Lambert, 1998) and as Lambert (2002) states,

> ..the days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. We can no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators" (p.37).

My earlier discussion highlighting the operations and hierarchy of early childhood centres gives some weight to this view - the team teaching approach, collaborative

planning and rotating responsibilities gives weight to the idea that distributed leadership is particularly relevant to early childhood.

There is very little literature analysing leadership in early childhood (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Jorde Bloom, 1992; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 2001; Scrivens, 2003). The few studies of leadership in early childhood subscribe to a similar view. Rodd (2001) has endeavoured to outline domains she sees as the key to being an effective early childhood leader while Jorde Bloom (1992) investigated the effect of leadership training on the quality of child care programmes in the United States Both these studies assert that leadership is a pivotal element in ensuring a quality programme. While maintaining leadership is critical in creating and sustaining quality early childhood programmes, Mitchell (1997) comments on the lack of a formal pathway to leadership in early childhood as is seen clearly in other areas of education. She asserts that becoming a leader in an early childhood centre is likely to be through a series of ad hoc circumstances that may depend on such things as teacher supply, experience, legislative requirements rather than a professionally constructed pathway of 'moving up the ladder'. Scrivens (2004), reviewing literature on leadership in early childhood, found that the very little research that did exist tends to support what has been suggested within the wider discussion of leadership. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) and Kagan (1994) contradict this view ascertaining that because early childhood education is largely female dominated there is less likelihood of the 'heroic' aspect of leadership occurring and traditional views of leadership are not necessarily helpful in understanding leadership in early childhood. Notions of distributed leadership come from the premise that educational change and raising student levels of achievement are never the sole responsibility of the principal, nor can the principal accomplish change on their own. Distributed leadership recognises the role that all the professionals within an educational setting play in implementing change and it is through collaboration and collectivity that expertise is developed. The idea that power is shared and teachers are afforded greater agency appears to be a hallmark of not only effective leadership but better outcomes for children (Lambert, 2002; Robinson, 2002; Southworth, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Southworth's (2002) study of ten small primary schools in England where the principals were all considered to be

successful because of the measure of student outcomes found these principals attributed much of their success to the sharing of leadership and skills across their teams so that teachers could learn from one another, and be strong professional role models.

Silins and Mulford (2002) also suggest that effective leadership is about agency and empowerment of teachers and that this is more likely to happen when leadership sources are distributed or stretched across the school. In their large scale study over three years of ninety-six secondary schools in Australia investigating the nature of leadership contributions to enhanced student outcomes and organisational learning Silins and Mulford (2002) found that the more distributed the leadership is throughout the school community, particularly with regard to teachers, then the more positive the outcomes for students. Lambert (2002, p.38) suggests three assumptions that might help make the shift from seeing leadership residing in an individual to leadership as a community responsibility: the right, responsibility and ability of every individual to be a leader; how leadership is defined influences participation; and educators strive to be professional, hence leadership is an essential component of being professional (p. 38). Linked to these assumptions is also the premise that leadership is linked to learning, not just the learning of students but of colleagues as well. As Spillane et al (2001) suggest, this premise includes the view that knowledge is constructed through the multiple and shared perspectives of all involved. Bennett and Anderson (2003) make this connection between leadership, learning, and community suggesting that learning is a reciprocal activity and to implement change requires learning that is more than just a one-way exchange between leader and follower. Harris (2002b) in an analysis of research and studies of leadership concludes that distributed leadership is more likely to result in sustained change, mutual dependence and improved school outcomes.

Defining distributed leadership

Proponents of distributed leadership have not come to an agreement of what this term means and there are already appearing a variety of interpretations (Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003; Gronn, 2000;

Harris, 2002b). Studies analysed by Bennett et al (2003) conceptualise leadership as distributed, democratic, dispersed or delegated. These studies have positioned leadership in a traditional top down hierarchy and examined how that leadership is then dispersed or distributed by the leader (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Campbell, Gold & Lunt, no date; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell & Capper, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Bennett et al (2003) in a review of literature investigating distributed leadership found a variety of studies that specifically addressed the concepts or closely related concepts of distributed leadership. These studies, although using a variety of theories of leadership, generally subscribed to an approach of distributed leadership as: "an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals, an openness of the boundaries of leadership, and varieties of expertise distributed across the many rather than the few" (p 7).

Two studies carried out in schools, Harris and Chapman (2002) and Spillane et al (2001) take quite different approaches to distributed leadership but in fact place the role of leader with the principal. They show how through the devolving or distributing of leadership by the principal to teachers, students and community, change is implemented and sustained.

Harris and Chapman (2002) examine the styles of leadership used by the principal in 'schools facing challenging circumstances' (SFCC) and report that distributed leadership is one style of leadership that principals adopted at certain times of the school's development and it was this 'democratic' style that empowered others to lead and help move the school forward. Distributed or democratic leadership in this instance involved shared decision making and giving professional autonomy to teachers.

Spillane et al (2001), however, adopt a different approach seeing leadership as a series of tasks and that the "execution of leadership is often distributed among multiple leaders" (p 25) and hence distributed leadership is about leadership responsibilities and actions being dispersed or distributed across both positional and informal leadership. As Bennett et al (2000) suggest in their analysis of the studies of Harris and Chapman (2002) and Spillane et al (2001) both relate to the

"work of principals and how their responsibilities can be shared or distributed so that leadership is not exercised by one person but several people conjointly" (p 23).

These definitions do not include the question about who holds the knowledge and according to Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) distribution of leadership happens through knowledge: there will be different holders of different types of knowledge within the structure of the organisation. Who takes a leadership role will depend on the knowledge required and there is, therefore, interchangeability within the domains of operation. This model is particularly analysed in the context of early childhood education and they suggest that through the accessing of information - the reflecting, reviewing and utilising of knowledge - leadership is derived. The understanding that leadership is built on existing knowledge and a culture of learning is a key assumption here.

A small study of leadership within three different early childhood services in Aotearoa/New Zealand concluded that effective "leadership was collaborative with leadership roles being shared between team members" (Thornton, 2005). Thornton (2005) was interested in investigating what leadership roles existed in three early childhood centres designated as Centres of Innovation (COI), how these roles were shared and had their participation as a COI provided further leadership opportunities.
The findings indicated that there was variation in the leadership structures within the three centres but in all centres leadership was shared, teachers were valued for their contributions and it was deemed important to use everyone's skills and expertise.

Distributed leadership and sustained change.

Distributed leadership appears to fit the suggestion noted previously by Lambert (2002) that "everyone has the right, responsibility, and the ability to be a leader" (p.37) that leadership is about "learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.2) and that distributed leadership is more likely to be a model that leads to sustained and

meaningful change. Day et al (2000) in their comprehensive case study of twelve schools in England examining effective leadership interviewed deputy headteachers, teachers, students and governors and parents. It was the characteristics of sharing the vision, delegating roles, encouraging sharing of skills and seeing leadership as the responsibility of all involved that were determined by the wider school community to be the hallmarks of effective leadership.

In the light of the research and studies discussed above a conclusion about the nature of distributed leadership might be drawn to help inform the remainder of this thesis. This conclusion could surmise that distributed leadership is about recognising individual's strengths and expertise, and through shared decision-making and collaborative effort, a common goal is achieved.

 If, as is suggested distributed leadership is effective and a hallmark of distributed leadership is where change is undertaken collaboratively, then how might schools and early childhood centres be encouraged to embrace this model of leadership to help generate change? Silins and Mulford (2002) suggest that it is difficult for teachers to create and sustain conditions for change, particularly to do with improved student learning, if those conditions do not exist for their own learning. Therefore how might these conditions be provided for teachers and how might professional development assist in this?

I want to look now at ideas about professional development and its place in empowering teachers' sense of agency and motivation to change. These are questions for Part III of this chapter.

Part III - Professional Development

Professional development can be defined as formal or semi-formal in-service education for teachers. As with leadership theory there is a proliferation of studies concerned with professional development within educational institutions (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Borko, 2004; Edwards & Nicoll, 2006; Lambert, 2003; Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006) and once again there is, too, a variety of theories and ideas about

the effectiveness of the professional development, how that effectiveness might be measured and most importantly how sustainable are the changes that occur as a result of the professional development.

Professional development for teachers is designed to improve outcomes for children and students; many professional development programmes involve pre and post analysis of children's learning with the efficacy of the professional development being measured through the post analysis of student outcomes (Higgins, Irwin, Thomas, Trinick & Young-Loveridge, 2005; Phillips, McNaughton, & MacDonald, 2002; Timperley & Phillips, 2003).

In spite of the abundance of ideas about the process or machinations of professional development, analyses of the literature on professional development (Hargreaves, 1994; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003) emphasise that professional development is a fundamental component in effecting and maintaining change within schools and early childhood centres, particularly the quality of learning and teaching. Professional development is also seen as a major contributor to capacity building within educational institutions when it offers greater agency to teachers. The ability of teachers to be able to take responsibility for their own learning, engage in critical reflection and share experiences with colleagues is more likely to result in increased opportunities for learners and develop leadership amongst teachers (Guskey, 1986; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Lambert, 2003). Harris and Muijs (2005) suggest that effective professional development leads to "self-directed improvement of practice" by teachers, greater risk-taking and an improved sense of efficacy (p.61) while Lambert (2003) views professional development as effective when it encourages teacher leadership and contribution.

Coupled with the notion of agency is the imperative that professional development leads to change - change in practice and change in beliefs and assumptions. Guskey (1986) states that professional development is a "systematic attempt to bring about change - change in the practice of teachers, change in their beliefs and attitudes, and change in the learning outcomes of students" (p 5). An educational intervention project undertaken by Engeström, Engeström and Suntio (2002) supports Guskey's (1986) statement in that the changing of the teachers'

beliefs about the students' capabilities was a significant factor in students experiencing success. A New Zealand study, *Te Kotahitanga*, (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003) looking at the experiences of Year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classrooms also found that outcomes for students were influenced by the teachers' beliefs about student capabilities. Teachers who made a shift in their attitude and beliefs from a deficit view of the student to seeing them as capable and competent found students responded and their learning progress was enhanced (Bishop et al, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Powell & Teddy, 2005; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy & Clapham, 2006).

Professional development in early childhood

Two early childhood studies within Aotearoa/New Zealand support the idea that effective professional development results in a change in teacher beliefs and greater agency for teachers making a link between professional development and distributed leadership.

A comprehensive synthesis of the literature on professional development and enhanced pedagogy in early childhood settings has been carried out by New Zealand researchers Mitchell and Cubey (2003). This Best Evidence Synthesis[4] (BES) supports other national and international studies of professional development (Bishop et al, 2003, 2005, 2006; Guskey, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Timperley & Phillips, 2003) in identifying key characteristics of effective professional development and is firmly situated in the context of early childhood education in Aotearoa /New Zealand. The brief of this synthesis was:

> to focus on evidence about what constitutes quality professional
> development as it relates to learning opportunities, experiences, and
> outcomes for children within diverse early childhood education
> provisions (p3).

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[4] Best Evidence Synthesis is a systematic literature review strategy incorporating explicit and transparent methods while being accountable, updateable and replicable (Oakley, 2002)

The work looked primarily at the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand but also drew on international evidence of the constitution of quality professional development. In order to identify research meeting criteria of 'best evidence', the following benchmarks were applied: strong evidence linked to outcomes for children, strong evidence about professional development but with little information about outcomes for children, data- based evidence with some gaps and commentary and opinion (p 6). The findings of this BES described eight characteristics of effective professional development:

- The professional development incorporates participants' own aspirations, skills, knowledge, and understanding into the learning context

- The professional development provides theoretical knowledge, content knowledge and information about alternative practices.

- Participants are involved in investigating pedagogy within their own early childhood settings. Professional development advisers assist in data collection and ongoing critique.

- Participants analyse data from their own settings. Revelation of discrepant data is a mechanism to invoke revised understanding.

- Critical reflection enabling participants to investigate and challenge assumptions and extend their thinking is a core aspect.

- Effective professional development supports educational practice that is inclusive of all children, families and whānau.

- The professional development helps teachers/ educators to change pedagogical practice, knowledge, and beliefs.

- The professional development helps teachers/educators to gain awareness of their own thinking, actions, and influence.

<div align="center">(Mitchell & Cubey, 2003. Pp 83-92).</div>

Carr, May, Podmore, Cubey, Hatherly & Macartney (2000) in their action research trial of the implementation of a new evaluation and assessment framework in six different early childhood settings found that through critical reflection, collaboration and a willingness to analyse actions and practice, teachers changed their beliefs about themselves as professionals and made shifts in their teaching practice. Participants in this project constructed their own tools

and measures for trialling in their respective centres, hence taking ownership of their goals and expectations.

Another example is the documented journey of a teaching team involved in a professional development programme which highlights the changes in beliefs held by teachers about their own practice, the children in their centre and the role families have in contributing to children and teacher's learning. These changes occurred over some time and were a result of data gathering, setting goals, collaboration, critical reflection and the provision of resources from the project (Carr, Hatherly, Lee & Ramsey 2003).

The studies cited show there appear to be commonalities in the approaches of these professional development programmes - collaboration and critical reflection, setting own goals and having input from expert others (researchers or professional development facilitators).

One other New Zealand study (Gould, 1998) highlights some interesting features of a professional development programme for early childhood education. This study interviewed participants who had attended three two-day modules held one month apart. The findings indicated the following aspects about the programme design. The action research approach allowed participants to incorporate learning into their practice and gave them the ability to "view an aspect of their practice as problematic" (p.122). Those participants who did not view an aspect of their practice as problematic had less success in achieving change. The collaborative nature of the programme was significant and participants valued the opportunity to collaborate with teachers from other early childhood centres. The third aspect of the programme design that was significant supported the notion of professional development programmes being long-term.

Professional development and distributed leadership

So far the discussion has argued that the last ten years or so have demanded that early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand be able (and willing) to make considerable changes, that professional development is a central player in this,

and that an aspect of effective professional development is increased agency for teachers or distributed leadership.

The literature that connects leadership and professional development appears to take a two pronged approach, one that examines professional development for leaders (Lambert, 2002; Law & Glover, 2000; Fullan 2001) and the other examining the opportunities leaders provide for others in the organisation, either to develop as leaders or to engage in ongoing professional learning thus building the capacity of leadership (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005).

In the New Zealand studies cited above (Carr, Hatherly et al, 2003; Carr, Podmore et al, 2000) in both instances leadership was crucial in the change process but that leadership was interchangeable and multifarious. In Carr, Hatherly et al (2003) leadership came from the facilitators of the professional development programme, the Head Teacher of the kindergarten, the other teachers, the families and the children, while leadership in the other study (Carr, Podmore et al, 2000) was distributed across the researchers and the teachers, with the teachers assuming an increasing leadership role as they gained confidence and made changes to their practice.

An earlier study from the United States analysed a professional development programme for leaders in childcare conducted by Jorde Bloom (1992) with twenty-two lead teachers and directors of early childhood centres. Her findings attest to the importance of professional development in increasing teachers' ability to affect change. This professional development model used applied research experiences for the participants where they identified specific issues and designed a research project based on the issue. Critical reflection and visits from the professional development facilitators were other key components of this programme.

In these studies leadership was distributed across a range of participants and contributors, and the professional development encouraged the leadership to be distributed. Earlier discussion in this thesis about effective leadership suggested

that distributed leadership was more likely to support and sustain change and it is now apparent that professional development can encourage distributed leadership. A particularly good example of this is the work of Hargreaves (2004a); his notion of personalising learning and change.

Part IV - Personalising learning and Gateways as entry points

In a series of conversations with school leaders in the United Kingdom about personalised or personalising learning, David Hargreaves (2004a) has suggested that "personalised teaching and learning is realised through nine interconnected gateways" (p.5).

Personalising learning.

There is a growing debate or discourse about education for the 21st Century which tries to imagine how learning might be for the future. The notion of personalised learning where students have customised programmes and activities based on their strengths and interests, taking account of their learning style and ability and using multiple technologies to access information and build knowledge was introduced to the educational literature by Hargreaves (2004) and has been picked up by the Ministries of Education in England and New Zealand. (Miliband, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2006a). The emphasis of *Te Whāriki* on the individual learner and responding to their strengths and interests in order to "help the child develop dispositions that encourage learning" implies learning that is personalised (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.44).

There are also strong connections between personalising learning for teachers as well as children. The concept of ongoing learning and the disposition to learn must include adults and children so it can be argued that personalising learning is as important for teachers as it is for children.

Personalised learning is based on principles of life-long learning and citizenship moving from an imperative of knowledge acquisition to having the disposition to

learn, being able to access the knowledge and information required and making a valued contribution to society (Hargreaves, 2006). Personalising learning, according to Hargreaves (2004a) is about a

> new educational imaginary with an emphasis on customised packages
> of activities and programmes to meet individual needs through
> innovative networks entered by interconnecting gateways (p. 7).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education document (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.2) notes that in a personalising learning environment learners will be "set up for life-long learning". Some of the ideas from Hargreaves' work on personalised, motivated learning – in particular the notion of entry point – will be explained in relation to the topic of this thesis.

Entry points for professional development and distributed leadership.

Regardless of motivation or desire, professional development or learning is 'part of the job' and it is how teachers find a point of entry into ongoing professional learning, stay engaged and make shifts in professional practices, beliefs and attitudes that is the fundamental question of this thesis. Two frameworks for analysing these 'points of entry' appear useful: Gateways (Hargreaves, 2004a) and Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999).

The outcome of Hargreaves (2004a) discussions with school leaders was nine gateways as entry points for personalising learning. Each gateway is applicable to every school and classroom in that it was deemed by the school leaders to be a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning. The gateways are: *curriculum, learning to learn, assessment for learning, advice and guidance, mentoring and coaching, new technologies, student voice, workforce reform, organisation and design.* Hargreaves (2004a) also suggests that entry to personalising learning may be made through any one of the gates but, as they are interconnected, entering through one soon leads to others.

Although this gateway concept for personalising learning has been developed for teachers to better meet the needs of all students, this study will explore the possibility that *learning for teachers* can also be facilitated by entry through one of the gateways. The following briefly summarises these gateways and begins to conceptualise them within an early childhood setting, referring back to the earlier discussion of early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Curriculum in early childhood is about the valued outcomes of knowledge, skills and attitudes and as discussed previously, encouraging dispositions for learning. Holistic and deeply contextual views of learning are emphasised and the curriculum encourages active learning. An equivalent understanding and incorporating of the principles of *Te Whāriki* (Empowerment, Holistic development, Relationships, and Family and Community) are vital to the implementation of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum. The development of a unique early childhood curriculum in1996 asked teachers to change their practice.

Learning to learn entails the provision of opportunities for children to develop, strengthen and broaden their disposition to learn. Hargreaves (2005a) talks about learning to learn as fostering an independence and a motivation to engage in further learning throughout life. *Te Whāriki* outlines the importance of teachers encouraging children's disposition to learn and Claxton and Carr (2004) discuss the attributes of learning environments that foster and value life-long learning in early childhood settings or do not do so. *Prohibiting* (where it is dangerous to make changes), *affording* (where opportunities are provided), *inviting* (change is valued and welcomed), and *potentiating* (powerful: learning dispositions are not only invited they are actively 'stretched' (p.92). My view is that this will not be so much a *Gateway* for this study: it is rather the aim or object, another way of describing 'personalising learning' or life-long learning dispositions.

Assessment for learning reifies or documents those opportunities and experiences that are valued by teachers, children and families/whānau in identifying progression or continuity of learning and providing feedback for learners. In New Zealand, the 1996 curriculum called for changes in assessment practice. Learning

Stories (Carr, 2001) as a form of narrative assessment linking curriculum strands and learning dispositions were introduced to early childhood settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a new method for documenting and assessing learning. The Kei Tua o te Pae resource and professional development contracts accompanying this give teachers opportunities to engage in assessment for learning consistent with *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The *advice and guidance* gateway links closely to curriculum, in that it is about the pastoral care and advice given to students in choosing their personalising learning pathways (Hargreaves, 2005b). This gateway is particularly pertinent for the context of secondary schools where decision making by students about curriculum choices can have direct impact on career opportunities. My experience as an early childhood teacher leads me to think that in context of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand advice and guidance is linked to the relationships between teachers and parents/whānau. Often, as a teacher, parents would ask advice about a myriad of child rearing matters or concerns they had about their child's development and learning, sometimes after discussions with other professionals from health or education. There is evidence that this gateway, if viewed as involving parents/whānau, can impact on childrens' and teachers' learning. A recently funded initiative by the Ministry of Education for Parent Support and Development has seen a number of early childhood centres in Aotearoa/New Zealand provide support, advice and guidance for parents/whānau in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (Ministry of Education, 2006b). Some of these projects include integrating services and supporting parents in their learning pathways. Hargreaves (2005b) cites in his Advice and Guidance Gateway publication, the development, in England, of joined-up services for children and young people. For Hargreaves (2005b) this concept offers deep support that can account for the needs of the 'whole child' and does not separate curriculum choices from the wider community context that influences the child and their learning pathway. These concepts are mirrored in the principles of *Te Whāriki* and so sit comfortable within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Mentoring and coaching is seen as crucial for scaffolding, co-constructing, reflecting, evaluating and further learning. Hargreaves (2005c) describes

mentoring as taking the assumption that one person can help another and that the mentor is not someone who is in a position of responsibility, whereas coaching assumes that one person has expertise that can be used or transferred to another. He suggests that mentoring and coaching can take place on a number of levels – student to student, teacher to student, teacher to teacher and student to teacher. All of these relationships can impact on both teachers' and childrens' learning and that mentoring and coaching plays a vital part in personalising learning. For many early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand there is little opportunity for mentoring and coaching to happen outside of the centre in which they are employed. Teachers may find mentors and coaches within their teaching team and some may know other early childhood teachers and use these contacts in a mentor or sounding board type role. Although professional development opportunities do exist and there are a number of Ministry of Education funded providers, it is not always easy for teachers to access these and often it may be for a one-off workshop or seminar day thus decreasing opportunities for mentoring and coaching relationships. Teachers who are employed in centres that have a parent or umbrella management and/or governance structure are likely to have increased opportunities for sharing with other colleagues outside of their own centre through combined meetings and workshops and may in fact form some strong relationships with teachers at other centres. For a small local community stand-alone centre the teachers can be quite isolated and find themselves going to work each day with the same small group of colleagues with very little opportunity for establishing relationships with people who can provide professional advice and guidance and/ or mentoring or coaching.

New technologies support curriculum and provide another tool for teaching and learning. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is becoming an integral part of teaching and learning in early childhood. The ICT Strategy, *Foundations for Discovery*, launched in 2005, covers the provision, resourcing and professional development for ICT in early childhood settings (Ministry of Education, 2005c). New technologies in early childhood not only provide a vehicle for making learning and teaching visible by capturing images of young children engaged in learning but it becomes another resource for accessing

information and communicating with the wider community (Lee, Hatherly and Ramsey, 2002).

Student voice enables the teacher to receive feedback about their learning and its consequence for children. This gateway is defined by Hargreaves (2004b) as

> how students come to play a more active role in their education and schooling as a direct result of teachers becoming more attentive, in sustained and routine ways, to what students say about their experience of learning and school life (p.7).

The student or*, child's voice,* as it is referred to in early childhood education, is considered an integral component of the multiple perspectives of teaching and learning for children. The emphasis in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) on competent and capable learners means that it is important that the child's voice is heard in assessment and planning and that teachers respond to children's strengths and interests. Book 4 of *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004) is entitled 'Children Contributing to Their Own Assessment' and provides a theoretical basis for including the child's voice and examples of assessment practice demonstrating this. In the context of this thesis the same principles apply for the role of the Teacher voice. Both 'child's voice' and 'Teacher voice' are used as gateways in this study.

Workforce reform entails changing the 'structure and function of the educational workforce' (Hargreaves, 2004a, p.4) and the utilisation of paraprofessionals and expertise within the community. It is about specialisation and utilising skills to provide personalised learning. Within early childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand there is a greater use of support staff or teacher aides, mostly for administrative tasks and the use of expertise from the families/whānau and wider community of the early childhood service is common practice for many services.

For Hargreaves (2006), *design and organisation* is the gateway that is significantly influenced or impacted on by the other gateways. As schools begin to look at

personalising learning for students through curriculum changes, assessing for learning, incorporating student voice in planning, managing and assessing, providing new technologies, utilising specialisation through workforce reform and development then the design and organisation of the school must undergo change. This includes the physical environment and layout, the rules and routines and internal arrangements of staffing and leadership. Design and organisation can mean large-scale reorganisation of the whole school structure to better meet the needs of students through personalising learning.

Changes to do with regulations and legislation within early childhood in Aotearoa/ New Zealand have led to reorganisation and redesigning of the physical environment of services while new approaches to learning and teaching have also impacted on the design and organisation of the learning environment. These changes may include the rostering of staff duties, use of non-contact time, structure of rules and routines and the organisation and presentation of resources (Ministry of Education, 2004b, 2005c, 2006b).

Alongside the concept of gateways for learning is another theory that may also provide a framework for analysis of educational change-activity theory.

Part V- Activity theory.

Activity theory has its roots in Soviet cultural-historical psychology including the work and theories of Leont'ev (1978), Vygotsky (1978) and Luria (1979). Activity theory is based on ideas about activities not being rigid or static but being under continuous change and development. Activities, according to Leont'ev (1978), can be differentiated or distinguished by different objects (or goals, objectives, intentions or aims). "It is exactly the object of an activity that gives it a determined direction "(p.62). It is how these objects are interpreted that influences the individual's actions. An object can exist as a cultural and collective construct but it is only when an object meets the needs of an individual or group that it has meaning and motivation as an activity.

Vygotsky's contribution to activity theory is closely linked to his theories about the cultural and historical context of human development and interaction (1979). Vygotsky saw joint activities as being socially and culturally situated and it is as people go about getting things done using a variety of tools (be it language, concepts or material artefacts) that they construct meaning and 'ways of knowing' that are relevant to the society in which they live. This has given rise to CHAT (Cultural Historical Activity Theory) where human societies and individual members are viewed as mutually constructive - a reciprocity exists through the influence that culture has on individual development, and vice versa, an individual can alter or preserve the culture (Wells & Claxton, 2002). Within activity theory it is the use of these tools and particularly artefacts that enable goals to be achieved through activities. Both Leont'ev and Vygotsky were concerned about thinking in relation to mind and world, espousing a strong link between the human mind being revealed in action on the world (Wertsch, 1998). They were concerned with how we might "transform our worlds through our increasingly informed actions on them" (Edwards, 2004. p 3). Activity theorists describe a mediating network, often drawn as a triangle (Engeström, Engeström, & Suntio 2002. p.216). Features of the activity theory triangle include artefacts, rules and routines, community, and division of labour demonstrating the activity of the subject/s being mediated by four other components (artefacts, rules and routines, community and division of labour) as they work toward a goal or outcome.

The notion of transformation in activity theory has been further developed by Engeström (1999) as an interventionist methodology whereby a system is entered and the participants are supported and resourced to develop new tools so as to transform the objects of their working world. Engeström (1999) sees this transformation happening through the jointly performed activity of the participants, the division of labour, the fluidity of relationships and the degree of freedom available to the players. Wells and Claxton (2002) describe cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) thus

> As people, play and solve problems together, so their spontaneous
> ways of thinking, talking and acting – the ideas that come to mind, the

words they choose and the tools they make use of - embody an accumulated set of cultural values and beliefs that have been constructed and refined over previous generations. … it is through taking part in joint activities…. and participants collaborating to find creative solutions that effective new skills and understandings are developed.. (p 3).

Once an individual or group begins to mediate or reconstruct cultural historical tools tensions begin to arise in the other components of an activity system. The rules and routines and /or distribution of labour may constrain the mediation and hinder the activity. These tensions need in themselves to begin to be resolved and undergo mediation otherwise it is unlikely that the desired object or goal will be achieved. Engeström et al (2002) provided a change intervention for teachers in a school in a disadvantaged area of Helsinki. As the intervention provided opportunities for the mediation of existing tools and the exploration of new ones (e.g. different forms of assessment for students) the structure of the school timetable, teaching spaces and organisation created tensions that for the change to be successful needed to be mediated and resolved. As the physical changes were made and different practices employed, internal transforming of teachers attitudes and beliefs about their students also occurred.

The fundamental premise of activity theory is that individuals or groups are driven by an object – oriented action which is mediated by culturally and historically constructed tools or artefacts. This mediating network is useful for the intention of this thesis: discovering how a team of teachers may be persuaded by some intervention to make some changes to the way they do things, and what tools or artefacts within the cultural and historical context of their environment may assist them in achieving their goal.

There appears to be possible alignments between the learning gateways and the various components within the activity triangle.

Part VI - This thesis

It is with this concept of learning for teachers that I wish to use in the analysis of a case study of a professional development model for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research will explore what gateways, pathways, resources and leadership opportunities have been provided for teachers to make changes in their practice, attitudes and beliefs and what further gateways or components of a mediating network might sustain that capacity to change.

My interest in this particular professional development model stems from conversations with early childhood teachers and being in a variety of situations with teachers where they talked about their involvement with this professional development provider (the Educational Leadership Project) and the impact it was having on their teaching. I have also had the opportunity to attend various functions where teachers who have, or are currently involved, with the Educational Leadership Project (ELP) were sharing and presenting their learning journey. I had also noted a number of publications from ELP facilitators that included teachers as co-authors (Hatherly & Sands, 2002; Lee, Hatherly & Ramsey, 2002). The enthusiasm of the teachers and the obvious learning and shifts in practice that had occurred for them impressed me and it seemed that many of these teachers were being empowered to take risks and become leaders. Another aspect of the ELP that interested me was the cluster concept - early childhood centres participating in the ELP were part of a regional cluster of centres which would meet together for workshops. This seemed to provide opportunities for sharing, collaborating and having professional discussions. I asked the Director of ELP if she would be willing for me to research this professional development and she agreed (Appendices A & G).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research method in relation to the research topic. It also provides a rationale for choosing the research method and how the data was collected and analysed. This chapter includes a discussion of reliability and validity of the research and the ethical considerations of the researcher. The final section provides a description of the case involved in the research.

Case study as a research method

There have been many ideas over the years about what constitutes a case study and how this type of research may be carried out (Merriam, 1988; Smith, 1978; Yin, 1984). Case studies have been employed as a research method in a variety of disciplines: medicine, law, counselling, anthropology and education and within these disciplines a variety of ways of gathering data for the case study have been used (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

What then defines a case? Smith (1978) suggests that a case study is a 'bounded system', there being a specific phenomenon as the focus of the investigation, such as: a particular child, an event, a process, a specific class or institution. Stake (1998) talks of a case being a functioning specific, having working parts and that we choose to study the case for a variety of reasons. The doctor may study the child because of the particular disability or disease the child has, the social worker or psychologist may study the child's behaviour, while the educationalist may study the child's interactions in the mainstream classroom. In each situation the child is the bounded system or case but the purpose of the study varies. A case may be studied because it is of particular concern, presents an issue or hypothesis

or it may have intrinsic interest (Merriam, 1988). The purpose for the case study in this research is to investigate how a model of professional development (the ELP) might provide personalising learning for teachers and offer them leadership opportunities.

In defining 'the case' the researcher needs to identify the unit of analysis - "what is it you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study?" (Patton, 1980, p.100). Defining the unit of analysis helps in 'binding' the case as so much information can be gathered that the researcher needs to decide to which body of knowledge they are wanting to contribute (Yin, 1994). Hebert and Beardsley (2001) studied a gifted black child living in rural poverty, the child being the unit of analysis and the rural environment providing the context by which to look at the educational achievement.

A case study can use both quantitative and qualitative data, however it is generally argued that a case study is associated with a qualitative method of research as opposed to the positivist approach of experimental, quantitative, controlled, laboratory-based research (Stenhouse, 1988). Case studies usually define their methods of data gathering as descriptive, qualitative, interpretive, particularistic, heuristic and naturalistic (Cohen et al, 2000).

I wish to examine these terms in greater depth to assist in the understanding of case study as a research design. In this instance I shall use Merriam's (1988) terminology in looking at the special features of a case study.

Characteristics of a case study

A case study is *particularistic* in that it focuses on a particular or specific situation, individual, event or programme. As Stake (1998) points out it "draws attention to what specifically can be learned from a single case" (p 86). It may be helpful in suggesting what to do or not to do in a similar situation and can provide insights for generalisations through the specific case. In the case of ELP, it

provides ideas and implications for this particular case but also suggests implications for all professional development models.

The *descriptive and naturalistic* nature of a case study provides a rich, thick description of the case, including a sense of time and place, the 'reality' of the situation/event giving a holistic, complete picture of the case. The description strives to portray a close up of the case, including thoughts and feelings of the participants and is less likely to have these narratives judged or evaluated by the researcher (Cohen et al 2000). Description allows the complexities of a situation to be reported, the influence of personalities and history using a wide variety of sources of information. Both the internal and external context of the case is taken into account in the description which better explains the functioning of the case.

The *heuristic* characteristic of a case study enables the reader to have a greater understanding of the case. This may include new meaning or confirm what the reader already knows, it may explain the reasons for a problem, why something worked or not and it may provide further generalisation or applicability (Merriam, 1988). The case study can allow insights into the why and how of phenomenon and illuminate new relationships between variables, perhaps adding to the theory.

Another characteristic of a case study as outlined by Merriam (1988) is that of *inductive* reasoning. This means that a case study is more likely to produce new relationships and understandings rather than verifying or reconfirming hypotheses. A case study would endeavour to discover emerging concepts, generalizations or hypotheses from the data and its rich description of context (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Firestone (1993) suggests a case study may add 'tendrils' of new theoretical insights.

The characteristics of a case study tend to lend themselves to different types of case studies. These have been defined in a variety of ways. Stake (1995) uses the categories of intrinsic, instrumental and collective, while Merriam (1988) describes case studies as descriptive, interpretive and evaluative. Yin (1984) employs the terms exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

The similarities of the terms may be grouped thus: intrinsic and descriptive, instrumental, interpretive and explanatory, and, exploratory and evaluative.

Types of case study

Essentially descriptive and intrinsic case studies describe in detail a particular case without forming hypotheses, making judgments or pitting against a theory. The ELP case study is analysed within activity theory and the notion of gateways for personalising learning. As Stake (1995) states " .. the study is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case…. not because the case represents other cases …. but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest" (p.88).

The descriptive case can provide a basis for future comparison and theory building but it is not the primary reason for the study, the narrative account is. An example of this is *Cases in Early Childhood Education* (Driscoll, 1995). Driscoll studied a variety of different early childhood programmes over a period of time describing in detail the context and interactions, providing rich narrative data. Her purpose is to present examples of practice for the reader to reflect on in order to challenge their own thinking and philosophy. Each case has its own intrinsic value and interest as defined by Driscoll and she presents each case in its own right, her only 'boundedness' being that she judged them as 'out of the ordinary' (p.7).

Instrumental, interpretive or explanatory case studies are more about interpreting or theorising about the phenomenon (Merriam, 1988). The ELP study has in mind to advance understanding and refine a theory, with the case itself being a secondary consideration. The interpretive, explanatory or instrumental case study is more likely to look at the 'why' question and contain a far greater level of analysis and conceptualisation than a descriptive case study.

Evaluative case studies according to Merriam (1988) involve 'description, explanation and judgment' (p.28). Although Yin (1994) does not ascribe evaluation as a specific type of case study he does state the value and place of

case study in evaluative research because case studies can explain, describe, illustrate and explore to form judgments about a programme, event or intervention.

Stake's (1995) collective case study encapsulates those studies involving a number of cases providing information or knowledge about a population or general condition. The collective case study is individual cases studied jointly in the hope that better understanding or theorising will occur for a greater number of cases.

Single and multiple cases

Just as we have seen that there are different types of case studies and used for different purposes so there are variations in the number of cases within a study. Some case study research will study one case (single) while other research will include multiple cases. (Cohen et al, 2000). Again the purpose of the study will help determine the design and data collection methods and whether a single or multiple approach will best answer the research question. In this particular case the purpose is to describe the complexity of teachers learning through engagement in professional development and test a theory about gateways for engaging in professional development.

Data collection in case studies

As has been stated previously a case study may employ a wide variety of data collection methods. Questionnaires and surveys producing quantitative data may be useful in certain cases to ascertain some background information about quantity, gender, age, particularly if the case study is of an institution or programme. Generally case studies will use qualitative methods of data collection and analysis such as interviews (unstructured and/or structured), observations, ethnography, use of documents and written material. The researcher is often a participant observer and plays a part in the data collection as they establish relationships and become part of the 'furniture'. The researcher brings her or his

own subjectivity and interpretations of reality that can enable the readers to create their own reality or interpretation of the case. Merriam (1988) states, "because the primary instrument in qualitative case study research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through one's worldview, one's values, one's perspectives" (p.39). The researcher will provide the rich description of the context in order to try and capture as much of a holistic picture as possible, identifying any number of variables.

A case study may run over a long period of time. For instance, if the case study is of a particular programme or group of children then the study may follow the programme or group for a number of years depending on the purpose of the study. Hebert and Beardsley (2002) collected data over a three-year period as they studied their case.

Reliability and validity

Critics of case study research tend to be from a positivist epistemology viewpoint which has difficulty in reconciling the uniqueness of the case with a particular view of what constitutes reliability (Cohen et al 2000). Reliability is generally about the extent to which the findings can be replicated; this of course is problematic when studying humans and their interactions as human behaviour is never static. This fact, however, could be viewed as a strength of case study in that the research captures and documents, in rich description, these fluctuations and changing contexts. The case study usually reports reality in an accessible format and highlights the complexities of the social context (Merriam, 1988). Researchers using qualitative methods are likely to use triangulation to strengthen reliability and validity (Stake, 1995). Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data or methods of collection to confirm the emerging findings. In the case of the ELP, it could be argued that multiple perspectives of the one case are provided through the descriptions from a range of participants.

One other way in which validity of a case study may be enhanced is by comparison to other cases. Some researchers set out to compare their case with

others while often it may be left to the reader to draw their own comparisons (Stake, 1994). Comparison in qualitative case study research tends to run contrary to the premise of learning from a particular case. The rich description provided by a qualitative case study would render comparison a huge task unless specific variables were identified for comparison but then the particularity and uniqueness of the case is trivialized in the attempt to compare.

Another criticism or debate about validity of case study research is the notion of generalisation. Can and should we generalise from a single case? There appears to be three particular discourses pertaining to generalisation. The first is sceptical of the ability of a single case to influence general applicability and confirm grand narratives.

The second aligns the generalisation to a theory rather than a population (Firestone, 1993). It is the importance of the relationship between the data and the theory or concepts that can strengthen the theoretical tenets. 'When one generalises to a theory, one uses a theory to make predictions and then confirm [*or refine, or disrupt, or refute*] those predictions" (Firestone, 1993,p.17; italicised words added). Case study can also provide data for grounded theory, that is, theory that is based on concepts generated by the data (Johnson and Christensen, 2000). Grounded theory research should have generality so that it is not confined to one small group or specific situation; it's usefulness as a theory in such a case would be extremely limited. Thus case study research can contribute to generalising about theory even if it's uniqueness or qualitative richness defies typifying about the 'norm'. Stake (1995) suggests that *"*case studies are of value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability" (p.104).

The third discourse about case study contributing to generalising is in the case-to-case analogy as often used in law (Jardine, 1992). The reader makes their own judgments from a specific case and applies the generalisation or applicability to their own case. The case provides new meaning and understanding for the reader and some transferability of the concepts are made, thus increasing the generalisation.

Case study and ethics.

Any research involving humans needs to be ethically sound. This protects the participants from harm and also as this too adds validity and robustness. Many texts about educational and qualitative research deal with ethics (Johnson and Christensen, 2000; Merriam, 1988; Cohen et al, 2000; Punch, 1998) and in this instance I wish to highlight the ethical considerations most likely to confront the case study researcher.

Because of the intense nature of involvement and participatory observation by the researcher in a case study over a prolonged period of time there is the possibility of revealing or encountering issues that could be harmful to the participants (Ball, 1984; Stake, 1995). The risk of exposure and embarrassment to the participants can be high and it remains the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants are comfortable with all stages of reporting, be it interview transcripts, anecdotal evidence, initial interpretations or the final public document. Ball (1981) in his case study of Beachside Comprehensive found himself being seen by the teachers as accusatory and critical. On the publication of his research the media took a strong interest in the findings, wanting to identify the school and interview the researcher.

Merriam (1988) in her summary of ethical considerations concludes

> .. the burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator.. the best that an individual researcher can do is be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualizing the problem to disseminating the findings (p.184).

However, a written and informed 'contract' with participants should accompany the researcher being 'conscious of the ethical issues'. The ethical provisions for this case study are outlines later in this chapter.

In conclusion, case study as a research method can and does provide rich narrative data gathered by a variety of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Bounding or defining the case strengthens the methodology, design and validity. Inherent in the characteristics of case study is the researchers depth of interest and focus on the specificity or uniqueness of the case. Case study research may provide greater generalisation or it may serve to increase the readers understanding of a particular case. As Stake (1995) summarises

> … the study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for the things we cherish (p.136).

This case study

The Educational Leadership Project is an independent professional development provider contracted by the Ministry of Education through a contestable fund for early childhood professional development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Contracts are tendered for on a three yearly basis for the delivery of general professional development and on a yearly basis for professional development linked to the assessment exemplar resource, *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars.* The following information was provided from an interview with the Director, Wendy Lee and the ELP document Centre Facilitator's Handbook.

The Educational Leadership Project (ELP) has been in existence as a professional development provider since 2000. It operates in eight regions of the country (sixteen different cities) and has a contract for both general professional development and the exemplar resource. ELP also has a contract to deliver Saturday programmes throughout New Zealand on the exemplar resource.

ELP has its origins in the desire of an early childhood teacher to work with other teachers and their communities in creating positive learning environments for children. As ELP was taking shape as a professional development provider, a

relationship developed with a researcher/lecturer at a local university and this relationship has provided a strong side to the professional triangle of ELP that includes project facilitators, teachers enrolled in the project and academics.

The focus of ELP is centre improvement and innovation with an emphasis on centres becoming 'lead centres'. Rather than following more traditional models where professional development is in response to the needs of individual staff, ELP make the centre or service the starting point, asking for full participation from all the staff of a centre/service. Another strong focus of ELP is shared leadership. In its facilitators handbook some three pages are given to outlining a view of shared leadership and how this might be enacted through the professional development with centres emerging as "leader centres - centres that are known for their expertise and innovation in a particular curriculum area or in processes associated with planning and assessment" (ELP Ltd, 2006. p.7).

The director of ELP has developed strong international connections with learning institutions through ELP, has published articles in journals and presented at numerous conferences (in the UK and Ireland, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Malta, Dubai, USA, Canada, Iceland, Belgium and Cyprus).

There are six project facilitators. These facilitators are all early childhood teachers who have been involved in ELP professional development programme in the past. The majority of the facilitators have published articles in education journals about their journey with ELP or the action research that they undertook with ELP. Publications include; *Early Education* (2004), *Computers in New Zealand Schools (*2006*)*, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership (*2003*)*, *Early Childhood Folio (*2002*)*, *The First Years: Ngā Tau Tuatahi New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education* (2002) and chapters in the following books: *Beyond Listening – children's perspectives on early childhood services* (2005) and *Weaving Te Whāriki* (2003). A number of the facilitators have also presented at conferences, both nationally and overseas and made a significant contribution to *Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars (*Ministry of Education, 2005a) and the ICT Strategy, *Foundations for Discovery* (Ministry of Education, 2005c).

The role of the project facilitators is to conduct workshops for clusters of participating centres in an area and provide in-centre support through visits and other communications. Participants are invited to enrol in ELP through a pamphlet that is mailed to centres in the region who have not previously been involved or, through word of mouth, centres, may contact the director or the project administrator and ask about enrolling. Decisions about successful applications are made by the project facilitators collectively according to conditions as outlined in the contract. Once a centre has been accepted for ELP they are asked to nominate a centre facilitator who will 'lead' the staff during the programme, attend extra workshops, support the centre's development of a research question and ensure the goals set by the centre are met.

This study involved staff at three early childhood centres who had completed at least two years with ELP. The rationale for choosing centres who had completed the professional development programme was to try to ascertain (i) whether any shifts or changes in practice, attitudes and beliefs had occurred during the programme, (ii) whether they had been sustained and were still impacting on learning for children and (iii) whether the emphasis on shared leadership was evident in practice.

Data collection

In each instance unstructured individual interviews were conducted by the researcher with teachers who had responded to a letter asking for their willingness to be involved in the research. The ELP project director had initiated interest by emailing the centres and telling them of the research proposal and endorsing the researcher (Appendix C). The letter from the researcher stipulated that participants needed to have been part of the ELP professional development programme (Appendix D). At Centre 1 two teachers were interviewed, at Centre 2 five teachers were interviewed and in Centre 3 four teachers were interviewed. From a total of seventeen eligible participants only six declined to be part of the study.

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews according to Fontana and Frey (2000) can "provide greater breadth than other types" (p.705) and are used in qualitative and ethnographic research. The researcher, in this instance, had three or four prompt questions to refer to if the participants had not talked about certain topics during the interview (Appendix E). Using prompts enables the researcher to gather information pertinent to the research question. This 'leading by the researcher' can result in researcher bias and subjective interpretation of data; however, the shift, in interpretive research, away from the prescribed and rigid role of a neutral interviewer enables the researcher's voice to also be heard (Cohen et al, 2000). My interest in the ELP as outlined earlier, obviously provided some pre-conceptions which I was keen to find out about, hence the focus of some of my prompts. Warren (2002) describes this as 'guided conversation' (p.85).

Narrative inquiry

My motivation in using unstructured interviews was to give the participants the opportunity to 'tell their story'. Chase (2000) in her critique of narrative inquiry talks about the interviewee becoming the narrator and the researcher the listener. This notion of interviewee/narrator makes a shift away from seeing the participant as providing answers to researcher questions but rather viewing the interviewees as narrators with "stories to tell and voices of their own" (p.660).

This approach of storytelling was attractive to me in that as a former early childhood teacher I have documented children's learning with stories and lent my own voice and perspective to that documentation. I have also listened to many children tell me their story and have come to appreciate the importance of people being able to tell their story and be listened to.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) writing about narrative inquiry in education give this rationale.

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives…. teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories (p.2).

Mary Beattie (1995) suggests that narrative inquiry in educational research can allow teachers to be acknowledged for their knowledge of a situation or context and be validated for their professional judgement and perspective.

In the case of this study, I, as the researcher, had some small understanding or knowledge of ELP and how I thought it may have impacted on teachers but by allowing the participants to give me their perspective and outline their experiences gives validity and robustness to the data.

Analysis of data

The interviews with the teachers were taped and then transcribed. Due to the vast amount of data, I did not transcribe all the tapes myself but had other people assist. These people were experienced transcribers and had some knowledge of the context. I provided them with further information that would help in their transcribing, e.g. recurring names, titles of publications likely to be referred to, and events. On receiving the transcripts I read them and in some instances listened to the tape myself for clarification and on some occasions to fill in gaps. The transcripts were sent to the participants for amending and approval.

While waiting for the transcripts to be returned I began to read them through to become very familiar with the data. I started to analyse the data initially using the activity theory framework but when my supervisor gave me a paper outlining Hargreaves (2004a) framework of Gateways for Personalising Learning, I began to look at the data in light of these gateways as well as the activity theory framework. I was reluctant when using the data (once the transcripts had been returned) to edit the quotes I used, as I was keen to keep the authenticity of the teachers' voices. In most cases the quotes used are as they appeared on the tape and transcript. It has been my interpretation and perspective (with some

reinforcement from my supervisor) that has led me to place quotes under specific headings.

Ethical considerations

The following ethical issues were considered when conducting the research.

Access to participants.

In conjunction with my supervisor we approached Wendy Lee, the Director of ELP, and asked if she would be willing to allow her professional development programme become the basis of my research. The director then had discussions with the ELP facilitators, giving them some background to the proposal and ascertaining their willingness for the research to continue. (Appendices B & H) The director then furnished me with a list of centres who had completed their contract with ELP and I chose 3 centres based on relative proximity to one another for ease of access and that they provided a cross section of early childhood service. A letter was sent from me asking if they would like to be involved and the director also emailed the 3 centres endorsing the research study. Once the participant centres had contacted me a suitable time was arranged for the interviews.

Informed consent

The participants were given a copy of the research proposal and at the beginning of each set of interviews this was discussed before the consent form was signed. Participants were given the right to withdraw within the first two months of the interview being conducted (Appendix F). No participants withdrew.

Confidentiality.

The issue of confidentiality was addressed by the participants choosing pseudonyms for themselves and the centre. The participants were sent the transcript of their interviews to make any amendments. Once the data had been analysed and reported in draft as part of the thesis, the participants were sent a copy of this to comment on and suggest any changes.

In the case of the director and ELP project facilitators I discussed confidentiality with them, since although I did not interview project facilitators they were key players. The outcome of that discussion was that they all wanted to be identified in the research and so no efforts have been made to protect their confidentiality.

It is acknowledged that New Zealand is a small country, and the early childhood sector, in particular, draws from a relatively close-knit community where people are well-known to one another. So although this study focussed on a specific project it is important that the participants were protected from unwelcome identification. Freebody (2003) sums up nicely the ethical responsibility of the researcher with this

> I have taken the view that the doing of research is fundamentally the willing adoption of certain responsibilities, made evident as guiding disciplines or principles of method, which in turn, accord the products of research a particular status as ways of knowing. (p 69)

while Merriam (1988) concludes that " the burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator" (p. 184).

Hence the researcher needs to be mindful throughout the whole process from the conceptualisation of the research question to the dissemination of the final report of how to ensure the professional, emotional, psychological and physical well-being of the participants and the wider community.

Potential harm to participants.

With the researcher as participant observer having the potential to establish strong relationships with the teachers and their communities of learning it is imperative that a strong trust exists between the researcher and the research community and that this is maintained (Punch, 1998). I have developed a modicum of trust with the early childhood teaching community in my roles within NZEI and as the local practicum co-ordinator for the initial teacher education programme. Being a recent teacher I have credibility and, I believe, respect among other teachers. This research is about those changes and motivators that were successful, and identifying the details of how this happened, so this positive approach to reporting has minimised any risks to the participants and the project. Although initially I felt a little apprehensive about the participants seeing me as a relative stranger imposing on their time, I was received with such warmth and enthusiasm that my fears about trust were quickly allayed. The teachers were all very keen to talk to me and tell their stories. The next three chapters are dedicated to telling those stories.

Chapter 4

CASE STUDY ONE: TEWA TAWA KINDERGARTEN

Overview

Tewa Tawa Kindergarten is a state funded public kindergarten in a provincial town in the North Island of New Zealand, it has been in existence for approximately thirty-five years. There are ten other public kindergartens in this town, all under the same umbrella organisation. This kindergarten operates four three hour morning sessions and four three hour afternoon sessions catering for ninety-six families, in total, and staffed by three qualified teachers. Parents choose to have their child/ren attend either the four morning or four afternoon sessions. The fifth morning session is a special four hour session for older children (four and half years to five). Children start attending Tewa Tawa Kindergarten at about the age of two years eight months. The remaining session (Wednesday afternoon) is for teachers to carry out planning, assessment, have staff meetings, complete administration tasks, attend professional development workshops etc.

The participants were two teachers who had been at the kindergarten for a number of years and had both been involved in ELP for two years beginning in 2002 - this involvement as a participatory centre had finished some three years previous to this study. One of the teachers interviewed (Marion) has been on leave from the kindergarten for 2006. She had an E-Fellowship contract from the Ministry of Education which followed her involvement with ELP. It provided her with a year's paid leave to research the use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching.

Entrypoints

Hargreaves (2004a) suggested gateways for personalising learning are founded on the premise that the gateways need to be in existence as a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning. This concept suggests that teachers are more likely to engage in further learning if that learning is pertinent to their day-to-day work and does not necessarily require them to accommodate brand new approaches to or major reconstruction of their normal teaching programme. However, within those fundamental aspects of teaching and learning, dissatisfaction may occur for teachers which prompts them to consider looking at trying new ways of doing.

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is one of the gateways outlined by Hargreaves (2004a) as an everyday practice or requirement of teaching and learning. As outlined earlier, assessment for learning has found a basis in teaching and learning in early childhood education within Aotearoa/ New Zealand, particularly with the introduction of *Te Whāriki (*Ministry of Education, 1996) and the development of Learning Stories. It appears from an analysis of the centre's involvement with ELP, that Tewa Tawa Kindergarten entered ELP through the gateway of assessment for learning and that the more recent initiatives around assessment were creating some challenges for the teachers. They were wanting to find out more and make changes.

Marion reports:

> We had been going through a process of assessment that we weren't happy with, there was a lot of form filling out and checklists and stuff, that did nothing, and one of our teachers had been on a course on Learning Stories which really impressed her, and she said "I really think this would work for us". And at that stage we had just started off on Learning Stories, but didn't have a lot of practical experience around writing them, so when we got this flyer in the mail from Wendy Lee (ELP Director), we jumped at it, and thought "now's our opportunity to learn more about Learning Stories".

The pamphlet stated 'we will be offering a series of four workshops over the year to staff teams in the area of 'Assessment and Learning Stories' (Wendy Lee & Associates, 2002, p.2). Phoebe, the other teacher recalls that

we were all a little bit despondent about where assessment was going for us and that we didn't know the children and for me that was … I'm not a list person, I don't believe in checklists, I've never been one of those teachers and I've always tried to be very positive with children and I saw that Learning Stories and ELP was a positive form of assessment for children and I really liked that so I wanted to go a bit further.

It is clear from these comments that the team at Tewa Tawa was feeling dissatisfied with their assessment processes and saw that the ELP, from the information on the flyer, could offer some possible solutions.

The opening of other gateways and sustained involvement.

For the team at Tewa Tawa assessment for learning became their focus and quickly led to other gateways being opened, the first of these being curriculum, closely followed by new technologies as they endeavoured to find ways to make learning for children more meaningful and visible.

Curriculum

The interrelationship between curriculum and assessment for learning is apparent in that in order to make assessment more meaningful it was necessary to have a strong understanding of *Te Whāriki*) Phoebe articulates the importance that having a deeper understanding of *Te Whāriki* meant for her.

Some of the most important learning has been the dispositions … learning about the dispositions and really understanding what they mean. I … to be honest I had no idea, I didn't understand Te Whāriki before that, like even though it was drafted while I was training and stuff … and we were guinea pigs with that. I didn't really know it. Like I didn't know the document like I should have and so through ELP I could honestly say that I know that document inside and out. And that's been very positive.
And basically it comes down to the principles for me, and understanding the principles and making it… if you understand the principles you understand the document and the links between the two. And also being able to link between the primary school curriculum and our curriculum, there are links that have come from that as well.

New Technologies

Hargreaves (2005a) describes new technologies as the means in which learning can happen at any time and in any place. Learning is not confined to schools and the digital world offers new possibilities for learning. The New Zealand Early Childhood ICT Strategy: *Foundations for Discovery* (Ministry of Education, 2005c) is based on the premise that there are benefits in making connections and building on children's communities. ICT is a part of children's lives and using ICT in early childhood as a learning and teaching tool can enhance learning (Bolstad, 2004). The use of digital images to instantly capture moments in children's learning has become a widespread practice in early childhood settings. This digital still and digital video documentation means that very young children have the opportunity to look at images of themselves, make comment, recall and revisit the event or activity. Not only is this a powerful artefact for the child, it also enables parents/whānau to relive the experience and hear the story from the child or read what a teacher may have written to accompany the image/s.

As outlined by Marion and Phoebe, their growing understanding of the use of ICT as a learning and teaching tool became a crucial gateway for their continued learning.

> *And at that particular stage, too, we were just starting off using ICTs, technology, and it just enabled us to see what could be done with technology, in terms of how it could impact on relationships with families. And also, the learning journey for children (Marion).*

> *it's (ICT) been a very good skill to develop. Something I've always wanted to … I've always been interested in anyway but I didn't know how to adapt it into the programme. So it's been good to be able to explore it … basically explore it with the children, 'cos that's what we did. You know we were learning at the same time, we got our laptops and we'd throw them on the table and the kids were showing us how to do things,!(Phoebe).*

ELP offered the teachers from Tewa Tawa a variety of *tools* which they employed for themselves in their own context. Pawson (2001) advocates that for the 'contiguous context' of a programme, a 'what works for whom and in what circumstances' approach with the participants deciding how they will interpret or use the resources on offer (p.4).

As Marion and Phoebe explored alternative or different ways of assessing for learning (this was largely deepening their understanding of formative assessment, Learning Stories, links to the curriculum and gaining skills in narrative documentation) the tools that became important in helping achieve this and sustain their interest were; the ICT equipment (digital camera, computer software that allowed digital images to be inserted into Learning Story templates), portfolios (changing from scrapbooks to clear files), Learning Story templates and formats..

It was the mediation of these tools, as highlighted in activity theory, that produced tensions that needed to be resolved, generally through the opening of other gateways, in order for them to achieve their goal. Learning to use the technology took time and was sometimes frustrating, deciding on the best way to document learning and then how to store the new portfolios were all dilemmas that needed to be solved. Not only were there physical tools, such as listed above, but other cognitive and intrinsic tools became available to Phoebe and Marion which were useful and highly valued. These cognitive and intrinsic tools were to do with their own learning (such as reflection and exposure to new ideas about capturing learning) and at times resulted in decisions that were at odds with their own usual practices and the practices of the other teachers. Sharing a common goal and having time to discuss and talk through the tensions and dilemmas was very important for helping the team to progress with their goal.

Design and organisation

As Marion and Phoebe continued their research journey and were determined to make learning for children more visible through the use of digital images both on display and in children's portfolios they found another gateway opening for them - design and organisation. As has been outlined previously design and organisation is a gateway that is impacted on by other gateways and influences other gateways. The following comment by Phoebe shows the importance of design and organisation to support personalising learning.

> *You have to find what works for you as a team, 'cos every team's different and the dynamics and the beliefs and values and the way that we all learn individually as teachers, is all different so you have to work out a system where everybody's okay with it.*

The gateway of assessment for learning that Tewa Tawa had found as an initial entry point meant that as they made changes some reorganisation and redesigning needed to occur. It became necessary to reorganise the physical environment so that space was available to store the children's portfolios where they could be accessed easily and comfortably by children and families/whānau. Not only did this entail changing the physical layout but also purchasing adequate and useful storage containers and furniture.

> *Once again ELP showed us the possibilities of what portfolios could look like, so we made them more visually attractive, I guess. They were more meaningful for kids – they took ownership of them. We also reflected on things through ELP, things like the layout of our kindergarten, if these portfolios are meaningful to kids, and we are appreciating this, we used to have them stuck in the office – they weren't out there for children. It's the practical stuff that's really meaningful.(Phoebe)*

Marion talks of how they came to see how they could reorganise some of their systems and processes to streamline and simplify administration and compliance requirements so that they were meaningful to their learning and teaching.

> *Also, a lot of the teaching material we got through ELP got us to think about things like how everything ties in together, like your strategic plan, your annual plan. It got us to think of how can you make it more simple for you, how does one relate to the other. ..and also to look at any gaps that we had in our knowledge and skills. So we actually reflected on what was missing. What we needed to improve on, and how we could do that.*

> *I've made it manageable. You do have to have very good time management systems in place. When you're writing for ninety-six children like we are, it's very full on.*
> *We had to develop a lot of the systems that monitor the profiles to make sure that we are doing … you know what we say is part of our philosophy we are noticing, recognising and responding. So we've got to make sure that the systems that we've set in place work for the children and work for us. So we have adapted them over the last six years. Definitely, we've changed them to make them work and some things didn't work and we say, 'We'll chuck that one out, let's try something else', you know? And so now, dare I say it, we do have little check lists on the wall about … you know … with their names and the month and who's written what and we go through twelve folders every week to make sure everyone's interests are being (Phoebe).*

> *I guess it was extra workload in a way but at the same time it enabled us to streamline what we do here in terms of assessment, so I guess we came up with practices that made our job easier. You're provided at the beginning with Learning Story formats, and I guess that was our starting point. And it's really gone from strength to strength in terms of assessment (Marion).*

The *rules and routines* component of the activity triangle link very closely to design and organisation. There is evidence that rules and routines within the kindergarten underwent change during the involvement with ELP. As mentioned before the children's portfolios went from being hidden in the office to readily accessible to children and families/whānau and the sharing of administration tasks meant the teachers made it a proirity to use their non-contact session for writing up Learning Stories, downloading photos etc. Marion also talked earlier of the change in practice to link their planning and assessment to strategic and management plans and budgets.

Mentoring and coaching.

It was very clear from the interviews that ELP offered mentoring and coaching. Phoebe and Marion both found the mentoring and coaching had a strong impact on their learning and was greatly appreciated. The relationships that were established through ELP have been very important in sustaining ongoing engagement in the project. Specific aspects of the mentoring included the quality of the facilitators, readings, real stories, choosing their own direction, and the networking with other teachers.

Quality of the facilitators

> you know Wendy is one of those awe inspiring … you know every time I'm in a room with her my mouth drops to the ground because she comes out with so many inspiring things..

> …she showed us how easy it could be and it was like … and the next week we'd be back. You we'd come back from a workshop, we'd be buzzing for weeks afterwards doing all these new things, and it was just … yeah, you just come back so inspired that you want to make your programme better, and you get the passion back into your work (Phoebe)

> Yeah the workshops and Wendy Lee and Margaret Carr (university professor)… and she's inspiring in a different way because for me, Margaret Carr was the underlying support of the programme. Like she was the one who had the philosophies and the theory and the knowledge that formed the basis of what we need to know. And Wendy is the one that makes things fly, and fun. Whereas Margaret to me is a solid base which this should be based on. And so whenever she came to workshops and things, and often when we

presented our things each year that was … she was always at those and the things … the advice and the input she had into our programme was very … philosophical, it was quite deep, it made us really think further … made us think about things a little bit.

Wendy Lee visited here and whenever we had a question about anything we'd email her and she'd email us the very next … often at 3 o'clock in the morning when we weren't here but she'd get back to us. And we could talk to her and she'd send us these little directions to see other things and so … if there was anything that we needed she was always on hand. The same with Margaret Car, we emailed Margaret, we always got an answer back. (Phoebe).

…..lot of collegial support, I guess. And also, if there was anybody coming through, like, Robyn Lawrence or Ann Hatherly (ELP facilitators), they would run a workshop and we would get invited,

and we had visits : Robyn Lawrence visited us at our centre, as well. I think the facilitators were willing to share knowledge about themselves, like they shared with us about them, so that we actually knew who they were as people and who they were professionally as well (Marion).

Readings

And I think too there was the big picture of looking at what research had already taken place? And there was always information there, you know, reading that was provided for us (Marion).

There were readings. I still refer to those all the time. And especially with the new staff that we've had on board, I always give them to them and say, 'Read this and you'll understand why we're doing what we're doing'. And I have certain readings that I refer to all the time.. So they're very valuable, very well thumbed. (Phoebe).

Real stories and examples

I liked the workshops (with other centres) because we got to see where other centres were at as well, and that was quite an eye opener, thinking, 'Oh we could do that. We could adapt that to suit our programme as well' Yeah, from real people, real centres, real kids. Seeing those made me think, 'Oh I can do that, it's achievable' (Phoebe)

she used other people's Learning stories, she used photographs, she used feedback from parents and children, which at that stage we weren't doing much of (Marion).

Choosing your own direction

An objective of the ELP is that each centre decides on their own research question and after attending an initial workshop teams are asked to formulate their action research question.

> *….there was a centre focus – you know, what is important for you as a Centre ? where do you want to go with ELP, so the ownership was ours…(Marion)*

> *… it's funny how each team would take it away and we'd all take away different things. You know, where you can all see the same movie and we'd all remember different things about it. It's the same sort of concept. Each team took it in a different way and it was interesting to see who, where and which direction and you know, 'Oh so you … oh that's a good way to do that'. And so it was quite good to pool the ideas when we fed back to each other at this end of the year presentation (Phoebe).*

Networking

It is also evident that not only was the support, guidance and mentoring from the professional development providers important but an added dimension to this support was the networking with other teachers as a result of meeting together for workshops- the cluster concept. Marion says

> *We've also kept in touch with Roskill South Kindergarten – we made a relationship with them through Kim. In fact the team this year are visiting there next week on an observation visit. Karen sends us newsletters of what they've been doing.*

And Phoebe talked about the relationships that had been developed through ELP.
> *…..so we're actually going to Roskill South Kindergarten on Tuesday. I've been there before, twice, but (the other teachers at Tewa Tawa) haven't been there and so I thought they needed to go there and see why I keep harping on about them … and I'm quite good friends with Karen Ramsey so I do keep that up. And I think we've sort of maintained a bit of a relationship with Kowhai Childcare Centre, which is one of the centres that we worked with.*

Child's voice

One of the new understandings for early childhood teachers closely linked with the theory and philosophy of *Te Whāriki* is the concept of the child as a capable and competent learner. This credit-based view of a learning environment as a

'culture of success' (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.9) requires the teacher to make a shift from identifying what the child cannot do (such as checking off a list of skills) to recognising the child's strengths and interests and building on those interests through curriculum implementation (Carr, 2001). This shift in thinking happened for the teachers at Tewa Tawa and became a prime motivator for continuing with the professional development and making changes within the environment and their practice. The teachers linked the evidencing of the child's voice with their own enjoyment and excitement of the job. This gateway of student or child voice features strongly in the data as evidenced in these reflections from Marion where she saw the changed ways of assessing impacted on her practice and interactions with children. The fact that writing Learning Stories highlighted the strengths and interests of the children and enabled her to take notice of them in a different way.

> I guess my goal-setting and my excitement in my work with just being with the kids, my enjoyment of the children. Whereas ELP made me look further afield in terms of where my practice could go to? I'm just really sorry that I haven't done it when I was younger, to be quite honest (Marion)
> Researcher   And is there anything – well I'm going to call it an epiphany, the light kind of coming on, were there any particular points when you felt there could be anything that made shifts, hit you like a bulb of light, and you went "ah yeah, OK!"
> Marion   I guess to me, as I've said before, it was the questions. Looking at other people's Learning Stories. And there might be a comment like "What does this tell you about the relationship between this teacher and that child?" Things like that, that really sort of made me think about stuff like that. "What does this tell you about how capable this child is, how confident they are?" things like that.

Planning for learning began to focus more on individual children and their strengths and interests, where the child's voice was important in decision-making about progression of learning.

> Having more meaningful planning – the way that we used to plan, compared with to the way – it's just recognisable, I suppose. So it was a whole new way of working, I guess, that impacted, made the job more enjoyable (Marion)

Phoebe found the increased evidence from narrative assessment and the 'child's voice' impacted enormously on her view of the children and her response to their learning which resulted in major shifts in her philosophy.

> Really knowing the children … like through ELP and learning stories, writing a story and then thinking to myself, 'Wow! I didn't know the child

could do that!' We only write about positive things so it's a positive structure of assessment. There's no … 'No you can't do this right now …you can't catch a ball', kind of thing. You know, it's all positive and knowing the child and so when you write a story or someone else has written a story and you say, 'Oh I didn't know they could do that' and it's like, 'Wow! That's cool'. We always used to call them 'wow moments' when we first started with ELP, and I still call them that to this day because to me they are. You know their interests and their skills that they've developed and there are 'wow moments'

I guess when I first came out of college I was quite a theoretically-based practitioner. Like I based it all on … everything I did was … 'Oh, I can relate that to Piaget' or … so I was quite based on what I'd learnt. And my shift came about with Wendy Lee in the respect with 'Just go with it. Just go with what's happening', … I've always been able to stand back and let children explore. That's one thing I've always been able to do, so I didn't find that hard at all. I know that some teachers have found that hard … standing back and letting the kids go with it - fly. So the biggest shift for me would be my philosophy has changed a lot. I think I had such a structured reading-based philosophy when I first started teaching and now I … yes it is based on readings now, but it's more based on my experiences as well … knowing children and knowing how they learn.

Personalising learning after ELP

The teachers were interviewed after they had completed their time with the ELP. This was done in order to try and ascertain whether any sustained shifts in practice had occurred as a result of their involvement. Personalising learning carries with it the idea that if individuals are engaged in learning that is meaningful to them in their context then that learning is more likely to be deep and sustained.

Activity theory and its ideas about individuals being driven by an object-oriented action which is mediated by tools or artefacts can be applied to the teachers at Tewa Tawa as they continued their involvement with the ELP as well as their careers after the ELP. The initial gateway of assessment for learning resulted in other aspects of activity transforming their world that are not in the gateway framework but are components of the activity theory framework. Two of these are 'community' and 'distribution of labour' (or distributed leadership).

Community

Closely linked to the child's voice for early childhood centres is the involvement of parents/whānau and the opportunity for their voice to be heard in the planning and assessment for children's learning. Parent involvement is not only recommended as a desirable practice by policy makers but it is the recognised that parents have expert knowledge of their children and can provide insightful perspectives. One of the principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is Family and Community and states in the description of this principle:

> Families should be part of the assessment and evaluation of the curriculum as well as of children's learning and development. Parents and caregivers have a wealth of valuable information and understandings regarding their children (p.30).

Silins and Mulford (2002) found in their study of Australian Secondary Schools that where leadership was distributed across the community and parental engagement considered a priority, there were obvious enhanced outcomes for students. As students saw their families being valued by teachers and staff they were more likely to sustain their engagement in learning.

The interviews with Marion and Phoebe indicate that as they made the learning for children more visible and began to write credit-based Learning Stories this impacted on the response from families/whānau. It also became an important motivating aspect for continuing with ELP and sustaining their practices once their involvement with ELP had finished. The feedback and positive comments from families/whānau reinforced the work that Marion and Phoebe were doing and that the changes they had made and were continuing to make were eliciting favourable responses from the community.

> *Our relationship with our parents is very strong now. We send out a response sheet once we review a folder and we've had every single one of them come back. We've had a hundred percent response. … and our parents really understand what we're doing and why we're doing it. They know about our curriculum. We do put a little thing in the front of their folders to say what learning stories are, how they came about, why we do them, what the dispositions are … so when we're talking about them they understand them*
> *Yeah, they contribute on that response sheet, 'cos what we say is … we ask two questions … the first one is, 'We've reviewed your child's folder, would you like to comment on what they've been doing at kindergarten lately and the last few stories?' And so there's a section for them to do that. And then there's a section … so they can write about how they think the*

assessment's going and what they would like to notice, you know what they'd like us to work on. And then the next section is down this … 'What is your child currently interested at home?' so that we can make the links with home as well. And so parents have been responding like that, and that's really valuable. And so whatever comes back from parents … if there's any concerns, or if there's anything that they haven't seen that they'd like to, we make a note of it on our board and we're all aware of it. (Phoebe)

One, I guess, would be feedback from parents – that's exciting. Having more meaningful planning – the way that we used to plan, compared with to the way – it's just recognisable, I suppose
Yes, we have, we've strengthened our relationship with parents, they contribute to children's folders, which has been really neat. And they write stuff, they put in photos, they are a strong part of it. (Marion)

An interesting aspect of community that perhaps remains unresolved and could impact on the sustainability of learning for Marion and Phoebe is the continuing of teacher networks. Marion, in particular talks about the importance of those networks.

The thing I missed most about ELP was suddenly I really missed the company of like-minded people? And you come to work, and you think "Oh, quite lonely, really" – It can be quite lonely in a professional sense. Yeah, and I really missed meeting – and even now, if I bump into Trish from the Ngongataha Kindergarten, I'll say "Can you let me know if there's anything happening, and I'll come." And she might ring me, and I might go to a meeting, or a workshop, just so I'm still keeping in touch with them.

Her comments also show her thoughts about constructing her own community and mediating supports by initiating contact with other teachers and re-establishing some relationships.

And I was actually thinking I might ring Lana from Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre and give her a visit, and see what she's doing there. You know, just initiating those sort of things, just so we can keep up the contact? I guess the only other way is to ring up a centre and say " look we're coming out for a visit and to have a bit of a chat."
Yeah, I think it's quite important for teaching not to become isolated, and I think with such busy programmes that we have these days, with 9 sessions, we just don't have that chance to go and meet with other staff members like we used to.

Phoebe, too, remarked on what she missed most about not being involved with the ELP any longer.

Wendy Lee inspiring sessions. That would probably be it actually. The only thing I've really missed is seeing Wendy Lee and having her show us stuff and show us how other centres are doing things and stuff. Because it always gives you new fresh ideas and so ... yeah ... I think that would be it.

She then remarks how some of the links have been kept through their involvement in other opportunities and that she feels motivated in spite of not having the regular input from the ELP.

We've done a few more sessions with them, (a centre that was part of the ELP cluster) without Wendy Lee, just talking about what we were doing, where we were at and they organised a bi-cultural thing as well. And I did a little bit ... something with Wendy Lee and Malcolm Carr as well ... Ann Hatherly. We did just some research stuff, so we've sort of maintained the links really.
I don't have a problem with that (motivation to continue with the learning that happened with the ELP) I think because ... I just ... well every story's different and every interest is different and the way children do things is different, so nothing's the same and nothing's boring.

Distributed leadership

In this instance the distribution of leadership can be defined by the sharing of tasks and leadership the teachers engaged in to advance their research goal. Not only was this shared or distributed leadership modelled amongst the Tewa Tawa teachers but was encouraged and modelled across ELP. It would appear that as the team continued their involvement with ELP this concept of shared leadership was strengthened and became a part of the culture of the centre. It may have been the result of the need for teachers to share their skills and help one another as they implemented different assessment for learning practices using new tools that allowed the distribution of labour to be mediated.

Teachers teaching teachers

Marion comments on the different impacts that leadership had on the team. This resulted in teachers teaching teachers, a characteristic of distributed leadership.

Kim (teacher who was at Tewa Tawa, not the Head Teacher, but is now at home with her children) took on the role of Leader, Team Leader of ELP.

She seemed to have a lot of pleasure in doing that, and it seemed to help her professional journey as well.

So we climbed on board, (with using ICT) and that was really the start of our using technology within the Centre, and we've actually become, I guess, leaders in a way, one of the leading centres in terms we were part of the Ministry DVD that was made, the ICT : Strategy - Foundations for Discovery

…it was like shared among our clusters, if you like, where someone might facilitate a meeting, bring stuff to share that they'd been doing.
If anyone had a particular skill, like Phoebe, had a particular skill in using ICT which she'd share with the other teachers. And also, too, when we mentored a new Centre, and that meant them visiting us, and I went out there and helped them with their Learning stories. And had a wee think about their planning, why they were doing it the way they were, and was it working for them, and gave them other things they could think of too.They've carried on with ELP   (Marion)

Phoebe reiterates these thoughts

… Kim was the leader. Kim was the one who signed up first, and then Marion became the leader and I was a follower. [Laughing] I just went along, didn't want to do all the evaluations and stuff. But basically we've always been … Marion's been a brilliant delegator, so we've always been a really good team in the respect that we each pulled our weight, whether it was … even if it was a head teacher duty we did it, because that's just the way we worked. So it was pretty much a big team thing for us.

Marion comments on the learning about shared leadership that occurred for her and what it has meant for the teaching team.

the realisation that everybody has got strengths that can be utilised, and I think that's ongoing in terms of our practice. We've got two new teachers, and they're bringing their strengths into our teaching team.

Shifts in the distribution of labour or power are interconnected with the child's voice and community. A shift in the distribution of power occurred as the teachers started taking account of the child's voice and incorporating this into their planning and assessment in a meaningful way. Their changing view of the child as capable and competent seemed to enable them to let the child's voice be validated and valued. Parents and whānau also, began to have a voice and share leadership through the information they provided for teachers about their children. Phoebe comments, earlier, on the importance it was to listen to parents and collaborate with them about their children's learning.

The tensions between all these components of the activity triangle and the interelatedness of them has for this team resulted in changes to their practice that were fundamental and profound. This interplay was brought about by their involvement with ELP and using the mechanisms and resources of ELP in meaningful ways for their specific context. It has opened up leadership opportunities and shaped different identities that have also allowed them to sustain changes and continue to be motivated in their learning and teaching after finishing with ELP.

Marion outlines what these opportunities have meant for her.

> Now I guess it was this feeling through the ELP, that here was a strong emphasis on leadership as part of the project, and that wasn't just leadership say by the Head Teacher, but by everybody on the team, and it made us lift the bar, really, in terms of our practice, and I really thought "Yeah, I can be a leader here." And I can be more of a leader than I'm being. And it made me feel part of this in terms of my job.
>
> Researcher: What other things would you identify for yourself, as being different leadership opportunities?
>
> Marion. I guess leadership within my role as Head Teacher in terms of working with families, working with parents, working with children, working with colleagues…..and also we get quite a lot of teaching teams (from within our umbrella organisation) sent to us to look at our Learning stories and our written assessment – that's come through as a strength of ours in terms of leadership. That's talking to those teachers when they come, as to why we're doing it. They come and look at our written work, they come and look at how we are using ICT in the kindergarten. They're the two main areas.
>
> I guess it's made us stronger as teachers, to say "This is what we want for our centre. You might be up here, but You don't need to tell us what to do." As long as we can articulate why we're doing it. So we went ahead and we got our Macs(Apple MacIntosh computers), and other equipment as well, and we've continued to strengthen the practice. Now we have other teams with Macs who come to us for help, so I guess in a way, even that's leadership (Marion)

And Marion attributes her involvement with the ELP to having the confidence to go on and try other things.

> I guess I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing in terms of the fellowship if it hadn't been for ELP ,'cos it's enabled me to share my work with other teachers um, I've had one of my stories in Kei Tua o te Pae.

Phoebe identifies the opportunities and leadership skills that she has developed.

> *Researcher: So do you think that through this you've developed some kind of leadership opportunities or enhanced your skills in that direction?*
> *Yeah, I probably have [said modestly] Management uses me to take courses and stuff like that, so I guess I have.*
> *Researcher: In ICT or assessment?*
> *Both. Assessment and evaluation, and ICT ... I just did an ICT course in the holidays on Apple computers for other teaching teams, and last year we did Assessment and Evaluation. I feel like they've really recognised where my strengths are and that I am capable of sharing them with others. And taking on acting head teaching this year. I've always said, 'I didn't want to do that. I don't want to do that. I don't want to be head teacher'. But not because I didn't think I could do it, it's because there's a lot more work involved with it and I didn't want my learning stories to suffer. That's the biggest thing for me. I still want to be able to write that many stories per week, and when you've got a lot of other admin stuff, that does suffer.*

> *We've been one kindergarten that's sort of stood up for ourselves and said, 'No way. We're doing it our way'. And the funny thing is now they're sending every other kindergarten to us to look at how we do it.*

She then talks about her ongoing learning.

> *I did a Transition to School research project for a year and presented my findings at schools, so year I guess I have developed a lot of confidence in that area to do that.*
> *That was last year. The Management asked me if I wanted to do it, so I said, 'Yeah'. They also sent me on a Child Protection Studies course as well, for a week. And that got me inspired to do my Psychology, so I'm doing that as well.*

Teacher voice

Both Child's voice and Teacher voice have been significant gateways for the teachers. In this instance 'teacher voice' is defined as the expression and defence of practice and philosophy. Teachers may be called on by parents/whānau, other teachers, management, outside agencies and the wider community to explain reasons for practice within their learning and teaching environment.

Articulation of practice.

There is evidence of an increased ability of the teachers at Tewa Tawa to be able to articulate their practice to others. This is something that has grown as a result

of their involvement with the ELP and is valued as a skill by the teachers as Phoebe outlines.

> ELP has probably made me a more confident practitioner. So I'm very confident about what I do, and I understand what I do, and I'm very passionate about what I do … I think it's important that if you are that kind of person that is able to stand up in front of people that you should be doing it. Because if you want other teachers to be … confident, capable teachers as well, and be excellent, be very reflective and excellent teachers then you're going to have to go out and show them how to do it.
> And I'm sure we articulated it as clear as we understood it, you know and they just didn't get it and that really frustrated me more than anything. So I must admit that after ERO[5] came I really made sure I understood what I was doing and why I was doing it and we've just had ERO visit again and I felt very confident in talking to them about our planning and assessment practices

Carol reiterates how important the articulation of practice has become for the team.

> I guess when we were last ERO'd I came away thinking "I need to be more articulate about my practice", because even though we were doing it, I felt that I didn't articulate that I was doing it very well at the time? And I thought that as Head Teacher, I really need to sharpen up here. And that was an area that I've really worked on. I believe that I really need to be able to articulate what we're doing to all different audiences, and I guess just the extra study I did with the ELP I guess it's made us stronger as teachers, to say "This is what we want for our centre. As long as we can articulate why we're doing it.

Reflection

Reflection as suggested by Day and Harris (2002) is about re-enacting or recapturing of events and accomplishments in which to analyse and learn from experience. Reflection can result in a clearer understanding of values, attitudes and practice. This understanding, in turn, is likely to lead to an increased ability to express ideas, philosophies and reasons for practice. The access, for teachers, to theoretical viewpoints and questioning can also assist in the reflective process and allow teachers to build robust arguments, reinforced by theory , into the defense of their practice. Thus reflection can also be seen as linked to articulating practice or teacher voice. This is a skill that has for Phoebe become integral to her practice is, for her, one of the most powerful legacies of ELP.

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[5] Education Review Office- the government department responsible for reviewing and reporting on the quality of education in all New Zealand schools and early childhood centres.

… you know relating it (those questions like- do you make me fly) to the dispositions and answering those questions in my own practice as well.- being reflective that would be one of the biggest ones I've remembered and has stayed with me from ELP (Phoebe).

Summary

It was through the Assessment for Learning gateway that the teachers at Tewa Tawa entered the ELP. It created tensions and challenges, and their involvement in the project helped resolve the dissonance that they were initially experiencing The development of reflective practice was encouraged and supported throughout the project and was instrumental in encouraging the disposition to learn. Being reflective often leads to dissonance which teachers may choose to try to resolve – the following comment from Phoebe, in particular, shows how that dissonance and reflection helped her think about making changes.

> *I think one of the biggest things that I vividly remember was when Wendy Lee was talking about dispositions and she was saying questions like, 'Do you let me fly?[6] ' and things like that, and I was just sitting there going … 'Do I do that?' You know it really made me think about whether I did that and I must admit I came back from that one quite reflective about how I did things and made sure that I was doing those*

The following quote evidences the lasting impact that being reflective has had for Marion and how she saw it affecting the whole team.

> *and it was Wendy Lee's ability to portray to us what was meaningful for children, and that's really stayed with me right through 'til now, this ability to get us to reflect what was on the screen, or what she'd said. She'd just leave it with us, to absorb it. And it just really had an impact on us. It wasn't anyone up there saying "this is how you do it, this is why you do it", it was like a huge impact on us in terms of our own reflection, as teachers (Marion).*

Assessing and documenting children's learning had become the most enjoyable aspect of teaching and learning. Phoebe's comments about the impact that ELP had on her practice and her identity as a teacher demonstrate this.

> *If you're passionate about what you're doing, you're teaching it to someone else, it's going to be memorable.*

> *The readings and the resources and the actual real work … you know that you've seen it in practice, you can see that it's going to work and you see*

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[6] These questions refer to the theoretical framework of the 'child's voice' used in the study by Carr, May, Podmore, Cubey, Hatherly & Macartney, 2000

the children's responses to it … one of the things that really impacted with that documentation was the fact that parents response to it. You know, seeing that on paper as well you think … oh wow, I want our parents to feel like that. So you think, 'Oh I can do that!'

Researcher. So for you the 'wow moments' have been very much about the children and their learning for you?
Phoebe. Absolutely. Yeah.
I've never had a day when I didn't want to be here, you know, since we've started that project.
Researcher. So it seems to me from what you're saying that what happened and the understanding you got about assessment and things for children have fundamentally changed some of your practices and the way you operate?
Phoebe. Yeah. The structure of me as a teacher. Absolutely, because I think … I can't think of any other system that I've seen that is so beneficial to children like this.
I mean I love coming to work every day. And I think if you can be in a job where you do love coming to work every day that's a good thing. And getting paid to do something you love's even better.

Marion indicated the influence that assessment has had on her practice.

So it was a whole new way of working, I guess, that impacted, made the job more enjoyable.
I've been here for quite a long time at Tewa Tawa, and I've always tried to set goals for myself within my teaching, but every now and then I think I've done my bit and ELP changed that, it made me really keen. I'd found a way of assessment that was really enjoyable. And it's an easier way of teaching, actually, when you work alongside children.
* And I think too, the documentation that we did over the years that we did with ELP – you do pretty intensive documentation of the work that you do with them – so that's been really neat to look back on, and think "we've come a long way here"*

Phoebe demonstrates her attitudes about continued learning.

you're always a learner. Even though you're the teacher, you're always a learner as well.

That ELP has been influential in empowering these two teachers to make sustained shifts in their practice, and to change some of their attitudes and beliefs, particularly about children's learning and their role as teachers, is clearly evidenced by their stories of their involvement with ELP. Both teachers identified the opportunities for leadership that had evolved for them through ELP and the confidence to try new things and step out into unknown territory.

Marion's comment about what has been, for her, one of the most significant legacies of ELP demonstrate the effectiveness of this professional development provider in facilitating change in teachers attitudes, values and beliefs.

> *I guess the values of what we've learnt, the values have been so strong that we've stayed with those.*

In relation to Hargreaves (2004a) notion of gateways as entry to personalising teaching and learning, the teachers in Tewa Tawa Kindergarten reinforce this idea that the gateways need to be fundamental aspects of teaching and learning and that Hargreaves' (2004a) defining of the nine gateways hold good for this early childhood service. The case study of Tewa Tawa also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the gateways and that once an initial gateway is entered then others soon open and impact on one another at least partly to resolve or reduce some of the tensions created by the opening of the earlier gateways. Activity theory is useful in identifying the ways in which sustainability and interest were maintained beyond the ELP project especially community and distributed leadership (or power). The flipside of Child's voice - Teacher voice – was also a significant aspect for personalising learning after ELP. The following table summarises the three phases of the journey towards personalising learning.

ENTRY POINT	OTHER GATEWAYS AND SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT	PERSONALISING LEARNING AFTER ELP
Assessment for learning		
	Curriculum	
	Design & Organisation	
	Technology	

	Mentoring & Coaching
	  Facilitators
	  Readings
	  Research questions
	  Networking
	  Real stories and
	  examples	

	Child's voice	

	Community
	  Families/whānau
		Community
		  Families/whānau
		  Teacher networks

		Teacher Voice
		  Reflection
		  Articulation

		Distributed leadership
		(Distribution of power)
		  Teachers teaching
		  teachers

Table 1: A summary of the personalising learning pathway of the teachers at Tewa Tawa Kindergarten

Chapter 5

CASE STUDY TWO: PACIFIC COAST EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

Overview

Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre is located in a coastal town in the North Island and was established in 1992. It is privately owned and operated and consists of two separate centres in neighbouring streets. One centre is licensed for twenty-five children under two years of age (babies from 3 months old can start at the centre) and the other for forty over two year olds. Both centres are full day services, the hours of operation being 7.30am to 5.30pm. Children attend for a minimum of nine hours per week. The total number of families attending either full-time or part-time at Pacific Coast is approximately one hundred. There is a total of sixteen staff, all qualified. The five teachers who were interviewed at Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre had years of service ranging from nearly three years to fifteen years.

This centre had been involved in the Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning exemplar project. The director of ELP was also a co-director of this exemplar contract and had formed a relationship with the team leader at Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre through this project. The ELP director asked if Pacific Coast would like to join a cluster of centres in their region (this was the first time ELP had worked in this region) and be a part of ELP. Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre began with ELP in 2003.

Three of the teachers interviewed had been part of the original team that enrolled with ELP. Another teacher had been employed at a kindergarten in Auckland and been involved in t ELP with that team and then had relocated and joined the staff at Pacific Coast during the second year of ELP. The fifth teacher interviewed was employed by the centre in the last year of ELP.

Entrypoints

Returning to the method of analysis, gateways to personalising learning, the nine interconnected gateways that have been defined by Hargreaves (2004a) as entry point for personalising learning are; *curriculum, assessment for learning, learning to learn, student voice, new technologies, mentoring and coaching, advice and guidance, design and organisation and workforce reform.*

Mentoring and Coaching

The case study of Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre shows some differences and similarities to Tewa Tawa Kindergarten in their experiences with the ELP. With regards to the initial gateway that opened for Pacific Coast, the team leader reports

> *I think it goes back to when I was doing a Masters paper with Jenny Ritchie and she gave that paper to Margaret Carr to moderate it and I was using learning stories as a way of gathering research data... and after that Margaret invited us to be involved with the exemplar project, Kei Tua o te Pae, and that's how we got to know Wendy via that... and then Wendy asked us if we were interested in doing professional development for the following year and that's when ELP first came to this region... and so we got together a group of interested centres... well, they applied... and so we spent two years on the project.*

While one of the other teachers recalls,

> *Well, I'm a little bit hazy on the details. I think that relationships with Wendy Lee and Ann Hatherly developed and yeah, we applied to get on board with ELP with the focus initially around learning stories and then later on we looked at transition between (under two year olds and over two year olds centres in neighbouring streets) (Olivia)*

Samantha had been employed at a kindergarten in Auckland that was involved with ELP. When she was thinking of applying for a job at Pacific Coast, the project director was able to tell her that Pacific Coast was part of ELP and that a relationship already existed.

> *and Wendy had met Lana because they had started on their first year of ELP here and I came down and met the team and I thought 'Yes, this is certainly a place that I would like to move'*

It could be suggested that this centre entered ELP through the gateway of mentoring and coaching in that the team leader already had a positive working relationship with the director.

The opening of other gateways and sustained involvement.

Although mentoring and coaching was the initial gateway for this centre, many of the aspects of mentoring and coaching were very important for sustained involvement and provided a range of tools that the teachers were able to mediate and reconstruct to meet their new goals

Sustaining aspects of mentoring and coaching.

To return to the activity theory analysis some aspects of mentoring and coaching provided strong mediators that influenced and extended the teacher's actions. Many of these aspects are similar to the ones identified by the teachers at Tewa Tawa. Such aspects included: inspiring facilitators with positive attitudes, readings and research, ELP cluster group workshops and networking, and choosing their own research question.

Quality of the facilitators

A positive aspect of the workshops was the quality of the facilitators and the things that were shared and their positive attitudes. Lana particularly valued the manner in which the facilitators approached the participants - they did not bring instant answers but encouraged the teachers to find their own solutions. The respectful and positive messages of competence and capability that the facilitators portrayed to the teachers was powerful role model. Cordingley (cited in Hargreaves (2005c) in her conference presentation to school leaders about Gateway 5, mentoring and coaching, asserts that a vital feature of effective mentoring is asking good questions. She goes on to suggest that

good questions entail using open questions to raise awareness, explore beliefs, encourage learners to arrive at their own plans, understand consequences and develop solutions (p11).

These characteristics appear to be features of the mentoring and coaching experienced by the Pacific Coast teachers from ELP facilitators.

> *But just the motivation that the various speakers brought to us ...I think the inspiring workshops were wonderful... the whole idea with the 'can do' attitude*
> *It's that kind of... respectful, responsive listening was modelled... we always felt with the people here that involved... Wendy and Ann were the main people in the beginning... that they valued what you were contributing... that whole idea of starting from credit base and working through... if it works for children it works for adults just as well...*
> *everybody is very generous in giving their time and experience and reflective thoughts in conversation with other teachers across the sector so that whole idea of disseminating, actually ... I just mean that sharing...*
> *so I suppose that wonderful nurturing to start with has meant that we see things from a different perspective than we would have done previously... we would have been probably beavering away in our own little private community and now we see much more responsiveness to a wider setting so ELP has been really [...?] (Lana)*

Olivia, also found the encouragement given by the facilitators empowering and the interactive nature of the workshops inspiring and engaging.

> *You know there were things that were being raised, people might have been struggling with issues across the centres. But Wendy and Ann just always ... just so encouraging, so positive, so uplifting I guess it was very reflective.*
>
> *It was always so inspiring. You never sat there thinking, 'Oh come on'. It was just always so interesting and engaging there was a lot of involvement from everyone that was there. It wasn't just one person standing up the front and talking the whole time. It was a really interactive environment ... relating directly back to what you were doing, so ... there'd be moments of discussion as a team, as a group ... so it kept it engaging. It kept it interesting and it kept it based in your environment.*

Inspiring is a term used by Samantha, too, and it is an adjective that features in Phoebe's interview from Tewa Tawa.

> *The workshops were always great... always inspiring... there were always different people invited to come and speak with us so I think probably most of the time it was Wendy and Ann...*

Readings and research

The readings and research provided at the workshops by the facilitators were considered useful in furthering the teachers' learning and helped make connections between theory and practise.

> *... lots of help with further research... so we were given papers to read (Lana)*

> *and they had a lot of current research that we could become familiar with and think about .....like while it related to research and there was discussion around it, it was still very much a part of what you do and linked back to work with children and there'd be examples of stories shown and discussion around that (Olivia).*

> *Research was presented both from whoever was facilitating the workshop, and from the group discussions that developed from them (Paige).*

Choosing a research question.

Pacific Coast, like Tewa Tawa found choosing a research question (as part of the action research cycle) was an important motivator and for the Pacific Coast teachers a different way of working, as Lana recalls,

> *... making us think in terms of a research question... that was very interesting to have in-centre research... a different way of working from what we had had previously... I think that was very important actually... having a research question.*
> *The whole idea of gathering a research question... it had to be something that everybody got excited about... so right from the very start... everybody was involved and the motivation was high and it stayed high..*

It was an aspect that Paige remarked on,

> *Well, I guess the fact that you were encouraged to have a research topic, you thought "well, what's an area that we need to look at?"*

Samantha, who had been involved with ELP in its early stages as a professional development provider while teaching in Auckland, comments about the changes in approach to action research.

> *I think they were more goals at the beginning... about what we would like to achieve... now it's more research questions... so it's evolved... It's more*

about getting the teams into the mindset of researching... 'how does this work for us?'

The idea of teaching teams choosing their own research question and deciding their own goals and direction is supported by the notion of personalising learning where students are encouraged to choose their own learning paths. For teachers, this ownership of learning is important for motivation and as Silins and Mulford (2002), Carr et al (2000), Harris and Muijs (2005) have all found teacher engagement was more likely to be sustained when they were able to take ownership of their goals and share in decision making about projects. As outlined in Mitchell and Cubey's (2003) BES of early childhood professional development, a number of the characteristics of effective professional development allude to this. These include teachers being able to incorporate "their own aspirations, skills and knowledge into the learning context, participants are involved in investigating their own pedagogy and participants collect and analyse data from their own settings"(p 81). There is an interconnection between this aspect of mentoring (choosing a research question) and distributing the power (across project facilitators and teachers).

Attending workshops and networking.

Attending workshops facilitated by ELP appeared to have multiple components that the participants found beneficial and were a key to the sustainability of their involvement. These included the opportunity to meet, share and develop relationships and networks with teachers from other centres, here Lana talks of the benefit of those networks.

> *We all went to the workshops... I think also the networking with other centres was really useful...*
> *It widened that community idea... from that very first year we still have contact with those centres... I think the idea that we're all on a journey together... that there was no hierarchy in a sense... we were all working things through... we had different research questions but we were quite supportive... we went and visited other centres... that was really useful....*

For Olivia meeting with teachers from other centres helped establish a network of sharing and the multiple opportunities for sharing to occur.

It meant visiting other centres and other centres coming to visit us. A lot more communication ... well a lot of communication that was not there prior to that involvement with ELP. It just opened up a network, and there were facilitator meetings too because while we'd be in the ELP Project as a centre one person within that team would be the centre facilitator so they would also attend smaller groups. So each centre facilitator would get together at a different time as well. So that smaller group also opened up a lot of communication between the centre facilitators which spread back down to the rest of the team as well.

Amber recalls the opportunities for meeting with a wide variety of people

we had the opportunity to go with a whole lot of people from Seaside and so on, up to Auckland to visit a kindergarten, and you got to know other people, and you'd go here, and here. Yeah it definitely widened our network,

while Samantha recounts how important the workshops and networking were for the team she taught with in Auckland.

The biggest thing I think was the networking... because once again we were all struggling trying to make it work because, being the first couple of years, there was no-one to give us answers... there was no-one to say, 'Hey, this is what we try'... and this is what works for us... we were figuring it out for ourselves... so... I think the networking was really good because we would go and have meetings at other kindergartens... most of them at that stage were kindergartens... actually in fact there was only one childcare centre... and so we would go out and look at other centres

Harris and Miujs (2003) suggest that networking with other schools is crucial for building leadership capacity and effective professional development should provide this opportunity. The earlier discussion about early childhood teachers operating in relative isolation in many instances may help clarify the importance of networking for these teachers. Marion from Tewa Tawa bemoaned the lack of networking opportunities once her team had finished their official involvement with ELP. Networking as a gateway interconnects with community, a component of activity theory.

Ideas from other centres

Another benefit from attending ELP workshops were the ideas that teams got from other centres. The workshops were held in different centres and the participants were able to look at the physical environment and layout which

prompted ideas and discussions of how a specific aspect might work in their own centre. Olivia, Paige and Amber all endorse this theme.

> *Other centres would be saying : "Oh, we do this and that", and it was like "Oh, that's a cool idea! I wonder how we could bring that into what we do, the way we teach, and our philosophies"(Olivia)*

> *the workshops were at various different centres. So you got to visit in that way, not necessarily during the day, but out of work hours, so you'd spend time looking at the walls, and getting ideas (Paige)*

> *I know that we got the opportunity to go to the other centres for lunch, and it was really cool seeing other centres "Oh, that's such a good idea, wow, look at that!"(Amber)*

ELP gained permission from families to share their children's portfolios with other teachers. This paved the way for teachers to share examples with others. The fact that other centres involved with the ELP in other regions were willing to share ideas and support other teams made an impact on Olivia.

> *I just remember Ann coming and bringing children's profile booklets from Roskill South Kindergarten and saying, 'Have a read. See what you think'. And so often in Early Childhood sector things are so competitive and there isn't that strong networking, or there wasn't, I believe, before ELP. It was this competition where you can't share information …….having these folders down and being able to look through and read these stories and cement in our minds of what we were doing and how exciting it was. So I just think that the culture within ELP that's so supportive that's something that's really come through for me.*
> *Absolutely, other teachers sharing what they were doing and taking that idea away from not being able to share children's information because of the Privacy Act and that sort of thing, which is something that we had trouble accepting for a very long time anyway. But it was sort of breaking away from that, being able to celebrate what children do. Share it amongst teachers and have those discussions about it.*

Reflection

 Reflection also features as a mechanism or tool that the participants found empowering and assisted them in looking at their practice and deciding to make changes. It appears that ELP provided questions and opportunities for critical reflection and that this was presented in a manner that did not threaten the participants but rather made them engage in meaningful discussion amongst their

teams. Samantha outlines the value of reflection particularly in helping achieve goals.

> *The facilitator for our team we would bring back the readings... and at our staff meetings... basically... just discuss and there would be reflective questions that we would have jotted down... 'How does this fit for our team?' ... and we would talk about that at our staff meeting... and quite often you need to think about these things for a little while and get your head around them... and then we would come back and revisit them.*
>
> *Reflection, I think, has been really important in realising our vision... because it's easy to go along your merry way thinking everything's fine but I think when you start to change and think about what you're doing and reflecting on them then you often open up more questions than answers so you need to become comfortable with that... that it's unsure and that's okay...*

Lana talked about the value of having a facilitator come to the centre and encourage critical reflection.

> *Yes, Ann came and spent time in the centre and gave us challenges... put challenges out there but really affirmed a lot of what was happening as well... She would talk to us individually .. we would sometimes have her at a team meeting... she would write us feedback as well... I think those written feedback statements were very valuable.*

For Paige having the chance to reflect and discuss back at work after being presented with challenges at the workshops.

> *It was just being able to come back and reflect on what's happening here, and why are we doing it this way?*
> *So it was really being able to get down to the nitty gritty of "what are we doing, and why are we doing it, and that just helps you to re-focus on "Well, is that what we want to be doing, then?" and continue on to develop from there, as well.*

Olivia found the linking of information was useful for reflection.

> *presentations, discussion, handouts, there would be ... some of the stuff that would come in the post would occasionally be information that might come through and they would actually link it specifically to what we'd been talking about with them. So it wasn't just an article that had come out, they actually would link it and there might be a note on the top saying, 'In regards to our discussions along those lines, here's something to think about'. So it really was a ... not ... perhaps not saying, 'Well this is the way to do it', it was more of a ... having open-ended questions, you know? 'What does this raise for you?'*

And then having them come in-centre and talk to us about how things are going, raise questions about what we were doing, why we were doing it. And so it was teaching us to articulate our practice a bit more which is something that can be quite challenging.

Day and Harris (2002) suggest that the literature shows that teacher reflection plays a vital part in any improvement in that reflection allows for evaluating assumptions, helps teachers experience greater self - knowledge and challenge and permits collaboration, discussion and enquiry. The complexity of teaching and learning means that there is not necessarily one way or approach and having the ability to be reflective allows for teachers to explore other ways, ask questions, gather information and share ideas.

It is obvious that these elements of reflection were present for the Pacific Coast teachers and that reflection became a powerful tool for mediating change.

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning, or documentation of learning, was a gateway that opened very soon after their enrolment in ELP. Although they had been using narrative assessment and Learning Stories as part of their involvement with the Exemplar Project, the choosing of a research question for their ELP project and then the collecting of data resulted in a closer look at how evidence was being gathered and what evidence they had of children's learning.

Well one of the big ones was assessment which I talked about before. You know we were sort of questioning this anecdotal record taking that we were doing and had to start thinking really clearly about dispositional learning theory, narrative styles of writing and we had to think really hard ...(Olivia)

well, we'd been working with learning stories for a long time as an assessment way of working... well, it's more than just a method isn't it... it's a philosophy... learning... assessment... teaching and planning just kind of gelled with how we were working already and just made us very excited and motivated...
Our first question looked at that... how we built competence amongst ourselves as colleagues and built that base of shared leadership because we think that that is a precursor to working with children in that way... we want children to be leaders and we have to be risk takers as well and supportive of colleagues...(Lana)

Other gateways that opened for Pacific Coast as they continued their involvement with ELP were: new technologies and design and organisation

New technologies

Once again, as with Tewa Tawa Kindergarten, Pacific Coast found themselves using an increasing amount of ICT, particularly in their documentation of children's learning. This meant not only increasing the number of computers and digital cameras they had so that staff could use their time efficiently but also deciding to change from PCs to Apple MacIntosh computers because of the latter's digital capabilities. As they have explored new technologies further the teachers have all purchased laptops. The centre also has computers for children to use as a learning and teaching tool. Samantha articulates the value of using ICT to document learning.

> *what we learned about ICT was that it allowed children to become involved with their own learning because they could see it... it was visible... it was instant... and we needed it to be instant because otherwise the inspiration is lost... it's here and now or they're gone and so it was very, very important.... the ICT but ICT in terms of children visiting their learning is very important... the learning stories that we write we read to the children and so they have that verbal memory but the pictures tell the story... they're looking at those pictures as we read the story... so that was something that we looked into a lot over the ELP... at the beginning of the ELP anyway... because we discovered pretty quickly that if we were wanting children to be able to evaluate their own learning then we needed to have the physical evidence for them to see.*

Paige indicates that the team were good at supporting one another in learning new technology skills.

> *Researcher. Did you find that ICT became an important part of what you were doing?*
> *Paige Yes, whenever we discover something new, it's like – go round, tell everybody. And it was like: "Oh, how do you do that?" We're quite a sharing community! Certainly I don't think anyone's backward about coming forward when you've finally discovered something! And sometimes you come and say "Look what I've found!" "Oh, I knew about that weeks ago!" Yeah, but "I've just done it, and I can do it now!"*
> *Generally we're quite aware of making sure that everybody's on an even path with what we're doing - Yeah, lots of supporting one another.*

Olivia recalls how ICT impacted on her attitude to technology and her teaching.

> *A lot of up-skilling in ICT. Really because I'd been involved in a lot of study*
> *I used my computer solely to write assignments and then tried to avoid*
> *using it at any other cost. I just wanted to get off that computer. But it was*
> *different writing stories because it was just so exciting. Having these special*
> *moments to share with children to share with families it was just such a buzz*
> *to be able to write them ... and to learn how to insert photographs and to*
> *work with Word Art and just ... yeah it was a huge learning curve I guess.*
> *But it was just so awesome and it's gotten better and better.*
> *So I was very unfamiliar. I hadn't used digital cameras. I hadn't used Word*
> *Art, I hadn't used any of that. So yeah it was learning how to use that*
> *equipment ... absolutely.*

Design and organisation

Pacific Coast experienced a similar interconnectedness between the assessment for learning, and new technologies gateways and design and organisation to Tewa Tawa. The increasing use of ICT meant for the teachers at Pacific Coast that space needed to be provided to accommodate a variety of ICT equipment and sufficient time allocated for completing documentation. Further reorganisation of the physical environment occurred as the teachers reflected on their research question, analysed data and implemented curriculum changes.

Lana outlines how researching the transition of children from the infants and toddlers centre to the over two's centre resulted in a number of changes in the design and organisation of the two centres.

> *Yes we re-affirmed the whole idea of primary care giving... not just with*
> *babies coming into the centre but for children transitioning from one centre*
> *to another and while often the children were quite ready, the families didn't*
> *know those people particularly well so we had to find ways of bringing that*
> *sense of belonging that they had here up to speed really fast at the over*
> *twos centre and that's what we've been endeavouring to do ever since ..the*
> *idea of making the transition much more visible over a long period of*
> *time...*
> *We've talked about the other centre a lot more... we've got books about*
> *what might happen when you go there... we start talking about what kind of*
> *setting it is... a rich vibrant setting for the children who are moving from*
> *this nurturing, challenging setting... vibrant as well but what it means to be*
> *in a wider social... bigger social arena... and that moving towards greater*
> *independence as they get older... so talking a lot about the possibilities and*
> *opportunities that Mitchell Street has to offer but way, way back... instead*
> *of just thinking about it just before it happens we're getting families used to*
> *the idea that this is going to be an exciting place... we have quite a few*
> *rituals in place for moving from one centre to another... the children know*

these rituals and they get excited and talk about going to the other centre a lot .Teachers there writing stories for children while they're still here (in the infant and toddler centre)... teachers coming to visit children who will be transitioning so that they see them as competent capable people in their environment... with a great sense of belonging... not in that transitional phase where things are new and different...

Paige also referred to the changes that occurred through the action research.

*With transition, I guess the biggest issue was that our two centres are in two different locations, so parents find – initially we thought "Oh, we're doing pretty well with transition, but I'm sure we can do better", and once we got into it – six months into it – we realised "it's not the children that have a problem with the transition, it's the parents". The children have been visiting every couple of days, and they've got to know the routine, they've gotten to know the teachers and the other children – but the parents, if you're lucky, may have visited once? And they've been **so** happy, and **so** comfortable at the infant and toddler centre, and it's not saying that they're not going to be. But it's that whole getting to know new people, making new relationships.*

Another design change that was made at Pacific Coast was the accessibility of portfolios to children and parents/whānau. In the past (pre ELP involvement) any documentation or assessment of children's learning had been kept in an office and was only accessible to teachers or parents on request. As the teachers endeavoured to make learning more visible for children and families and have children and families share in the documentation it became necessary to have the children's portfolios in an easily accessible area. As with Tewa Tawa Kindergarten this required purchasing suitable durable stationery to file stories, photos and other documentation as well as containers for the portfolios. It soon became evident, too, that as children and families were spending more time reading the portfolios, having a comfortable place to sit and share this experience together was important.

Paige continues with her story

I know that we changed our format – the folders themselves were scrapbooks with the stories going in a clearfile pocket, sort of thing, and once we brought those down, they weren't quite robust enough, they weren't strong enough for the children to be handling and using them every day. We decided that we needed to go for these bigger folders. It just seemed to flow quite easily, I think, because we expect children to have a respect for the equipment, and books, so this was just the next step on with that, as well, that they be careful of books.

While Samantha comments

> *and I think one of the biggest things was just getting the folders down out of scrapbooks into more durable books and letting the children access them.*
> *Researcher: Did you have to change like the physical layout in terms of making your folders accessible... or do different systems or something?*
> *Samantha   What our research in our... sort of... reflections taught us was that children only feel supported if resources are available to them all the time and that they feel welcomed when they have access to the equipment that they need and they feel that they can be creative when they have access to that equipment and so we work really hard at making sure that resources are available to children all the time... so we needed to bring things down... get lower shelving... different containers.*

The changes in documentation to a more narrative style of assessment and the including of images meant reorganising routines, creating flexibility for teachers to process the documentation and ensuring there was enough equipment.

> *We've always had non-contact time, and in our centre that means – often that's admin, so we get non-contact time for administration, and we also get "Sleeproom time", which is actually the time (when) we write our stories. In the last year – every so often we'll change our routines around, like we've managed to give ourselves another half hour in the Sleeproom of an afternoon, just by moving a few things around. (Samantha)*

> *Researcher How important has it been for you to have 1. The technology, and 2. Time for doing things you've needed to do?*
> *Paige I don't know. I guess we're extremely lucky with the management that we've got. we'll print one story to go in their folder, and one story to go in their project folder, and the same story about twice as big, to go on the wall – just talking about money-wise, from the printing aspect!*
> *Just thinking outside the square, to come up with other ideas – yes, this is working, but could it work better if we did this, or changed it to that? And we're all fairly flexible in trying things, even if one or two of us might be thinking "Oh, I don't think that's gonna work". Let's give it a try, let's see. we had the one iMac on a trolley table that we'd move between being out here in the children in the mornings, and being in the Sleeproom in the afternoons, for us to work on. And then we realised "we really do need another computer!"*

Olivia talks of the need for flexibility and systems that work for everyone. This has involved devising ways to ensure every child is having their learning documented in an equitable manner.

> *Well time's always a factor. It's always difficult to fit in things so that's always a struggle but we're very fortunate. We have Sleep Room time where we can devote solely to writing of learning stories, which is wonderful because we just get in there and just go for it and we download the photos. Occasionally I might make notes but generally it's just there and stored in*

my head and once I've got that computer there and just go for it. But time is a factor and that's something we've learnt going out and visiting other centres with ELP.

That's one of those things that we talked about you know, reflecting on … well this is what we want to do but there are steps we need to take, so how are we going to do it. And working out time management strategies and just lots of things like that that would have come up when we'd been at perhaps a workshop and just thought, 'Well what is it that we do and why do we do that and how can we justify what we do' it was really thought provoking.

Samantha also comments about needing time and how that might happen in a busy but committed environment.

we've got a team of 16 teachers… we make the time… even our part-time staff have time each week to sit down… so that… once again comes down to making sure you've got the ratios to be able to do it…

Researcher I guess taking some of it home and using your lunchtime… and things like that too.

Samantha   We don't do that here… we try not to anyway… certainly if there is a story that I'm so excited about and I want to do it and I want to get it done… that night… so I can show it to the child next day so we can continue on the journey… I'll do it at home… but it's not… usually if it's that exciting someone in my team will support me and I can come and do it in work time… but we basically get two lots of non-contact… because we have a non-contact afternoon and we have the sleep room and we share that duty as well so that we have the computer to be able to write our stories with the children and one to use in the sleeproom.

The changes that were made in response to implementing a more responsive curriculum for children are evidenced by Samantha's earlier comments about accessibility of resources for children and ensuring the environment is welcoming. This is echoed by the following comments from Lana and Olivia.

I'm going back to the idea I was talking about a moment ago, about a disposition persisting with difficulty? If you privilege that notion, and you have routines- at nine o'clock you do this, at ten o'clock you do this, how can you possibly be authentically working with that as a principle? So, a long time ago now, set routines went. So we just like nice, natural rhythm to the day, picking up on the children's interests and strengths, and working from that credit base model, that's what drives us here (Lana)

and other just day-to-day changes too, to the routines … working out ways that would be more supportive for children, less interruptions in the day. We really reflected as a group on what it was we believed and how it was being carried out across the whole day. And so we might have really felt very strongly about children being given opportunities to persist with difficulty, but then we were interrupting them at different times of the day when they might have been persisting with difficulty and so there were just so many

little elements there that we had to really think through and look closely at. (Olivia)

or why we're doing the things we do and in recent times there've been changes in mat times. Where we would perhaps six months ago have a mat time at about eleven-thirty before lunchtime with the big group. But we now have the mat time but have it open for children to come and go as they are interested. So rather than just suggesting that a child sit there for twenty minutes or thirty minutes that's not actually interested in being there and disrupting the group, we have children there that really do want to participate and are involved, and the other children that want to come in for a shorter amount of time can (Olivia)

Nuttall (2003) outlines in her study of the role of the teacher in constructing curriculum the place of routines within an education and care full-day service and the tension that can exist between teachers' differing interpretations of 'teaching and caregiving' (p.178). Particularly, in the care of infants and toddlers routines can be seen as very important for not only the development of the child but also for the management of the centre and staffing. *Te Whāriki* integrates routines into the curriculum and suggests that they should be responsive 'to individual circumstances and needs' (p.47) Making decisions to change or do away with established routines can be considered a risk-taking exercise hence for the teachers at Pacific Coast to make the changes they did required them to be able to clearly articulate why and what they were doing. In earlier quotes from Lana and Olivia they talk about reflecting as they researched and how that resulted in them coming to a different understanding of their teaching and learning which resulted in changes. Olivia premises her comments here by stating that they needed to be able to talk to parents about what they were doing.

also communicating with parents and talking to them about what our philosophy … or why we're doing the things we do and in recent times there've been changes in mat times.

Paige also reiterates the importance of articulating their philosophy and why they operate in a certain way.

You might have an idea of what it is that you do, but you can't necessarily put that into words for people.
And I think that's probably been one of the biggest things, that's assisted us to really articulate what it is, what our philosophy is, our vision is, how we work together, and why that is such an important part of who we are, and how our centre works.

It is clearly evident from the data that as the teachers at Pacific Coast continued their involvement with ELP their actions impacted on and influenced more and more of their teaching practices and learning environment. The activity of exploring a research question meant the utilisation of new and old tools in new and different ways. The mediating of these tools resulted in changes to rules and routines, distribution of labour and the community which in turn had mediating effects on the tools - the relationships between all these components was mediated rather than direct.

Personalising learning after ELP

The interviews with the five teachers at Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre indicate a commitment to ongoing learning and a transference of the skills and values experienced and learnt through their time with the ELP to different contexts.

Three aspects can be identified; distributed leadership, community and teacher voice.

Distributed leadership

For the teachers at Pacific Coast, sharing tasks and sharing leadership has been strengthened and shaped during their involvement with ELP. For Lana there were some new understandings about leadership that impacted on the way they had been operating.

> *I think we came to understand what leadership is, that idea of resonance and resilience in a team... not a top down idea but the building of resilience and deepening of relationships with each other... valuing each other...*

Paige comments on the development that occurred and the realisation of the shared leadership that existed within the culture of the centre. She also talks about how empowering this is for their whole community, including children and families/whānau.

> *I guess at that stage of the centre's development and growth, we were all very much making decisions as a team, which had developed – 'cos that must have been four years ago, and previous to that we'd had more the hierarchy line of things.*

With the changes in staff we had, that kind of evened out and flattened it and we really, long before ELP started, made that change to shared leadership.
Not that we even really recognised it at the time, it's just something that naturally evolved from Lana, and the way she works naturally, and myself probably picking up on that, and it just sort of fit with me, as well.
So it just evolved, and this much later, four or five years later, we're suddenly seeing "Oh, we really do work in a shared leadership!"
I think probably the biggest thing is, like I said earlier, we were already going on the journey of shared leadership, but this has cemented it, made us realise how strong and empowering that is, for us and all of our children. And invariably for our parents, as well. The fact that we work in this way, it's really solidified that, and made us realise how strong that really is.

Samantha talks about being prepared to share skills and knowledge encourages leadership and empowers others.

I think what you find is that in most teams at least one person is ICT savvy and that person becomes a leader within their own community... within their own team and they share their knowledge..

Olivia sees the benefits of a culture of shared leadership as impacting on decision-making that includes everyone and provides support through the sharing of skills and expertise.

There's a real culture of shared leadership in the Centre, so nothing happens without there being a lot of discussion around it
I think that we already had a very strong culture of shared leadership, shared vision, you know the ... we've always worked ... for a long time, as long as I've been here there's always been that shared responsibility amongst the team for the running of the centre and things like that, everything we do we do together really. It's all a shared ... shared role, shared responsibility and we all know each other's strengths and interests are and we know what each other finds really tough so there's always that extra support there at those sorts of times.

Amber, as a relatively new teacher, has found the experience of sharing leadership and having no clear hierarchy to be inclusive and empowering.

I think the underlying basis of how the team works – there's no hierarchy system, so everybody is responsible for everything. There's no Head Teacher, or anyone who deals with the parents – we're all responsible for admin jobs – we change them every four or five months, so we're all getting experience, and I think that it's empowering, to give you that support to go on.

Lana draws parallels between sharing leadership and supporting one another as adults and their teaching and learning with children.

> *how we built competence amongst ourselves as colleagues and built that base of shared leadership because we think that that is a precursor to working with children in that way.*

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (2002) suggest that collaborative cultures with shared leadership encourage the exchange of ideas and problem-solving while allowing opportunities for teachers to use their skills, knowledge and expertise thus building leadership capacity. These characteristics appear to be well evidenced in this case study example. Harris (2002b) identifies empowering others to lead as a vital aspect of distributed leadership - the teachers at Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre attest to being empowered through shared leadership opportunities. Of the five teachers interviewed they have all taken on roles as facilitators for ELP and are working with other centres in their region. Lana recounts how she had initially taken the role as facilitator for another centre but quickly saw the opportunity for growing leadership among her team.

> *last year I was doing most of it but this year I said I'd like to spread it around our group because ELP talks so much about being leaders in the sense of resonant, resilient people and so I was trying to think of ways I could motivate my team as well and that just seemed to be a wonderful way of doing it and so that's how people got involved in becoming facilitators... So there's eight of us across the centres working with particular centres and that has a wonderful collegial overflow because the conversations that we have with each other are very interesting and stimulating and even though one person might be in charge of a centre... they all without exception ask for support and share the ideas and people give back.*

Paige demonstrates the attitude of empowering and building leadership capacity that was evident in the decision to encourage other teachers to become facilitators.

> *Well, initially Lana was doing it with Samantha's help, I think maybe the first year, or two, even, and then I guess she suddenly realised "well, there's no reason why I need to be doing all this", when she's got a team of teachers who could be doing it with support as well.*

Amber recalls how it was for her as a new teacher taking on the challenge of being a facilitator and the support that she received from her colleagues.

> *but this year we had the opportunity to be facilitators, and about five of us in the centre have taken on that role*

*Well, Lana got the contract for this area to do the ELP, and she offered
"Who wants to put their hand up?" and pretty much everybody put their
hand up – you know the way this team works, if one person does it, we all
do it!
So they gave me encouragement to do it, and I remember my first time Lana
came with me, just so I could suss out what I was doing, and it was like
"Oh, I can do this!"*

For Lana passing on the learning they had received from ELP to other centres has
been very important for herself as a learner.

*Being facilitators now and transferring some of those principles of
reflection, distributed leadership
that gives me great credibility when they know that you understand... some
of the satisfactions and some of the stresses and yet find ways of sharing...
just because something works in this setting... we're not particularly saying,
'Try it'... you know... giving people recipes... we're not recipe givers... we
talk about visions and possible pathways... I mean it's also giving people
the ideas and opportunities... sometimes people don't realise they can make
changes... they just do what they've always done... and so the whole idea of
being inspiring is really different.*

Samantha, too, values the notion of empowering teams and encouraging them to
choose their own goals and find the solutions that work for them through shared
leadership.

*and then we invite the teams to share what they've been doing so it's a real
shared learning community ...we don't want to be the 'be and end all of the
information, it's very important to us that we're seen as a community of
learners and sharers... that's what we're hoping to build up in the teams
themselves... is that if we're encouraging and supporting people to come
and share their things with us and feel supported to do that... that's the
same model we'd like in their own teams... so we're trying to reflect that in
different ways...*

Teachers teaching teachers

As with Tewa Tawa the concept of teachers teaching teachers has had a
significant influence on the teachers at Pacific Coast, not only in their own
learning journey but also as they continue to facilitate learning opportunities for
other teams. The literature around distributed leadership includes the importance
of teachers as leaders and that there is credibility when other teachers can share
their ideas and practical experiences (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2002b; Leithwood et
al 1999). These aspects are identified by the Pacific Coast teachers and the

following comment from Lana outlines the value of teachers being involved in action research and providing a practical and real- life perspective.

> *it's the whole idea too of teachers' practical experience impacting on research and so... even with academic views... it's not top down... it's very much an integrated community... like... communities in practice... that's certainly what ELP promotes (Lana)...*

Samantha comments on the strength of involving teachers to teach other teachers and the credibility that brings,

> *and what became evident very quickly was that teachers teaching teachers was very powerful because you got a very... you just had that shared understanding of what the barriers are and the constraints ... we don't pretend to be any different than anyone else because we're not... we just do what we do with what we've got... and that's what people can relate to because you're not taking away from anyone.*

Amber talks about her learning as a newcomer to the team at Pacific Coast when the other teachers had already been involved with ELP for at least a year.

> *But I mostly learned through the teachers here, and their experiences, and the openness and communication with – like, every day we were having conversations about stuff that's professional, and that's probably helped me the most.*

And then she comments on how she has found the experience of being a facilitator, particularly as a recently qualified teacher.

> *At the beginning, it was quite nerve-wracking, because you're going to support other teams, and for me it was "Do I know enough? Oh my goodness, I'm new, ra di rah", but it made me articulate what I know.*

It could also be argued that not only did the distributed leadership happen between the teachers, but the children began to influence the programme and have more of a 'voice'. Looking back at the comments made by Lana, Olivia and Samantha about changing routines to be more responsive to children's learning and making learning more visible through the incorporation of children's and parents/ whānau interests, there is clear indication of a shift in the balance of power. This shift in power considerably impacted on the operation of the centre and probably meant a certain amount of disruption to the teacher's perceptions of teaching and learning.

Ongoing distributed leadership since ELP

The teachers from Pacific Coast have not only chosen to be facilitators for ELP but have enthusiastically joined in other learning opportunities.

> *Olivia. Yes. Oh it's such a privilege to be offered that opportunity to go out to other centres and visit with people and talk to them about all aspects of working in the Early Childhood Centre with families with children. It's a great privilege. And it's just as much a learning opportunity for me, an experience for me as it might be for them.*

Lana outlines the many different experiences of ongoing learning and sharing with others that they have been involved in since first enrolling with ELP.

> *also just the amazing opportunities that Wendy and her team would offer us to step up to another level and start talking to groups as well and running workshops ourselves as time went on...*
> *but we wouldn't have thought probably of applying for Centre of Innovation without this wonderful baseline of support and mentoring we have had from the ELP.*
> *We were able to support the ELP Inspiration Days (Saturday seminars focussing on Kei Tua o te Pae)... we are able to offer our ideas about learning and teaching and planning. Wendy also is bringing in overseas visitors... so that's really exciting too... our network has widened a lot...so those kinds of things... being able to talk at conferences and hui (meeting or gathering) around the countryside... that's really been supported by Wendy with her vast, vast network of people that she knows...*
> *Yes, Wendy offers us opportunities and we're just trying to share those around too... and we're making our own opportunities, too, actually people are asking us to do things from other avenues like kindergarten associations around the country... we've been able to go and speak to several... and the Victoria University with their recent symposium... I suppose as you get a bit known... it just starts to snowball... it would never have happened without ELP... and ELP gave us an extra challenge that we'd never had before from any other group and that was to publish the research so that shifted into a different plane and we did that at the end of the year and that was great...*

Community

The teachers at Pacific Coast reported positive outcomes for children and their parents/whānau as a result of changes that were made through ELP. The making of learning more visible through the use of ICT and narrative assessment allowed more dialogue and feedback between teachers and parents/whānau. For Olivia the

positive response from children and families as they made their documentation and learning more visible and accessible was important in providing impetus when sometimes life seemed very busy.

> *Researcher. So there weren't too many moments when you thought, 'Oh I can't do this any more' or 'Let's give up'?*
> *Olivia.   No, the feedback that we were getting was just so positive and encouraging from families, from each other, from the children ... there was just so much response and it just really strengthened the relationships between the teachers and the families because they actually had something to read and get a feel for ... well we could express ourselves within the stories we were writing and the stories we were writing and the stories we were writing come from the inspiration and the involvement in ELP. also ... communicating with parents and talking to them about what our philosophy ... or why we're doing the things we do*

Paige refers to the interest children showed in their stories and this would be quickly transferred to parents/whānau.

> *children were very very interested in them, which I'm sure was a tool to enable the parents to, because they were seeing that the children were there. I know that we often, if you put a new story in a certain child's book, and you'd let them know, that was a way of letting the parent know as well, in a roundabout way, because they'd then share that with the parent.*

Samantha remarks on the importance of relationships with parents/whānau and the principle of family and community.

> *getting the parents… to understand what was happening in the centre , so a few times a year we run a workshop evening for parents… an interactive evening where we share the stories that we're writing for their children and 'cause each story will highlight different aspects of our practice that we would like to focus on… so it's highlighting those things like responsive relationships… intuitive teaching… and all those sorts of things are things that we like to point out to our families… because we like that to be shared learning within our own families too… some of our families really enjoy that support and some families who are first-time parents and are wanting to find the ways to help their children make discoveries and be researchers and some of the stories that we share help them to look at play differently… so we're hoping to share our knowledge with parents as well as with our colleagues and in doing that then they feel comfortable to be taking part in our programme and helping us to make changes within our centre… and so they really feel like they have a place in our centre and that they can contribute*

Teacher voice

Schon (1983) attributes improvement in teaching and learning to teacher's ability to be reflective, of which a major component is the articulation of practice and

philosophy. It seems from both these case studies that the articulation of practice developed through the involvement with ELP was significantly empowering and has been instrumental in the long-term sustainability of their ongoing learning. This ability to articulate what they do and why they do it appears to have given the teachers a 'voice' and a strength of professional character which has spilled over into all aspects of their professional lives.

Articulation of practice.

Articulation is a word that appears frequently throughout the interviews, three out of the five teachers at Pacific Coast used this word to describe the importance of being able to talk to people about what you do and why you do it.

> *Researcher: I'm picking up that one of the things that ELP has helped you most about is knowing what you do, why you do it, and articulating that.*
> *Oh yeah. Absolutely. I'm sure that the fact that we were initially involved in ELP and then in ELP as facilitators, it's so much helped us realise what it is that we do, and be able to articulate that as well. And certainly perhaps even more so when we were going out into centres and doing it ourselves, talking to other centres: "what about doing it **this** way", and saying "this is the way we do it", and explaining why we do it like that. (Paige)*

For Amber being able to articulate clearly her beliefs as a teacher and the things she has learned about shared leadership has helped her role as a facilitator.

> *Yes. It's really made me articulate what I know, and believe what I know, and be more passionate about what I know.*
> *That's where I've really been able to articulate ways of working in groups, and coming in more as a support person, not as a "this is the way you need to do it" person, but more "this is what will happen if you do it this way".*

Olivia values the ability to articulate practice highly. For her it is a part of her professional practice that she is pleased to have had developed so that she can advocate for children and families.

> *but in saying that our understanding just learning overall and being able to articulate what it is we do, what it is we want to do, and being confident to talk about it to other people and go out there and put ourselves up in front of a group and that sort of thing has built up over a long period of time*

I'd just look at it as an element of professional practice, ... I need to advocate for what we do to other colleagues, to children, to families, to anyone. And so, as much as it might not be something that I enjoy doing, I can do it ... hopefully without jumbling up words and I do love to do it. And I do love to articulate what we do and why we do it and get it out there.

Reflection

This skill appears to have been one that has undergone growth and development during ELP journey and now is an integral part of the mindset or psyche of these teachers. It is also an attitude they are endeavouring to instil in the teachers they are now mentoring. Mitchell and Cubey (2003) list critical reflection as a characteristic of effective professional development stating that, critical reflection in their examination of research, involved teachers in "investigating and challenging their own assumptions, and this is turn encouraged insights and shifts in thinking" *(p.88).* Paige talks of how important reflection has become to the team,

> *and I guess the work that we're doing with ELP now is just reinforcing that (the importance of reflection) and making us continually aware of what we're doing and reflect on those sorts of things as a group,*

while Lana emphasises the fact that reflection has to be ongoing and a part of daily practice.

> *But it's not something that you can just leave... it's something that you have to keep revisiting and reflecting on. (Lana).*

Samantha and Paige both see this as part of their role to assist other teachers to become reflective practitioners

> *but just as a support person just to bounce ideas off and make little... set challenges and ask questions for them to reflect on and I think the biggest thing that I need to remember all the time is that I'm not there to give the answers... I'm there to ask the questions that require them to reflect on their practice because if I give the answers they don't learn to become reflective practitioners and they won't carry on doing that when the two years is up or the one year... whatever it might be... so it's all about getting them to reflect on why they do things and how long they've done it and if it works and if they want to try something new and if they get that mindset then that's something that will continue hopefully so our teams that worked in the first few years are doing really great things and the cool thing is that some of those teachers are now running workshops...(Samantha)*

It's something I feel passionate about, too, to show teachers that there are other ways of doing things, you don't have to do it that way just because that's the way it's always been done.
And trying to get other teachers to be passionate and enthusiastic about their jobs. I guess that was one of the big pushes, too. We've got all this passion and enthusiasm that I've got here, and that we've got as a team, and wanting to share that, and get it out into the community of early childhood centres, too. (Paige)

Summary

The initial entrypoint for the teachers at Pacific Coast was mentoring and coaching. This had occurred through an established relationship with the director of ELP. The interview data also describes the sustaining aspects of mentoring and coaching throughout the project that became important to the participants.

The teachers at Pacific Coast obviously have a very close and strong relationship with ELP personnel and are now part of that structure themselves. They have taken on positions as mentors and coaches for other centres and this appears to be part of their teaching philosophy.

The learning to learn gateway has become a wide and well travelled path that should continue to remain open throughout their lives - lifelong learning is an integral component of these teachers' identities. Other interrelated gateways (e.g. assessment for learning, design and organisation) have been opened for Pacific Coast as they have engaged in action research and strengthened their critical reflection skills so that this, too, is a part of their daily lives and their identities as teachers. As the teachers at Pacific Coast have mediated their actions through the use of new technologies changes have occurred in their practice. Shared leadership began to play a part in these changes and resulted in further challenges and changes.

Learning has been personalised for these teachers and this has had an impact on their interactions with children and families/whānau and the learning of the wider early childhood community. The following table summarises the three phases of the journey towards personalising learning.

ENTRY POINT	OTHER GATEWAYS AND SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT	PERSONALISING LEARNING AFTER ELP

Mentoring & Coaching	Mentoring & Coaching
	  Facilitators
	  Readings
	  Research questions
	  Networking
	  Attending workshops
	  Ideas from other centres	

	New technologies	

	Design & Organisation	Community
		  Families/whānau
		  Teacher networks

	Assessment for Learning	Teacher Voice
		  Reflection
		  Articulation

		Distributed leadership (Distribution of power)
		  Teachers teaching
		  teachers

Table 2: A summary of the personalising learning pathway for teachers at Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre.

Chapter 6

CASE STUDY THREE: SEASIDE EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Overview

Seaside Early Learning Centre, established in 1988, is a full day service catering for children from six months to five years attached to a tertiary institution. This service has a total of twenty-two staff, eighteen qualified and four in-training. Seaside Early Learning Centre is open from 7.30am to 5pm and operates under two separate licenses. It includes four different centres on a single site catering for twenty-nine under two year olds and eighty-three over two year olds.

Four teachers were interviewed at Seaside and their years of employment at Seaside ranged from four - fourteen years. Seaside Early Learning Centre contract with ELP was for the years 2003 -2004. All the teachers interviewed had been working at Seaside when they enrolled with ELP- one teacher, Amber, had been in her first year of teaching when they began.

Entrypoints

One of Hargreaves (2004) rationale for including a particular gateway as a point of entry for personalising learning is that the gateway must be already in existence as a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning, hence the *gateways* are defined as; *curriculum, assessment for learning, learning to learn, student voice, mentoring and coaching, advice and guidance, design and organisation, new technologies and workforce reform.*

Assessment for Learning

Seaside Early Learning Centre entered their pathway of personalising learning through the gateway of assessment for learning. This was an aspect of teaching and learning that the team were involved in but they were experiencing some dissatisfaction with their programme planning and making links with outcomes for children. Tina recalls how she noticed an advertisement in the Education Gazette and decided to find out more because she thought it might fulfil their needs.

> *I read about it in the Gazette ... it sort of came at a time when the Centre was looking at ... we were sort of stuck with our programme planning, and it was an area that we were trying to develop because it didn't clearly show how we were planning for children's learning ... we knew it wasn't working well and we didn't know where to go. And of course, when we saw the Educational Leadership Project in the Gazette we thought, 'This could be something that would work for us!'*

In a subsequent comment, Tina actually talks about opening doors.

> *it was one of those things that we sort of knew it had to - like for our programme planning we knew that we were stuck, and we wanted to move on. It was just like opening doors.*

And the other staff interviewed recall a similar reason for being interested in professional development with ELP.

> *at that stage our planning was very much just our monthly planning meetings we brain-stormed and came up with a goal of Te Whāriki and what we were going to go from there, and it was a bit like a brainstorm on a piece of paper, and so we had a long way to go with our planning. One of our aims at the time was to improve our planning and assessment practices, so it was just a great chance to get the support in doing that (Amy)*

> *That's going back a long time! I think it was just something that was sent out to us that we were able to put forward our name that we would be interested in participating in, we thought. That was about where we were at. We were looking at our assessments and things like that at the time …(Mercedes)*

> *Good question! It was a little while ago. What is it this professional development thing (ELP)? and so we put forward a proposal and we were accepted. And we were wanting to look at our assessment practices and that was obviously going to help us on track so we began the journey. (Maya)*

The data shows the teachers at Seaside beginning to explore new ways of assessing for learning. The Learning Story framework was introduced to them as a possibility and they started trying out narrative assessment to highlight learning. Hatherly and Sands (2002) suggest that some of the differences of Learning Stories to other forms of assessment are: they capture important events, they make feelings and interpretations visible and they can show the reciprocal nature of learning by communicating the adult's learning as well as the child's learning. Carr (2001) in her development of the Learning Story framework strove to find a way of capturing the complexity of learning and the outcomes valued by the early childhood community showing the connections between the learner and their environment. The narrative assessment became a powerful tool for not only making learning more meaningful but the teachers were able to link their planning clearly to their assessment.

Amy talks about the way in which being more responsive to children because of the information they were gathering from Learning Stories allowed planning stories to evolve.

> *Yeah, I think it was probably. And we wanted to get away from teacher directed planning. So we wanted to make holistic and more … just going with the children's interests at the time. Emergent, that's the word I was looking for. The ELP helping us develop the planning stories, like kind of using learning stories as a base for doing our planning as well and also writing learning stories and planning stories a bit differently, I think.*

Mercedes recalls the value of being presented with different ideas and how that helped them find solutions that worked for their team.

> *but we were really open to suggestions. I mean we had no idea. I know a lot of the focus was our planning and none of us were happy with the way we were doing our planning. Each centre probably did it slightly differently but with a similar focus really, and it was something that we were looking at wanting to improve. So it (ELP) just provided the ideas and suggestions…, we were starting with the learning stories. Basically, that's where we focused to begin with, the learning stories but then how they impacted on the planning and I just remember the whole concept of planning stories … everything just fell into place and we thought, and I mean that took a little bit of refining as well.*
> *we've still got a big folder up there of our journey for that year, and how our planning looked at the beginning of the year to how it looked and changed and evolved to the end of the year.*

Research focus:assessments, we knew that we needed to do something with our learning stories ... well, developing our learning stories really and our portfolios and ... so that's where it was heading.

Maya comments on the process as it was before their involvement with ELP.

We changed our planning really. Initially we would have a question that we would look at, say out of Te Whāriki, or it might have been Belonging (Strand of Te Whāriki) and then we'd look at indicators and write them up on a piece of paper and then basically, if we saw it happening, we'd write it down. And that was our planning Not a lot was being transferred into learning stories from that either. It was quite disjointed. So we knew that we needed to make a change.

For Tina making the change to a narrative form of assessment was important to her. Learning Stories allowed learning to become more visible and show clear links to the curriculum while also impacting on planning and helping her feel more motivated about assessing children's learning.

Yeah, we got into the real narrative. And I guess too for me it's sort of, 'narrative' what's this word, but once you see it in motion, once you see it working, it's like, 'Oh, okay, that's what that means' Yes, and our planning it's more emergent ... what I really loved was the writing the learning stories from a narrative perspective ... because it made the learning more real because we could actually see it. We were articulating it, we could see it, the child could see it because you could feed it back to the child and talk about what learning's happening. It's a bit like owning Te Whāriki, saying, 'Our curriculum, Te Whāriki', which we never used to do before.
Once we got on ELP, and we started writing the learning stories, it just seemed so right it really really addressed clearly what learning goals are happening for the children. It made us re-look at our programme ... We knew it wasn't delivering what it was supposed to deliver. And it was like we just did it because you had to do it and there was no other way... and we didn't know how to get out of like this treadmill thing we were on. But there was no clear evaluation, it wasn't actually clear as to how the children learnt from it, what learning was happening for the children.
It didn't identify teachers' learning or how it had helped us to improve our teaching skills and ... there's none of that. And then you fold it up, stuck it in a book and that was the end of your planning for the month. And that happened every month and we'd just churn out this planning.

The opening of other gateways and sustained involvement

Just as with Tewa Tawa and Pacific Coast, the teachers at Seaside found the initial gateway of assessment for learning soon opened other gateways and that it was the opening of these gateways and some of the other resources and tools offered by ELP that kept them motivated and sustained their interest.

Mentoring and coaching

The mentoring and coaching from ELP facilitators through workshops and in-centre support enabled the teachers at Seaside to look at their planning and assessment. As the previous quotes have already demonstrated, Learning Stories were introduced as a possible form of assessment and as a result of the presentation of examples and sharing from other centres, the teachers from Seaside could se the benefit of trying Learning Stories. Tina comments on the value of seeing 'real' examples from other teachers and she reiterates her idea about ELP providing open doors for further learning.

Real stories and examples

> *You know there was always something was coming through from ELP that was like opening doors – it was like "yes we're on our way sort of thing'*
> *they also had some examples of learning stories from a narrative perspective from other centres that had already been on the ELP Project, and they were just brilliant for us to actually look at and actually see. And so that gave us some ideas.*

Maya and Amy both reinforce this.

> *It was just through discussions I think and talking with other centres, seeing different ways of what they did that we saw how Learning Stories could be written and used.(Maya)*

> *Probably just seeing the examples from other centres, and we really wanted to make our planning and assessment more real. Wendy Lee and a couple of other people spoke to us and showed us examples of*

> *what they were doing and what other centres were doing, so that gave us a great start. (Amy)*

Like the previous two Case Studies there were other elements of the mentoring and coaching that impacted on the teachers at Seaside. These included networking with other centres, in-centre visits from the facilitators and having a whole centre focus. The following quotes talk about the enjoyment of establishing relationships with teachers from other centres and seeing different teaching practices and physical environments. The mentoring and coaching widened their professional community – an example of the interconnection between the gateways.

Attending workshops and networking

> *we had some professional development days, and then we had the cluster group meetings with other centres as well. And then, I was actually a facilitator as well. So we had facilitators' meetings as well with Wendy Lee, so there was a facilitator from each centre. We'd meet every now and then as an extra for a day. We were having the meetings with other centres, you know we got an opportunity to go to other centres as well, so you always see different things and that's always really valuable as well. (Mercedes)*

> *we went to a couple of workshops, with the other centres that were doing ELP in the region, there were about three or four other centres in the area that were doing the ELP and we got to know quite a few of them quite well, which is really good and just hearing what they're doing at their centres differently, because everyone takes different aspects of it away. So it was really good to hear, because I think we had a presentation at the end of each year where we fed back on what we'd been doing and that was really cool. (Amy)*

> *It was actually really quite nice being a whole group of centres within the region, I think. So we could talk to other centres and have those centres set up as networks. (Maya)*

> *another thing I really liked about the ELP Project was there were six centres altogether on it, on the project, so you actually had other centres to network with … talk about … discuss and share … all those new experiences we were having together. And also having four centres of our own here, the staff could do that between themselves. It created a lot of discussion … lots and lots of discussion amongst the staff and that was the really great part because it made all this … all the staff came through with different ideas and different … so the learning was all different.*
> *they ran some workshops where we all attended. First we had a workshop with Wendy Lee and Ann Hatherly came along and they ran a workshop and*

we all went along and then we had other workshops at other centres it was brilliant. Visiting the other centres you could actually share that ... your planning on the wall and it created discussion and you'd pick up things about how they displayed the work and how they did some other linking and maybe how they shared the work too with the parents and whānau. (Tina)

In- centre visits from project facilitators

The teachers at Seaside found the in-centre visits from ELP facilitators to be very positive and helpful. As Maya points out this support was always encouraging and affirming.

I know when they would come and see us in the Centre we would get the feedback from that about different ideas and things that would be useful and nicely. It was never put, 'What are you doing! Goodness me!' It was never sort of spoken negatively of what we were already doing. It was always really positive and it was just building on what we had. It certainly wasn't saying, 'No, throw all that away and start here'. I think they were really aware that it is a journey that we go through.

The other teachers appreciated the feedback and discussions that were had when a facilitator came to visit. The ability to ask questions and talk about issues in their own context helped with their team focus.

They came and visited the centres individually. They came down several times and would spend one day in our Centre 1, which is the two bottom centres, and then spend a day with the others... and then we could bombard them with questions. Anything. Areas that we felt that we were just struggling with a wee bit and they would be here to support us with that. (Tina)

then Ann would come into the Centre as well and spend some time with us and see how we were going, what issues we were having. She always had lots of ideas as well. Yeah, it was really beneficial. (Mercedes)

And we had someone come and visit us in the Centre and help us along as well, it was Ann Hatherly. (Amy)

We were able to have visits from the facilitators, so that was really helpful. They would come in. They would look at where we were at as far as our programme and our assessment were and offer suggestions. (Maya)

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The fact that the whole teaching team was part of the professional development and that they all were focusing on a jointly decided goal was another powerful tool for motivation and sustainability. Tina has already talked about the discussions that were generated amongst all the staff as a result of attending workshops and in these next quotes the other teachers share their perceptions of having a whole team focus.

> *the whole team were in on it and we were all working towards the same goal and we all wanted to … we know what we were doing, we really wanted to improve on our planning. (Amy)*
>
> *Basically, that's where we focused to begin with (planning and assessment) but it was really empowering everyone being part of the whole process. (Mercedes)*
>
> *Yeah, we did have to have something that we wanted to look at as a team it was around our assessments,… we knew that we needed to do something with our learning stories (Maya)*
>
> *We needed to have the whole staff on board. We felt that if we were going to develop and move forward with our programme planning, we needed to have all staff on board. And that was the part that took the longest to sort out. It was our journey and we needed to ask the questions, you know, set the path and find the answers for ourselves. And in some ways, for some of the stuff that was quite frustrating, because it was like, 'Can't you just give us the recipe or answer?' and it was like, 'Well these are some ideas you could look at', but they weren't prescriptive and we had to decide what we would do. (Maya)*

Design and organisation

Through the gateway of design and organisation the teachers at Seaside began to make some changes to their learning and teaching environment. Some of these changes were in response to developing skills in new technologies and were a result of making learning more visible for themselves, children and parents/whānau. A structural design that occurred was the purchasing of perspex for the walls. This enabled the teachers to display photos and stories of children at the child's level but at the same time protect the documentation from infants and toddlers who were likely to try and pull things from the wall in their enthusiasm.

Technology (the taking of more photographs) interconnects with design (the display of photographs at the children's height), which began to impact on curriculum and child's voice (the children became able to revisit their learning). Maya recalls the enjoyment of the babies and toddlers at being able to see themselves in photos on the wall.

> *We've got perspex up,it was maybe an idea from another centre … it could have been through ELP. So the children can come right up to the walls – especially for little ones, 'cos I work with the babies, and they can see themselves. And with the before five, the older group, they don't really need the perspex as much 'cos the children don't pick the things off the walls. But just to be able to have the children view themselves and view their friends, it's just awesome with the perspex.*

Tina comments on the value of having the learning visible, not just for the children but for the teachers and parents/ whānau.

> *And our manager (a trained early childhood teacher) got this perspex to put on the wall and we were able to display photos and Learning Stories and the children could see themselves but it was protected form lots of little hands.*
> *The photographs bring it more alive for the children and the children actually revisit our planning all the time and our parents and whānau come and look at it all the time, we do as well and discuss things on it, and re-visit it quite often throughout the day with the children, and it may be on the wall for a long time.*

Amy recalls that getting the perspex on the wall was one of the first changes that were made.

> *I think the first thing we changed was starting to use more photos in our planning and displaying it on the wall, and we got perspex to put all our planning behind, so that we could be at the children's level.*

Some of the other physical changes that occurred through design and organisation were the storage of children's portfolios and the provision of the record of the day's events for parents to look at. The following comments from Mercedes, Maya and Amy describe these changes.

> *We changed where we kept the children's portfolios, we did daily sheets on activities and that and the learning that had happened each day for the children which were put up on the whiteboard for parents which was made into books for the children afterwards. I think we probably made changes along the way and it wasn't until we came to collate it at the end of the year we didn't realise how many we had actually made, which was really interesting. (Mercedes)*

> *and portfolios now go into the children's lockers. Initially they weren't sort of in there and they were maybe available to parents, but whether they*

actually even knew they were there to be used or to be taken home and looked at. It just is much more friendlier I guess, is a term. (Maya)

At the time, we didn't have the children's portfolios where they were easily accessible for the parents. We moved them into the lockers. That was another big change we made, which we found really helped the parents involvement, they started writing more family/whānau voices, and the children started looking at the portfolios more.
And the other major thing we probably changed was our daily noticeboard. We just used to have a whiteboard where we would write up daily what we're doing for the parents to look at. We've changed that so that now we do a daily printout on the computer, take photos and just write a little bit about the children's day and what they've learnt, and sort of once again, making it visual with the photos, the parents often look at that each day as well. (Amy)

Design and organisation also meant some reorganising and negotiating of time and rosters to allow teachers to have non-contact time or utilise sleep room supervision duty for documentation. The centre, during their involvement with ELP, found they had available to them some more building space. This went through a redesigning process and resulted in a workspace for staff computers for use with assessment and documentation. Tina notes the value of more non-contact time and having a special workspace to complete written work.

This year we were fortunate that our manager has been able to extend our child-free time. Now we have 3 hours a week which is really great- and you've got somewhere to come – we can use that teachers' room through there.

Mercedes and Maya both comment on how teachers have seen different ways of working develop and been instrumental in helping these come about.

We've all got our own computers (and) this facility in here to be able to come up and do documentations and reflections.
Well we've found ways. I know that we've got teacher release time in all the centres now, which is something that we've been working on over the years. That certainly didn't happen the first year. (Mercedes)

… and for us we use our Sleep Room time, with the infants, so we've got a day in the Sleep Room. So we use that as our planning and time in there. The other centres where there are older children and no sleep time the teachers use this area up in here, so it's an area away from the other staff. They've got everything here they need … printer downstairs. Our computer is hooked up to the printer downstairs, so that is fine. It all goes in the one place. (Maya)

Amy remarks that for her the changes in design and organisation have been positive and have not created extra work, in fact, they seem to have streamlined processes and tied things together more coherently.

> *We all have our child-free time anyway when we can write up assessment but with our planning it fits in with the work we're doing for the portfolio as well, it kind of ties in, so it doesn't seem to be extra work and ... pretty much at our planning meetings we're just going over what we've been doing and where we're going next, but it's not sitting down and thinking, 'This is what we're going to do', it's just such an on-going process that it ... I think it probably seems like it's easier.*

New technologies

Shifting to Learning Stories created opportunities and challenges, and one of the challenges was that new value was placed on photographs. Purchasing a digital camera also meant changes for the team and enabled a more instant record of learning, allowing them to insert images into their Learning Stories. Mercedes outlines how this change process occurred and the progress that has been made in the purchasing of enough ICT equipment and the upskilling of teachers.

> *So you were taking these photos, wait for the film to get full, then you get them developed, so the whole development of getting a digital camera was amazing and changed what we could do with photos. The value of it was just huge.... so we only had one, so we used to have to share that among the 4 centres, then we got two. So we got to share one digital camera between two centres but now all the centres have got their own digital camera. It's been a huge learning curve for a lot of the teachers, learning how to download the photos to use in learning stories and things like that.*

Maya talks here of the value of having a digital camera as opposed to a conventional one.

> *well we didn't have the digital cameras. They were something that we got as we were going through this ELP Project. We thought, 'Oh, digital cameras'. We didn't have the software and we didn't have the technology to do that sort of a thing. We had films with cameras, but again it was sort of limited. We had maybe a film or two films a term to take photos and get developed. So it was quite limited on what you could use them for and then you might have not even captured the moment. Digital cameras are great 'cos you can go back and you can see. Oh no! missed it and delete it and take it again straight away.*

Tina outlines some of the learning that happened for the teachers as they grappled with new technologies and how obtaining more equipment allowed for everyone to practise and acquire skills.

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putting your photographs from your laptop into the learning stories format and all that sort of thing. 'cos we were just starting to come to grips with doing learning stories, using IT for learning stories and computers and that. And so some of us were just struggling with taking photographs with the digital cameras! [laughs] And I think at that stage we only had two, like one between two centres and it just always seemed to be you couldn't get it when you needed it, sort of thing. And eventually we got the cameras for each centre and our IT skills grew.

Amy, too, found that new technology presented some challenges but the learning has been worthwhile.

At that time we didn't have the digital camera, we just had a normal camera so we had to wait for it to develop and all that process.
Yeah it took a while for everyone to get used to the digital cameras and downloading, it's still a bit of a process. There's always new things we're learning and everything. But yeah, it was really good. It was a good learning curve and it's amazing how far we've come with the ICT here.

Some of the other aspects of technology that have developed for the teachers are using laptops, scanners, making books with a binder and laminator, using a video camera and making DVDs. Maya's comments show the use of laminating to provide a book of learning for children and families to revisit.

… So we might take some photos, or use the photos that we've been taking anyway and just put up on the piece of paper you know, what the child was doing, what they were learning, who they were playing with maybe just as a really quick way that parents can see what their children have been up to through the day and put that up on the whiteboard. And that's like on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and then we put them into a clear file and once that's full we then laminate the pages and it goes down as a book for the children and later we bind it as a more permanent record.

Tina talks about finding ways within the constraints of the physical environment of continuing to make learning accessible and visual so that it can easily be revisited. She also goes on to talk about other ways they have started to use technology for recording and documenting learning in meaningful ways for children and families/whānau.

Quite often we're looking for room to extend, so we've had to go to project books now, so part of it's sitting in a project book and we've got the next stage sort of up on the wall so we've got some room to display the planning for the children because they all come back and revisit it – they all have their own stories to tell about it and as the planning evolves and the children learn from it they can see where it started, what happened here and where it's going to and quite often they're the ones saying to us lets go and do whatever and we're following their lead all the time.

> *Using photographs and we also use the laptops as well, so we can show the parents and whānau special events, and things that their children have been involed in.*
> *And we took, I suppose, twenty five of our families across for a trip to (a local geographical feature) with all the children and we did a DVD for each child so they could have it in their portfolio to keep as a momento of the trip as well.*

Mercedes comments on how much ICT equipment they now have and the possibilities it opens up for learning and teaching,

> *I mean we've got so much stuff. We've got scanners, we've got a laptop, and we're just in the process of getting a laptop so that each centre will have a laptop to use with the children as well.*
> *Yeah, and a video camera now as well, so it just set the ball rolling. I mean obviously you have all these ideas when you can see the potential of it.*

And Tina remarks on the way the use of ICT, especially, digital photos, has impacted on their planning.

> *It actually changed our environment in the way that we presented our programme. Like, it was more visual?*
> *The portfolios are more visual, too, they've got more photographs in.*

Child's voice

Another gateway that opened for the teachers at Seaside and continued to motivate them through their journey was the child's voice. In the case of the teachers interviewed at Seaside Early Learning Centre they all taught in the centres catering for infants and toddlers therefore the child's voice is linked closely with parent/whānau voice as it is more difficult to capture the 'voice' of a baby or toddler. For the infant and toddler programme listening to the Child's voice interconnects immediately with the wider community of families/whānau. As the teachers at Seaside made their planning and assessing more visible and accessible this allowed for children and their families to be included in the process. The positive feedback and involvement from children and families provided motivation and affirmation for the teachers. The four teachers interviewed at Seaside all commented on the positive impact their involvement with ELP has had on families and how it has been a strong motivator for them as teachers.

I also think it's because the children have been involved in their learning, and they can actually see it – they're displayed on the walls. It's their interest, and it's something they're really passionate about.
They know the teachers have documented it and they can see it and it's their special book and they can read it anytime. Tina
Actually when we did our programme before – we didn't get any feedback like that, but now we're getting parents writing about children's learning, telling us what's happening at home, and that relationship between us, the parents, the whānau and the children is really strong –even those parents who are a bit shy. (Tina)

I think they've been really positive. Just with getting the parents more involved, and making everything more visual and more interesting for them to look at. 'Cos they love pictures and we've definitely had more positive feedback and I think just growing and developing their understanding of what we're doing as well and the learning that's involved and everything. And they definitely take their portfolios home a lot more and contribute to them a lot more. (Amy)

Well it has to have had a positive impact on them, because that's what the focus of that assessment was really trying to get those families on board. That was just another little avenue we're following and getting the whānau voices and things like that into the portfolio. (Mercedes)
Researcher. And did you ever feel like being with the ELP was too hard and you wanted to give up?
Mercedes. No, because you could just see the value of it all and it was exciting and it was … you could just see the value of it in the portfolios and the parents' involvement and things like that, so … no.

We pop in a whānau voice form and we get whānau voices back from parents and quite often in the learning stories someone might write, 'Has this been happening at home?' or 'Maybe so-and-so has a pram at home', if they're really interested in the pram or something and quite often you'll get some, even verbal feedback … 'Oh yeah, she's just got a pram and she loves her big sister's … bike or …' whatever. So we've got that sort of relationship going and that can be from the learning stories as well. (Maya)

Personalising learning after ELP

For the teachers at Seaside Early Learning Centre being involved in ELP encouraged them to embark on a personalising learning journey. This journey has provided opportunities to construct pathways that were tailored to the individual, whilst also taking account of the group goal. The recognition of individual skills and expertise and the valuing of individual contributions appears to have

strengthened the learning of the teachers and had some long-lasting effects on their practice.

Distributed Leadership

The emphasis of ELP on shared leadership and centres becoming 'leader centres' encouraged the teachers from the Seaside Early Learning Centre to use their expertise and knowledge and to grow a culture of support. The concept of teachers teaching teachers became evident as the power and tasks were distributed across the staff.

Teachers teaching teachers

Mercedes, who was one of the centre facilitators (Seaside Early Learning had two centre facilitators for the four centres), talks of her initial fear of taking on the role.

> *I was scared of that leadership role I suppose (at the beginning) but it was just great. But I'm really pleased I did it.*

She then goes on to comment about ELP project facilitators and the way they encouraged people to share ideas, positively affirmed them and modelled a culture of sharing leadership.

> *but it was also attaching a bit of leadership skills and having that shared leadership focus so that people did*
> *It was quite empowering for people to be able to share, it was a collective thing, and that's what really the main focus was, is that shared leadership. Empowering people to participate and have their say.*

Maya and Amy both recall how staff willingly shared their skills when the team were beginning to explore the uses of ICT.

> *Some of us are more technological-minded than others and help each other out. (Maya)*

> *some people went on courses for ICT, and then came back and fed back to the rest of us and helped us along. So we had a few people who were experts in it and they helped everyone else. (Amy)*

For Tina having a teacher from another centre come and help them with the ICT was very valuable. The fact that the teacher who shared her skills had also been involved with ELP further attests to this culture of distributed leadership.

> *We had an IT professional development evening set up for us as well. Samantha from Pacific Coast Childcare came and ran an evening for us which is really great.*

Tina's following comment shows how the support from other staff empowered teachers to take risks and begin to use the computer for their documentation.

> *Some of the staff wouldn't go and use the computer at all, they still handwrote things for awhile until they got the confidence to actually come in and work alongside another staff member some them have been really good in helping at helping them.*

She goes on to talk about engendering a culture of distributed leadership and empowering the other teachers by including them in decisions and valuing their input. Tina also learns from the other staff and appreciates what they offer her in terms of mentoring.

> *And I like to listen to others too so they mentor me too if they question your practices it makes you keep you on your toes, too, then you don't get stuck, and you think about things. But at the same time I'm also aware not to overpower the others with the information I've got. It's that "stepping back", letting the others take a lead as well.*
> *I really like to nurture my staff that way even tho' I'm the Head teacher in my centre and they always say to me "Tina, you're Head Teacher, you've got to do that", but I say " Yes but I can't do that without your help" so I do it in that way so that it empowers them and I quite often say to them if there is anything that needs to be presented by the centre I'll say to them I really need you help with this would you and we'll sit down and discuss it, and say "How can we do it as a team?", rather than it being all about me, sort of thing.*
> *That's it –it's that sharing, because I think you have to nurture and bring all your staff with you as well and the staff have done really well this year.*

Maya goes onto comment how she is now modelling this mentoring with the students she has at the centre doing teaching practice.

> *I mean I see it with myself for example with Hannah, yeah and I see a lot of myself in her as well, when I started. So I certainly wouldn't come in and put the foot down and say, 'Hey, what are you doing?' -It's not about that, it's not about squashing someone's enthusiasm or anything like that. So yeah we probably do take some role modelling from that approach.*
> *Sometimes I think probably others see me more of a leader than I do. . I had a phone call from one of the other teachers the other night, 'Can you help me with this assignment?' and it was like, 'Yeah, sure.'*

Sometimes I probably feel a little bit unsure about things, like I've still got confidence things to work on for that, but in saying that, I can step in and take that role, but I probably have to keep reminding myself that I can do it.

Amy comments here about the way in which although there were leadership roles for some specific things everyone had the opportunity to share their skills and felt included and empowered.

I s'pose the Head teachers did drive it in each centre, but it was really a team thing. We all had different things that we were good at that we could bring to it.

The following comment provides evidence for the way in which the team trust one another professionally and value other's opinions and how having the whole team involved with ELP has nurtured this aspect of sharing and trust.

I think in this support too, if we're a bit stuck on something, like an assessment or a learning story, we'll say, 'Hey can you have a read of this and just point me in the right direction? It's certainly … we're quite open to helping each other out and it's not taken as a criticism and it's that support and it's like, 'Maybe you could try it this way or you could try it that way', and probably those skills have come through from doing that, and doing it as a group … like you say that whole team are all I guess on the same page with each other. (Maya)

Ongoing distributed leadership after ELP

The development of the disposition for learning has meant that the teachers at Seaside Early Learning Centre have had the confidence to involve themselves in further learning opportunities and been prepared to consider other possibilities – some of which have appeared daunting to begin with.

Maya talks about the leadership possibilities that have opened up for her since being involved with the ELP and the confidence she has gained.

Yeah, and then we looked at this research of baby sign language, and that's just taken us all over the world basically. It's taken us to Korea anyway. So we presented over there. But yeah, I guess it gave us the skills to do something as far as leadership was concerned.

Amy reiterates about the opportunities that they have had the confidence to avail themselves of subsequent to ELP contract

the infant centre went on to do research and baby sign language research, which Mercedes and Maya led, so that kind of followed on from it. I don't think we would have done that if it hadn't been for the ELP Project. It kind of encouraged us to look further and we've been presenting the Baby Sign research which has been scary but really good.

Teacher voice

Just like the teachers at the other two centres in this study, the teachers at Seaside Early Learning Centre found their involvement with ELP increased their ability to articulate their practice and be reflective. Tina remarks that as their learning and the learning of the children became more visible it became easier to talk about what was happening for children.

Articulation of practice.

> *And it made the learning more real for us as well, because we could actually see it. We were articulating it, we could see it, the child could see it because you could feed it back to the child and talk about what learning's happening.*

Maya comments on how articulating to the parents about the learning that was occurring for their child made her think about explaining her practice and linking it to theory.

> *I'm just trying to think how to word it and to think about what you see happening now and being able to put it into theory I guess for then the parents to see it and understand.*

Reflection

Both Tina and Mercedes emphasis the importance of reflective practice and what it means for them as teachers and that ELP has enhanced their skills in this area.

> *There was so much reflective practice happening and it's such a good habit to get into, that I think that just stays with you all the time.*
> *You don't just sit back and do nothing, that you're constantly looking at your practice and what else can you do to better it. (Mercedes)*
>
> *And the other thing that came out that I really like, is it's all about a reflective practice? You know, being a reflective practitioner can lead to a lot of teacher reflection. And it's just great. I constantly look back on that,*

and even now, I go back and revisit that, and read some of the teacher reflections I've done. It sort of affirms what I'm doing and makes me relook at how far my learning has happened from when I first started on the ELP and before that.
We were doing a teacher reflection, but not the way we're doing it now. Before, it was like tick box thing, we were doing, but now we're actually looking, really looking at our teaching practices.
And it's not just about Learning stories, it's about our practices in the Centre, work with parents/ whānau, how we work with other teachers in the centre, working with the children, obviously, but all those other things as well
it's looking at how effectively we're doing it, where do we need to improve. (Tina)

Community

For the other two centres, the powerful role of community was to do with the connections with families/whānau and the professional networks with other centres and the teachers. These features were important for Seaside as well. An additional key aspect of community for Seaside (a large centre) was bringing the teaching team together for a common purpose. The requirement of ELP for all the team to be involved with the professional development did mean that to ensure approximately twenty teachers agreed to take part some discussion and negotiation to get them all on board was necessary. One of Tina's opening comments talks about this.

So then we had to sell it to the staff, and that was the hardest part ... selling it to the staff because the staff ... as you know with childcare, we've always got so much work to do and there's paperwork everywhere and everyone's got heaps of paperwork to do. But ... managed to convince the staff that this could be something that could be really supportive for us in developing our programme planning, not only our programme, but also our own personal skills as well, as teachers, and to support us in that area as well. So we got on board and we were accepted.

Whether or not any of these teachers had shown an initial reluctance to be involved with further learning was not explored during the interviews but there is clear demonstration of a disposition for learning and commitment to ongoing learning from the following comments.

Researcher: If you think about your teaching practice two years ago, and where you've come to now, has there been quite a shift? And has ELP impacted on it, or –
There's been a big shift. There's been a really big shift. And I have to say ELP did impact on it. Very much so.

Not so much shifting: it opened doors. It opened doors to possibilities. And then I started questioning; "what if I did this,what if I tried this?" Maybe I'll talk to somebody else, and it just keeps opening doors all of the time. I think you have to want to change. That's the big thing. And when ELP came along, we wanted that change and it opened that door for us. (Tina)

that research was as a direct result of doing the Educational Leadership Project., I don't think the seed would have been sown in our minds if it hadn't have been for that.
When we were writing up the paper last year, I certainly thought, 'Goodness, what are we doing this for? How did we get into this?' But it's really exciting. It's just really exciting and I think you grow as a person and as a teacher. (Mercedes)

Maya: I guess because you're striving to always improve. Yeah and it just felt like, 'Oooh boom', okay that's it, done. And I don't think it should be like that, you're always learning,

Amy, who was a beginning teacher when the teachers from Seaside Early learning Centre began their contract with ELP, talks about the impact on her learning that the professional development had.

but I've just learnt so much from it that I think, yeah, it definitely would have impacted … who knows whether my teaching would be any different if we hadn't done it, but I'm pretty sure we wouldn't be where we are in our planning, or it would have taken us longer to get to where we are if it hadn't been for the ELP Project and that support and networking with other centres and everything. I suppose it's good to have something that you're working towards and something to focus on so you're always … you're always learning anyway.

Summary

The case study of Seaside Early Learning Centre provided further evidence to support Hargreaves (2004a) thesis that personalising learning requires gateways for entry and that these gateways need to lead into a fundamental aspect of learning and teaching. As the data has been analysed for this case study it is possible to see whether or not the initial entrypoint has continued to impact on the teachers' practice. The teachers at Seaside entered through the gateway of assessment for learning. It is clear from the teachers' stories that this has continued to provide impetus for reflection, articulation and strengthening relationships with their community. They have found through assessment for learning that not only are they enhancing outcomes for children but their own learning is benefiting. Tina's comment demonstrates how assessment for learning has impacted on their teaching lives.

We're constantly debating, and talking about children's learning, and those different lenses that you look through

Through their involvement in the professional development offered by ELP other gateways also opened and provided motivation and continued interest as well as opportunities for ongoing learning. These gateways included new technologies, mentoring and coaching, design and organisation. During their involvement with ELP the teachers were exposed to new tools which they mediated and fashioned to make them meaningful for their context and they also mediated tools that already existed in their practices to make changes. The mediation of these tools and joint actions of the teachers resulted in changes and modifications to other components of their working environment such as rules and routines, community and distributed leadership.

The ongoing sustainability of personalising learning and the shifts in practice that have continued to be demonstrated well past the conclusion of the professional development involvement from this case study include a new understanding of distributed leadership, reflective practice, teacher voice and learning to learn. The following table summarises the three phases of the journey towards personalising learning.

ENTRY POINT	OTHER GATEWAYS AND SUSTAINED INVOLVEMENT	PERSONALISING LEARNING AFTER ELP
Assessment for Learning	Mentoring & Coaching Real stories & examples Attending workshops & networking In-centre visits Whole team focus	
	New technologies	
	Design & Organisation	Community Involvement of whole team
	Child's voice	Teacher Voice Reflection Articulation
		Distributed leadership (Distribution of power) Teachers teaching teachers

Table 3: Summary of the personalising learning pathway of the teachers at the Seaside Early Learning Centre

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

This thesis asked the following question: "What is effective leadership for pedagogical change?" The literature indicated that professional development for pedagogical change will include distributed leadership, and that sustained dispositions towards pedagogical change can be described as 'personalised' or 'personalising' learning. This thesis has been interested in testing the hypothesis of Hargreaves (2004a) that personalising learning can occur through a series of interconnected gateways which are fundamental aspects of teaching and learning. The gateways meeting this criteria are; *curriculum, assessment for learning, learning to learn, student voice, mentoring and coaching, advice and guidance, new technologies, design and organisation and workforce reform.* The documented case studies in this research study have provided a specific context in which to contain this hypothesis – a programme of early childhood education professional development in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The table at the end of each case study illustrates the pathway of personalising learning for the three early childhood centres involved in the research and provides some evidence of support for the notion of gateways. Each phase is repeated here to compare the journey for the three centres.

Gateways as entrypoints

Tewa Tawa Kindergarten	Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre	Seaside Early Learning Centre
Assessment for Learning	Mentoring & Coaching	Assessment for Learning

Table 4: Summary of entrypoints for the three case study centres.

Each centre found entry to personalised learning through a gateway that was already a part of their daily teaching and learning practices. For Tewa Tawa Kindergarten and Seaside Early Learning Centre the gateway of assessment for learning was a very necessary part of teaching and learning but their dissatisfaction with their processes led them to look for other opportunities. It may have been, also, that with the publication of the curriculum, *Te Whāriki* as teachers began to explore this document and endeavour to understand the implications for learning and teaching, dissonance was created. The practices that had been in place prior to *Te Whāriki* and were continuing as teachers began to implement the curriculum may have seemed to no longer meet the principles and theoretical underpinnings of *Te Whāriki* There is some evidence of this in the data in that as assessment for learning options were explored a greater understanding and a deepening knowledge of the curriculum occurred; teachers perhaps began to see new ways to meet the curriculum principles in their practice.

The gateway of mentoring and coaching that the teachers from Pacific Coast used for their entry to personalising learning could be seen as a gateway that may not always be so readily available for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. My experience suggests that nationally this might be an unusual gateway; it developed because of a unique set of circumstances that linked ELP to Pacific Coast. As has been outlined earlier, although opportunities do exist for centres to engage in professional development, these are not necessarily readily accessible. Neither does the coming and going of rostered staff, on a daily basis, in a centre, lend itself to the building of strong relationships for mentoring and coaching as there is little opportunity for professional discussions. The provision of professional development for *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Ministry of Education, 2005a*)* which is being delivered throughout the country may allow the establishing of relationships between teachers and professional development providers thus strengthening mentoring and coaching as a entry point for many centres.

Implications for gateways as entrypoints

In identifying gateways as entrypoints for personalising learning for teachers in early childhood education in Aotearoa/NewZealand there are some implications. It appears from these case studies that the nine gateways identified by Hargreaves (2004a) are transferable to this context, however it may be that some of the gateways are not so evident or form fundamental aspects of teaching and learning for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This small study highlighted a number of the nine gateways and within the three case studies similar gateways were identified in each case, such as: assessment for learning, new technologies, learning to learn, design and organisation, child's voice and mentoring and coaching.

There are some gateways that do not feature at all – workforce reform, advice and guidance and it might be interesting to do some further exploration to ascertain if these are relevant gateways for entry to personalising learning in this context.

The strong connection between assessment for learning and curriculum could provide a common and much entered gateway for primary teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand with the release of a new draft curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006c). As teachers begin to explore and engage with this document and the presentation, in it, of new ideas, such as key competencies, dissonance may be created that prompts them to look for learning opportunities. It may be worthwhile for some thought to be given as to the nature of the provision of professional development accompanying this document.

The gateway of mentoring and coaching features as a component of the professional development provision and it was a gateway that became highly valued by the teachers. There were many aspects of this gateway that impacted significantly on the teachers' personalising learning pathway and continued learning. For professional development to be successful, mentoring and coaching must be regarded as an integral component of the provision. Harris & Muijs (2005) ascertain that the establishing and building of trusting relationships is very important for critical friendships and mentoring and can only be done over time.

The study by Gould (1998) reinforces the importance of collaboration and her findings support the use of cluster groups for professional development programmes. Networking and collaboration offers greater opportunities for mentoring and coaching relationships for participants. From the three centres involved in this study six of the eleven teachers interviewed talked about the value of having ELP contract last for two years and that the whole team needed to be involved. This feature, too, is reiterated by Gould's (1998) findings in that her participants all felt that sustained changes were better supported by long-term involvement in a programme. Long-term involvement (ascertaining a definition of 'long-term' has its own dilemmas) supports mentoring relationships, provides time for reflection and recognises that change is a process. This data from this case study indicated the value that teachers found in having time to reflect and discuss as they implemented changes.

Those that are responsible for deciding the direction and provision of professional development for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand need to be mindful of the importance of mentoring and coaching and how to best ensure that opportunities for teachers to develop strong relationships are maximised

Other gateways and sustained involvement

Tewa Tawa Kindergarten	Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre	Seaside Early Learning Centre

Mentoring & Coaching
  Facilitators
  Readings
  Research questions
  Networking
Real stories and examples
	Mentoring & Coaching
	  Facilitators
	  Readings
	  Research questions
	  Networking
	  Attending workshops
	  Ideas from other centres
		Mentoring & Coaching
		  Real stories & examples
		  Attending workshops & networking
		  In-centre visits
		  Whole team focus

Design & Organisation	New technologies	Design & Organisation
Technology	Design & Organisation	Child's voice
Curriculum	Assessment for Learning	New technologies
Child's voice		
Community Families/whānau		

Table 5: A summary of other gateways and sustained involvement.

The interconnectedness of the gateways, as suggested by Hargreaves (2004a), does allow for other gateways to be opened after the initial gateway provides the entrypoint. For the three centres in this study other gateways opened and became important for sustaining their engagement in the professional development and for tackling some of the dissonances and challenges that followed the entrypoint gateway. The relationships between the gateways allowed for the mediation of the various components and also provided a variety of tools for achieving their goals. Some tensions were apparent as other gateways were explored but there is little evidence of teachers being unable to resolve these tensions or if they were not resolved it had not appeared to hindered their involvement or being able to meet their goals.

Implications for other gateways and sustained involvement

For teachers to stay motivated with their learning after the initial few months of professional development there needs to be a variety of tools and resources available to them as they explore new ways of doing things. They need to feel valued for their contributions and have the opportunities to share their skills and expertise. It is evident from the data that the teachers in this study found the other gateways and the tools that ELP provided as they explored other gateways was important for their ongoing motivation.

For teachers entering a pathway of learning there needs to be acknowledgement that other gateways will be explored and this may create some tensions and challenges. Some mindfulness needs to be taken of the resources and tools that the teachers in this study found useful and meaningful for their ongoing learning.

Personalising learning after ELP

Tewa Tawa Kindergarten	Pacific Coast Early Childhood Centre	Seaside Early Learning Centre

Community
  Families/whānau
  Teacher networks
	Community
	  Families/whānau
	  Teacher networks
		Community
		  Involvement of whole
		  team

Teacher Voice
  Reflection
  Articulation
	Teacher Voice
	  Reflection
	  Articulation
		Teacher Voice
		  Reflection
		  Articulation

Distributed leadership
(Distribution of power)
  Teachers teaching
  teachers
	Distributed leadership
	(Distribution of power)
	  Teachers teaching teachers
		Distributed leadership
		(Distribution of power)
		  Teachers teaching
		  teachers

Table 6: A summary of the personalising learning pathways after ELP

Distributed leadership

One of the major components of this thesis has been the exploration of the concept of distributed leadership and how professional development programmes might encourage this kind of leadership. The notion of distributed leadership is also linked to assisting and effecting change, building capacity and providing greater agency for teachers (Bennett et al, 2003; Harris 2002b). This study has provided clear evidence for the three early childhood centres involved that distributed leadership has become a custom and practice of their learning and teaching environments and will be a key factor in sustaining their on-going learning after ELP. Distributed leadership is a strong philosophical underpinning of ELP which is modelled by ELP personnel and through this modelling it has been embraced by the teachers in the three centres.

Some of the positive features of distributed leadership that were highlighted by the teachers include: sharing of responsibilities to lighten the load, being valued for skills and expertise, shifting the power to give children, families/whānau a stronger voice, collaboration and shared decision-making, increased agency and empowerment for teachers (teachers teaching teachers), opportunities to be professionally and personally 'stretched' (such as presenting at workshops or writing for academic publications and doing further research).

Perhaps it is remarkable, or not, that all three centres had a number of their teachers, or the centre, as a whole, involved in ongoing research, facilitating for other centres, being asked to run workshops, doing further study, presenting at conferences both nationally and internationally, writing research reports and sharing their skills and expertise willingly with the wider early childhood community. The unremarkable idea might stem from the fact that a prerequisite to being an ELP project facilitator is that you need to have been through the programme yourself. As mentioned an earlier discussion, the facilitators are all teachers so this clear modelling of shared leadership and teachers teaching teachers could be expected to, in turn, be modelled by the participants. From this is appears the ELP is achieving its intention of distributed leadership.

It cannot be refuted from the evidence in this study, from this particular cohort of teachers, that distributed leadership has been a significant legacy from their involvement in ELP.

Implications for distributed leadership as a feature of personalising learning after ELP

There is support from both the literature and the finding from this study that distributed leadership is a significant factor in empowering teachers and affording them opportunities for ongoing learning and leadership development. Some attention needs to be paid therefore as to how distributed leadership and its characteristics may be fostered and encouraged in early childhood services and professional development programmes. *Pathways to the future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002) has a strategy, under the goal of improving quality of early childhood education, entitled 'promote the effective delivery of *Te Whāriki* (p.15) A component of this strategy is to "provide leadership development programmes to strengthen leadership in early childhood services" (p.15). The plan is into the fifth year of its ten year strategy so perhaps now it is time to look closely at the best type of leadership programmes for early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and ensure distributed leadership is a well established component of the programme.

Distributed leadership is about growing capacity, and this aspect could be a double-edged sword for the sector. On the one hand it is important to grow leadership capacity, particularly in the light of the changes facing the sector, yet on the other hand it is important to retain motivated, reflective teachers within centres. However if distributed leadership becomes custom and practice (a way of working and being) within early childhood centres then although some teachers may leave their centres to take up further leadership positions in other institutions they should leave behind teachers who continue to model distributed leadership and grow the capacity of new and beginning teachers to the centre.

Teacher voice

The study indicates that teacher voice (including articulation and reflection) were part of the ongoing and personalising learning that was evident post ELP involvement. The willingness of the teachers to be interviewed and talk enthusiastically and confidently about their practice and their learning journey indicated a sense of knowing who they were as teachers and the importance of their profession. In analysing the data it has become evident that this teacher voice was something that developed over the course of the professional development contract and was a result of all the activities of the programme – the gateways and tools that have been identified in the case study analysis. The culmination of action research, gathering data, reflecting, discussing, presenting to peers, networking and many other aspects has enabled these teachers to be confident in themselves as professionals. It also seems to have changed and/or consolidated their identity as teachers and this change and/or consolidation has been profound and deep.

Implications for teacher voice as a feature of personalising learning after ELP

This thesis has had change as a theme and has been interested in what might be a catalyst for change, particularly in relationship to teachers' practice. The notion that effective leadership can provide a catalyst for change and that professional

development is a component of this catalyst has found some support through this case study. Fullan (2001) suggests that "educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it's as simple and as complex as that" (p.115). This study has highlighted some of the simplicity and complexity of educational change. It has evidenced change through teachers' actions and reflective thought and that a catalyst for these changes has been through a professional development programme based on distributed leadership and a 'culture of success' (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Concluding comments

There were four major findings from this thesis.

(i) The Hargreaves 'Gateways' in action in these contexts suggested unique definitions for these early childhood centres. The following features were important for the participants in this study:

- Assessment for learning
  - Learning Stories, shifting to a narrative mode of assessment
- New technologies
  - ICT to make the learning and teaching visible to families/whānau and children.
- Design and organisation
  - a range of unique restructuring for an early learning environment that includes team teaching and, for education and care centres, has not traditionally provided time for reflection.
- Mentoring and coaching
  - relationships were central – with project facilitators and the others in the teaching team. Unique features included the readings, real stories, examples and ideas from other centres. The teachers' own research questions were also pivotal.
- Child's voice. This project divided this gateway into *Child's voice* and *Teacher voice.* The first of these was a mindset to 'notice, recognise,

respond, record and revisit' the children's interests and involvement. Teacher voice was about teachers articulating their practice.

- Community. This was not a gateway in the Hargreaves framework. It appears in Activity Theory and it was important here – the broadening of communities of learners to include the centre team, families/ whānau, and teachers in the wider community

- Distributed leadership. This, also, was not a gateway in the Hargreaves framework. It appears in Activity Theory as 'distribution of labour' (or distribution of power). It was a key feature here for sustaining the learning after ELP and included teachers teaching teachers.

(ii) Professional development is a complex interweaving of voices and intentions. One gateway may invite teachers to participate, but the secondary gateways or features of a mediating network were necessary for sustained involvement and motivation. The interconnections of the gateways allowed the teachers to find other gateways that provided tools and resources for achieving their goals. Entrypoints and secondary gateways were different for different centres. It was the dissonance that needed to be resolved for teachers that provided an impetus to find an entrypoint into the professional development programme. Once the programme was entered and other gateways opened, further dissonances and challenges occurred. As Gould (1998) suggests it is those teachers that can view an aspect of their practice as problematic that were more successful in making changes – the recognition or awareness of dissonance or tensions and a willingness to resolve these is important in securing change in practice for teachers.

(iii) Personalising learning – sustained learning dispositions for the teachers after the two year professional development programme - depended for all of the centres on three features. These were distributed leadership, community relationships, and teacher voice.

(iv) The notion of 'personalising' learning or 'personalised' learning, borrowed from England, was useful for this study. However, the everyday use of this word implies that professional development is an individual matter. The data here

illustrated that professional development is both a community and an individual undertaking. The cultural tools and gateways illustrate that it is about 'living in the middle' (Wertsch, 1998, p.65), in the reciprocal relationships between the individual and the community.

The case study of ELP, involving three early childhood centres who had completed a contract with ELP, has provided evidence of teachers making profound shifts in practice and being offered a variety of leadership opportunities. The case study has identified a range of strategies, tools and resources that encouraged and supported the teachers and the analytical framework of gateways for personalising learning has been supported by this case study. The study highlights many components of an effective professional development programme based on a philosophy of distributed leadership. It supports the notion that distributed leadership can be a key feature in facilitating on-going personalising learning.

The teachers' stories have provided rich, descriptive data for this study and it is a teacher's voice that completes this thesis:

> *Our involvement with ELP and doing our own research has made us more aware of ... the underpinning aspects of what makes people feel empowered and supported and able to take risks - and that holistic view of learning for teachers as well as for children...(Lana)*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to ELP Director

Tena Koe _____,

I am writing to formally request your permission to involve your Educational Leadership Project (ELP) in my research project for my Masters of Education Thesis.
My thesis supervisor is Professor Margaret Carr, her contact details are; email margcarr@waikato.ac.nz, ph 8384466 extn 7854

As I have indicated in my informal discussions with you, my research is focusing on finding out from teachers how their involvement in the ELP has enabled them to develop leadership skills within their teaching practice.

My own involvement in the ELP, some years ago, and anecdotal evidence from other early childhood teachers suggests that this model of professional development offers opportunities for leadership development, particularly pedagogical leadership.

There appears to be a lack of research about leadership in early childhood and I am hoping that my research may benefit both professional development providers and teachers.

With your consent and in conjunction with yourself and your facilitators I would like to ascertain a process by which I could identify and approach potential participants to ask about their willingness to be involved.
I can be contacted either by email(jgcp@waikato.ac.nz) or phone (07 8384466 extn 7807) and would be very pleased to hear from you.

I enclose a copy of a broad initial outline of my research proposal and a copy of the ethical issues I have identified with suggestions for addressing these.

Thanking you for your time and consideration and I look forward to working with you,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips
Department of Professional Studies
School of Education
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton

Appendix B: Letter to ELP Facilitators

Tena koe_____

As Wendy Lee may have discussed with you, I am interested in doing a research project for my MEd thesis based on the Educational Leadership Project and how early childhood teachers involved in this project are enabled to develop leadership skills within their teaching practice.
My thesis supervisor is Professor Margaret Carr, her contact details are; email margcarr@waikato.ac.nz, ph 8384466 extn 7854

My own involvement in the ELP, some years ago, and anecdotal evidence from other early childhood teachers suggests that this model of professional development offers opportunities for leadership development, particularly pedagogical leadership.

There appears to be a lack of research about leadership in early childhood and I am hoping that my research may benefit both professional development providers and teachers.

With your consent and in conjunction with yourself and the director I would like to ascertain a process by which I could identify and approach potential participants to ask about their willingness to be involved.
I can be contacted either by email(jgcp@waikato.ac.nz) or phone (07 8384466 extn 7807) and would be very pleased to hear from you.

I enclose a copy of a broad initial outline of my research proposal and a copy of the ethical issues I have identified with suggestions for addressing these.

Thanking you for your time and consideration and I look forward to working with you,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips
Department of Professional Studies
School of Education
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton

Appendix C: Email to prospective participant centres

Kia ora colleagues

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips, who works with Margaret at Waikato is doing a research project for her Masters on ELP as a model of professional development and an opportunity for leadership. She would like to interview some staff in centres who have completed professional development with ELP. There is teacher release funding for this. She is about to send you a letter about it. This e-mail is to say that I have discussed the project with the other project facilitators and we are all very happy for it to go ahead. Hope all is going well in your centres.

Warm regards
Wendy

Tena koe_____,

This letter is to ask if you would be interested in participating in a small research project I am undertaking for my Masters in Education thesis. My thesis supervisor is Professor Margaret Carr, her contact details are; email margcarr@waikato.ac.nz, ph 8384466 extn 7854

My research is focusing on the Educational Leadership Project (ELP) as a model of professional development for early childhood teachers. I am interested in finding out from teachers how being involved in this professional development has enabled them to develop leadership skills within their teaching practice. I have discussed this project with Wendy Lee and she says she is happy for it to go ahead.

The research will involve two (at the most) face-to face discussions (possibly 45mins-1hour) with 4-5 members of your teaching team who may have been part of your involvement with the ELP. I would like to be able to conduct these interviews some time between September and November 2006 at a time that is convenient to you. There is funding for a reliever to release staff to be interviewed. Each interview will be taped and then transcribed and I will send the teachers a copy of the transcript to read and change or amend as they wish. The project will adhere to the University's ethical guidelines for research, which ensures confidentiality and voluntary participation. If your centre agrees to participate I will ask the teachers involved to sign a consent form that outlines the conditions of participation and my responsibilities as well.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this, I know time is always at a premium, and I will phone you in the next few days. Please feel free to contact me at work (07 8384466 extn 7807) or by email (jgcp@waikato.ac.nz).

Regards,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips.
Senior Tutor
Department of Professional Studies
School of Education
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton
Ph 8384466 extn 7807

Appendix E: Question prompts

How did you come to enrol with ELP in the first instance?

What was the most important learning for you from your involvement in the ELP?

What did you find most useful/helpful from the ELP?

What were some of the changes that you have made as a result of your involvement?

Have you been able to continue with your journey?

What would help you or has helped sustain your continued learning and development?

Was it ever all too much?

Do you feel you have developed leadership skills/ opportunities?

Would you see sharing your learning journey as useful for others' learning?

Appendix F: Consent form (for participants)

I have read the covering letter and the research proposal and I understand what I am agreeing to as a participant.

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

I consent to the discussions being taped and transcribed and I understand that I have the ability to amend or change anything in the transcript.

I have read and understand the Ethical issues identified by the researcher and how these will be dealt with.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from my participation in the research up until 30[th]November, 2006.
If I choose to withdraw from the research study before this date I will contact the researcher.

Signed:

Name (please print):

Date:

Researcher contact details
Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips
School of Education
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton
Ph 07 8384466 etxn 7807
Email: jgcp@waikato.ac.nz

Research Supervisor contact details
Prof Margaret Carr
Ph 07 8384466 extn 7854
Email: margcarr@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix G: Consent Form (ELP Director)

I have read the research proposal and agree to work in conjunction with the researcher to identify participants for the study.

I understand that the information gathered will only be used for the purpose of the named paper and any presentations or publications as a result of the research.

I understand that I have the ability to amend or change any reference to myself.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and I understand the ethical issues that have been identified and how these will be minimised.

Signed:_____ Name:_____Date_____

Appendix H: Consent Form (Project Facilitators)

I understand that I have the ability to amend or change any reference to myself.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and I understand the ethical issues that have been identified and how these will be minimised.

I understand that the information gathered will only be used for the purpose of the named paper and any presentations or publications as a result of the research.

Signed:_____ Name:_____Date_____