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**Early childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Masters of Leadership and Administration**

**At Massey University, Manawatu,**

**New Zealand**

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**2018**

## **Abstract**

There are clear links between quality early childhood education (ECE) and positive outcomes for children and increasing research reveals the link between effective leadership of early childhood centres and quality ECE within centres. Development of ECE leaders to support their leadership skills and competencies is essential as a pathway to support quality ECE. The aim of this research was to give voice to teacher leaders in the ECE sector by exploring their perspectives on their own journey into leadership. Surveys and interviews were used to gather data on leader experiences. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and a case study approach. Findings indicated that leaders believed they were poorly equipped to take on their leadership role and called for practice-based leadership support that goes beyond a theoretical understanding of leadership. It was also found that ongoing leadership development was largely self-initiated with a clear call for supported networking to create connections between leaders in what has become a highly competitive sector. This research is relevant to the ECE sector because it discusses the experiences of ECE teachers as they enter into leadership roles.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors Tara McLaughlin and Karyn Aspden for their fantastic support and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. I also thank my father Douglas Shuker, for his belief since I started my first degree in 1995 that I would eventually gain my Masters, and the years of watching him lead and learning from not only his amazing work stories but his love of people. And finally, my wonderful children who have only known their mother to be studying something or another at Massey University these past 22 years and yet have never complained about it.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Overview

Leadership in early childhood education has been closely linked to quality education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and globally (Ang, 2011; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Klevering & McNae, 2018). Effective leadership is therefore an essential element of quality early childhood provision, and as such is a subject where ongoing research may help to enhance not only practice but educational outcomes for tamariki (children). Researchers have found that when leadership is supported and developed within early childhood services, outcomes for children improve as a result (Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2014; Douglass, 2017; Hadfield & Jopling, 2018; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Klevering & McNae, 2018; Nuttall, Thomas & Henderson, 2018).

There is, however, a lack of research in the area of leadership development in ECE settings (Aubry, Godfrey & Harris, 2012; Davis, 2012; Layen, 2015; Talan, Bloom & Kelton, 2014; Reynolds, 2011). This is particularly concerning in the New Zealand context where the number of early childhood education services continues to grow with 3025 new services opening their doors between 2000 and 2018 (Education Counts, 2018). May (2009) pointed out that this profusion of services has not only put pressure on services in terms of retaining qualified teachers, but most particularly effective leaders capable of improving outcomes in early childhood services. Further research is therefore required to understand the experiences of current early childhood leaders, so as to inform leadership development programmes for the future.

The study specifically targeted teacher leaders and their experiences as they moved from a teaching role, to a role that involved teaching and leadership (e.g., head teachers, section managers). The research used survey and interview methods to explore the experiences of current ECE leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand focusing on their leadership journey. There were 91 participants in the survey, four of which were interviewed using a semi-structured method with findings reported as case studies.

## 1.2 Researcher Background

As a senior leader in a New Zealand Kindergarten Association, I developed an internal leadership development programme, in conjunction with a colleague, to meet the needs of our own aspiring leaders as well as the current leaders. The stories that experienced leaders told over the years about the lack of support they experienced prior to the leadership development programme has been an inspiration for this research focus. By giving voice to leaders in the ECE sector, it is hoped that this research will inform professional development providers to understand the needs of new and incumbent leaders, as well as provide advocacy for central government to fund leadership development in the ECE sector.

## 1.3 Context

This research was carried out in the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector. ECE in New Zealand includes children from birth to the day they start primary school, which is up to but not beyond 6 years of age. The Ministry of Education (MOE) administers legislation to ensure regulatory, safety, and curriculum minimums are met. The MOE also writes and administrates the ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). The Ministry of Health (MOH) also administers legislation that guides the implementation of early childhood services in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The ECE sector is marked by diversity of services including: education and care services, kindergartens, home-based service, kōhanga reo, and playcentre. These services have different requirements for teacher staffing to meet regulations, and have diverse leadership structures, for example parent led services are led by a qualified teacher, kindergartens are led by senior teachers, home based services are led by qualified teachers but have a network structure as opposed to the place based structure of parent led services, with education and care being led by diverse structures including head teachers, managers, senior teachers (e.g., professional services managers) and/or owner operators who may or may not be qualified teachers. Currently, education and care services are 55.6% of provision, kindergarten is 14.3%, home-based care is 10.3%, kōhanga reo is 9.9% and play centre is 9.2% (Education Counts, 2018).

In New Zealand there has been increasing Ministry of Education (MOE) and private investment in the professionalisation of personnel (e.g., theoretical and practical

support for teachers and managers) within the ECE sector (McLachlan, 2011; Miller, Dalli & Urban, 2012), however, investment in the development of the burgeoning number of ECE leaders has not kept the same pace (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Davis, Krieg & Smith 2015; Ling, 2014).

Several countries, including New Zealand, have changed the qualification requirements for ECE teachers in the last 10-20 years. The repercussions of such policy shifts have had a profound effect on leadership. For example, in Australia the 2010 Government mandate that an educational leader be required in each ECE service and also require them to have 'suitable qualifications' thrusts many teachers holding the required qualifications into positions they may not have desired (Waniganayake & Stipanovic, 2016). Leadership training was not provided through central government to support this policy. The increase in responsibility and accountability alongside changes to qualification requirements has meant that ECE leaders' role has changed significantly (Franzen & Hjalmarsson, 2018). Strong leadership is vital for quality early childhood provision and capable leaders are required to address the multiple challenges of the sector, however, the lack of professional development programmes for ECE teachers and leaders throughout this change has caused concern (e.g., Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014).

The New Zealand Education Council, now Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, has recently finalised their leadership strategy (*Leadership Strategy: The leadership strategy for the teaching profession of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018*) to support ongoing leadership development across the education sectors: to "develop the leadership skills that underpin a high performing education system" (p.3). The strategy aims to build leadership capacity and grow leaders across all mediums of teaching and learning including ECE. This will be the first national strategy to be implemented for leadership in the education sector that includes ECE and will extend over ten years from 2018 – 2028. However, as with previous national strategies, this will be heavily dependent on the Government in power. From when this strategy was first commissioned in 2015, there has been a change of Government and therefore this strategy has the potential to be changed, disbanded, or removed from being implemented by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is currently not mandated but its adoption is encouraged.

In Aotearoa New Zealand there has never been a national leadership programme for ECE leaders. Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, and Tamati wrote in their

(2009) occasional paper that the MOE had “identified an action in the [2002] strategic plan to provide leadership development programmes to strengthen leadership in ECE” (p.1). Given this recommendation never came to fruition, they suggested in their 2009 paper that the MOE may have “not felt responsible for promoting or supporting leadership development” in ECE due to it not being a compulsory sector. The newly released Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Leadership Strategy (2018) and the Educational Leadership Capability Framework (2018) in part seek to engage with an underinvestment and lack of co-ordination in leadership development in the ECE sector. The Leadership Strategy (2018) document further suggests that a national approach to leadership capability development has been missing and that this has been in part due to confusion to who is accountable for the investment in leadership development. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Education Review Office, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Tertiary Education Commission, and Treasury, plans to use this new leadership strategy to close this gap.

Leadership in the new revised Te Whāriki ECE curriculum document (2017) empowers teachers to grapple with considerations for leadership, organisation, and practice for each curriculum strand, by providing reflective questions for teachers/kaiako to support reflective practice. These provocations provide support for educational leaders in the pedagogical leadership aspect of their leadership role, but states that “promoting and supporting ongoing learning and development of kaiako (teachers) is a key responsibility of educational leaders” (p.59). The document, however, does not provide any other guidelines for the leadership of ECE services in terms of practical application. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Leadership Strategy (2018) and the Educational Leadership Capability Framework (2018) plan to develop leadership over 4 themes encompassing: Stewardship of leadership practice and learning; Capabilities of leadership; Personalised professional learning; and Partnerships, communities and networks. These build on the foundation provided in the *‘Our Code Our Standards: Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession’* (Education Council, 2017). This document acknowledges the past lack of leadership development in the ECE sector by proposing an implementation plan for professional learning and development (PLD), under ‘Theme 3: Personalised professional learning’ which suggests successful targeted learning opportunities looks like ‘team and middle leaders, leaders in early childhood settings, leaders in Māori medium, and leaders in rural communities

to develop their leadership have increased.’ (p.17). This is intended to be context-based and support all teachers to have equitable access to learning and support that develops their leadership capabilities. It is unclear however how that will be funded, and how ongoing development of leaders will be achieved within a bulk funded sector where professional development is a controllable expense.

Currently, having 50% qualified and certificated early childhood teachers in a service is the minimum requirement for operating a service. Funding is capped at 80% certificated teachers as opposed to the 100% threshold in the compulsory sector. Leaders in ECE settings are often leading both trained and untrained teachers in their role. This means that leaders in early childhood settings cannot assume a shared body of knowledge within the teaching team. The new draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning 2019-2029 (Ministry of Education, 2018) recommends the move to 100% qualified and certificated early childhood teachers after the year 2022, but it is not known whether this recommendation will come to fruition or be maintained by future governments.

To date, leadership development programmes in ECE are largely provided on a user pays basis, unless there is a Ministry of Education project focus on leadership development. This is a concern in a sector where provision is bulk funded, where competition is fierce, and where services may be either private, corporate, or incorporated societies: professional development of leaders is a variable expense that is often cut when income is restricted (Sleeter, 2008). There is also no nationally agreed leadership development model for the ECE sector, meaning that the effectiveness of programmes that are available in the market place may be variable and not necessarily linked to accepted best practice or the needs of the sector.

It is against this backdrop of change and uncertainty that the present study was conducted. Data for the present study were collected in 2018 after the release of the updated curriculum but before the release of the Education Council’s leadership strategy. Nonetheless, the voices and experiences of teacher leaders on their leadership journey in ECE may be useful as programmes and plans for leadership development are put in place in the years to come.

#### **1.4 Summary of the Chapters**

This thesis is structured in the following way: Chapter Two critically reviews the existing research literature about leadership across the education sector and more specifically

the ECE sector. It encompasses leadership development in ECE and the development of ECE leaders within Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter Three then outlines the descriptive interpretive multi-phase approach of the research, describing the use of survey and interview tools, as well as the analysis process.

Chapter Four presents the findings from phase one and phase two consecutively. Phase one quantitative survey data are presented using simple descriptive statistics, while the themes generated from the qualitative data are described. Data from the phase two interviews are presented as case studies, offering rich descriptions of the individual leadership pathways of the four participants. Both phases are then described as a summary of six key findings. Chapter five offers a combined discussion and conclusion which critically examines the key themes across the six key findings in light of the extant literature, before highlighting the implications and limitations of the study and suggestions towards future research.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

Effective leadership has been identified as a critical aspect of effective organisational management, productivity and success (Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011), including educational settings and organisations (McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012). The present study is focused on leadership education and development, specifically in relation to leaders in early childhood education (ECE) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To set the context for the present study, the connection between effective leadership in education in general and quality leadership in ECE is explored. Several widely accepted leadership definitions and theories are examined before focusing specifically on ECE and contextualising current thinking and practice within the New Zealand experience.

#### 2.2 Definitions of Leadership

Over time and for different purposes, a range of definitions of leadership have been used including; pedagogical, distributed, transactional, transformational, moral, managerial and administrative. Pedagogical leadership connects educational practice to outcomes for learners, builds professional capacity and capability and recognises the importance of relationship building and quality infrastructure (Maniates, 2015; Radinger, 2014; Stamopoulos, 2012). Distributed leadership commonly includes concepts of interdependence, democratic leadership practice and professional learning (Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012; Colmer, Waniganayke, & Field, 2014). Transactional leadership relies on a system of rewards and punishment whereas transformational leadership has a common goal expressed through relationships that raise levels of motivation (Alameen, Male, & Palaiologou, 2015; Burns, 1978; Ho & Lin, 2015). Moral leadership is based on a leader's morality and personality by establishing themselves as a good example (Ho & Lin, 2015). Managerial and administrative leadership involves the more pragmatic day to day operations necessary to supporting all other functions (Nicholson & Maniates, 2016).

There is no one clear definition of leadership that may be applied uniformly across contexts (Gill, 2006; Gill, 2011; McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012; Waaland, 2016).

Despite the lack of a clear definition, there is considerable consensus that leadership encompasses management functions (Muñoz, Boulton, Johnson & Unal, 2015), and that cultural context (Hujala, Eskelinen, Keskinen, Chen, Inoue, Matsumoto, & Kawase, 2015) and other contextual factors (Gill, 2011) along with social processes (Jarvis, Bell & Sharp, 2016) influence perception of what leadership means. Because the functions of leadership and management often overlap (Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016), administrative tasks may also influence one's understanding of leadership and what it entails in practice (Coleman, 2005).

Educational concepts of leadership are similarly contextually defined (Henderson, 2017; Rodd, 2001; Waaland, 2016), however, there is often consensus on important functions of leadership in this context. For example, educational leadership is widely accepted as supporting organisational improvement (Aubrey, Godfrey & Harris, 2012) and is about positively contributing to quality education and future directions (Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013). Stamopoulos (2012) considers leadership to be co-constructed requiring the leader to have professional knowledge, identity as a leader, and relational trust. This perspective is further elaborated by Hujala, Eskelinen, Keskinen, Chen, Inoue, Matsumoto, and Kawase (2015) who suggest that distributed leadership, which involves multiple individuals not just those with a formal leadership title, lead to the more positive outcomes within educational institutions.

Nicholson and Maniates (2016) write about a shift in leadership literature away from equating leadership with transactional views of leadership as management towards a more inclusive construct of participation and collaboration within shared leadership roles. Taken together, these authors describe a changing discourse from perspectives that utilise formal position and authority to describe leadership and the developing distributed/collaborative leadership construct. From a socio-political perspective, Sims, Waniganayake, and Hadley (2017) argue that the current neoliberal context adds increasing complexity to a leader's work, specifically that balancing leadership with the marketization of services (such as education) creates a potential constraint to effective leadership (especially within the education sector).

### **2.2.1 Types of Leadership**

Gill (2011) suggests that defining or describing leadership theory or 'types' of leadership can be just as difficult as defining leadership itself. Generally, core leadership theories



can be grouped as trait theories, emergent leadership theories, leadership styles, and situational theories (Coleman, 2005; Gill, 2011; McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012; Smalley, Retallick, & Greiman, 2016). Trait theories reason that leadership qualities are what leaders are born with and identify specific positive leadership behavioural characteristics (Gill, 2011). Emergent leadership theories explore the interaction of the leader with the situation and context surrounding them (McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012). Leadership styles describe how a leader enacts direction, motivation, and implements plans (Maxwell, 2013). Situational theory explores how a leader changes their approach to fit the team/organisation they are trying to lead (Rodd, 2013). Komives, Mainella, Owen, Osteem and Longerbeam (2005) suggest that leadership theories that rely on traits, behaviours and situations reflect outdated ways of thinking about leadership given the contemporary focus on collaboration and transformation (Bass, 1998). Collaborative and transformative approaches to leadership are viewed more favourably in leadership in education (Komives, Mainella, Owen, Osteem, & Longerbeam, 2005).

### **2.3 Leadership Development in Education**

Leadership development for educational leaders is aligned to quality educational outcomes for children (Ang, 2011; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Klevering & McNae, 2018). Formal leadership training is seen as an important determinant of sustained school improvement and student achievement (Xu & Patmor, 2012). Leaders need to be engaged in their own leadership development (Duignan, 2006) and their context needs to encourage leadership learning (Cardno & Bassett, 2015) to ensure leaders' engagement and identification of themselves as leaders (Weisz-Koves, 2011). Nicholson and Kroll (2015) suggest that because educational leadership is situated, socially constructed and interpretive, effective educational leadership development programmes need to reflect individual contexts (Goffin & Washington, 2007). For example, New Zealand schools emphasise self-management for schools, including leadership development (Notman, 2011), whereas in the United Kingdom leadership development is not schooling specific but a discipline that overlays the sector (Bush, 2008).

To understand the New Zealand context for leadership development in education, Macpherson (2009) studied preparatory and succession strategies for leaders in New Zealand schools. The study utilised surveys of 12 senior educational professionals in

either secondary or tertiary roles in 2009. Findings were combined and contrasted with previous pilot studies of surveys of 14 serving secondary school principals in 2008 and beginning leaders in 2009. He found that leaders who had had no leadership development before a leadership role, expressed a more difficult journey than those that had. Macpherson (2009) further found that leader participants identified a need to be able to grow and develop themselves post leadership appointment through post graduate study or other leadership training to ensure they could continue to grow and provide positive leadership to their schools.

Carver (2016) asserts that many teacher leaders have had to learn on the job and gain leadership skills through experience in the role alone. This lack of preparation and support can contribute to school leaders describing their roles as lonely and brings up the question of how to support leaders to fulfil their role in a context of increasing complexity, greater school autonomy, accountability, and expectations to lead teaching and learning (Radinger, 2014). Lack of preparation can also mean that leaders fall back on their teaching skills and understandings rather than utilising leadership approaches that would contribute to positive school improvement (Cranston, 2013). There is therefore a need to not only provide leadership development for aspiring and current educational leaders, but to ensure that the substance of this development focuses on both the needs of the organisation as well as the needs of the individual (Cardno & Bassett, 2015).

## **2.4 ECE Leadership**

When discussing leadership within ECE, the context in which leadership occurs needs to be considered. Six key contextual features of ECE are discussed in relation to leadership: highly relational pedagogy; predominately female workforce; small settings with low ratios; triple the amount of services compared to primary schools; qualification requirements; and cultural context/s.

ECE is built upon a relational pedagogy, in which relationships between leaders, teachers, parents, and children are central to practice. ECE centres operate with a mostly flattened management structure with the sharing of leadership tasks and systems across the whole team, not just the manager (Heikka, Waniganayake, & Hujala, 2012) moving away from a hierarchical view toward a collaborative approach (Komives, Mainella, Longerbeam, Osteem, & Owen, 2006). Leaders in ECE often use a relational

approach to involve others (Maxwell, 2013; Odom, Boyd & Williams, 2012). This relational approach to leadership may reflect the predominately female workforce, and female leadership, within the ECE sector and is a potential reason why some definitions of leadership from the more masculine business-based sector do not fit (Aubrey, Godfrey & Harris, 2012; Davis, Krieg and Smith, 2014). Hard and Jónsdóttir (2013) propose that although leadership in education is still mainly viewed from a male paradigm, leadership in ECE is more feminine with more collaboration and power sharing than male dominated workplaces. Davis, Krieg and Smith (2014) note that whilst women are encouraged to be nurturing and caring when working with young children these traits may not be seen as desirable when they move into a leadership position – positioning leadership as either authoritative or nurturing and caring.

The ECE sector has several unique characteristics when compared to schools; including the small service size, greater teacher to child ratios, and a majority of female workers (Argyropoulou & Hatira, 2014; Cardno & Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds, 2011). Furthermore, there are also more than triple the amount of ECE services compared to schools, and therefore require more leaders to lead these services (Douglass, 2017). The high number of ECE services combined with the growing understanding of the strong association between quality ECE provision and teacher qualifications in a context where not all workers are qualified (McLachlan, 2011), has meant that qualified ECE teachers have found themselves unexpectedly in leadership roles with little or no training, especially in small teams and centres (Argyropoulou & Hatira, 2014). Many of these new teacher leaders have struggled with the burden of leadership on top of their teacher role (Reynolds, 2011). The different conditions and training available to school leaders as opposed to ECE leaders means that the extent to which leadership research can be applied across both sectors effectively has been disputed (Hadfield & Jopling, 2018).

Culture and context play a critical role in the way leadership is understood and enacted (Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016). The cultural norms of the community as it meets the cultural experience of the ECE leader, can affect the leadership approach and conduct within an ECE setting (Kerith & Dianne, 2000; Matapo & Leaupepe, 2016). Within New Zealand there is a national commitment to biculturalism, honouring the partnership between the indigenous Māori population and Pākehā (non-Māori) which is established in the Treaty of Waitangi (Fasoli, Scrivens, & Woodrow, 2007). This bicultural imperative means that if Te Whāriki, (Ministry of Education, 2017) is to be

embraced by leaders as partners to the Treaty along with Pasifika and all other cultures, then significant leadership development is required (Fasoli, Scrivens, & Woodrow, 2007). To describe a bicultural approach to leadership, Tamati (2011) frames Māori leadership in ECE with a focus on collaboration, contribution, and responsibility to be able to include and respect all ākonga – the people and relationships.

Nicholson and Kroll (2015) suggest that ECE leaders cannot learn to lead by following the current definitions and guidelines of leadership but must contextualise leadership as their own, because much of the research concerning education leadership is based in compulsory education. To achieve this, leaders need to be up to date with current issues within the sector, current legislation, be good communicators, change managers, culturally responsive, strategic and collaborative (Nicholson & Kroll, 2015). For Rodd (2013), to be an ECE leader means being a situational leader who is appropriate for the context, and also as Davis, Krieg, and Smith (2014) maintain, an individual leader who values the achievement of quality outcomes (Stamopoulos, 2012).

## **2.5 Effective ECE Leadership**

Current interest in the professionalisation of the ECE workforce, facilitated by government policy, is driven by a connection between quality ECE and positive outcomes for children (Millar, Dalli & Urban 2012; Waniganayake & Stipanovic 2016). Alongside the research showing links between quality ECE and positive outcomes for children there has been an increasing body of research revealing the link between effective leadership of early childhood centres and quality outcomes within those centres (Ang, 2011; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2014; Douglass, 2017; Hadfield & Jopling, 2018; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Klevering & McNae, 2018; Nuttall, Thomas & Henderson, 2018).

Leaders are responsible for creating the environment where outcomes are improved for children and teachers alike (Bloom & Bella, 2005). The leader of an ECE service not only has direct control over the implementation of the curriculum and the environment but also the quality of relationships with families and the community (Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016). Not just leaders, but 'effective' leaders are needed to have a direct impact on the overall quality of an ECE service (Nuttall, Thomas & Henderson, 2018). This is in part achieved through a leader's ability to communicate and enact the overall vision

for the service and the capacity to reflect on and engage with changing contexts (Ang, 2011). Effective leaders can be created over time but this means an intentional approach to leadership development and a focus on improving children's learning and well-being (McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012). Leadership development influences children's experiences in ECE by enhancing programmes that support outcomes for learning and development (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004).

## **2.6 Leadership Development in ECE**

The lack of clear and well supported leadership pathways in ECE compared to the wider educational sector is concerning, given the increasing complexity and accountability of leadership roles within the sector (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Davis, Krieg & Smith 2015). In the UK, for example, the lack of clear leadership pathways in early childhood was outlined by Muijs, Aubrey, Harris and Briggs (2004) as they contrasted differences between ECE and school leadership being underpinned by school/centre size, structure, and policy. They discuss the overall lack of leadership development programmes for ECE teachers, highlighting this as a key issue for the sector. Mistry and Sood (2012) also examined leadership development programmes for ECE leaders in the UK and noted there was a lack of diverse programmes to meet the specific needs of ECE leaders. They found that most leaders had little or no understanding of leadership as a result of their University teacher training course and discussed the need for a more holistic leadership development that understands the context and culture of early years settings and is practice based. Ang (2011) analysed the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) in the United Kingdom and found that whilst not increasing leadership capacity positively in all areas, the programmes did still somewhat support new ECE leaders within their difficult roles even with mounting responsibilities and pressures. Having a national support for ECE leaders was therefore found to be beneficial.

As within the UK, there is increasing pressure and accountability required of ECE leaders in many countries around the world (Ang, 2011; Franzen & Hjalmarsson, 2018). Sims and Waniganayake (2015) write of the leadership development opportunities in Australia and its links to the Australian National Quality Framework (NQF). They draw conclusions between the demand for qualified ECE teachers in leadership roles under the NQF and reluctance of some who take on these roles due to not only lack of training but lack of desire for the growing responsibilities and accountability that has been

slowly added onto the leadership position by the Government. The reluctance of ECE teachers wanting leadership positions is exacerbated by mandates such as standards-based curriculum, learning outcomes, and accountability (Goffin & Washington, 2008). The pressures of policy reform affect leadership development programmes in ECE and many leadership training programmes often concentrate on management tasks rather than leading (McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012), favouring transactional rather than transformative approaches to leadership development.

Waniganayake and Stipanovic (2016) argue that many post graduate programmes available to ECE leaders make connections between leadership theory and leadership practice, but are too expensive for many new leaders to attend whilst struggling with the rigors of their leadership role. Further to this, Nicholson and Kroll (2015) suggest that much leadership training is hijacked by theory as opposed to practical content. As a result, Nicholson and Kroll (2015) propose that leadership development for ECE leaders should value the context each leader works within “relationally with individuals, organisations, and within systems to bring about positive and ethical change” (p.17). Thus, leadership development programmes should focus on the individual and their context, recognising that within ECE the individual is usually female with a more relational approach to leadership (Davis, Krieg, & Smith, 2015).

Sims and Waniganayake (2015) propose that those who are the most effective ECE leaders are the ones who self-identify as leaders. This suggests that any development of new leaders should include the space to help potential leaders find their internal leadership ‘voice’ (Maxwell, 2013). Hesitant leaders who identify as teachers first and foremost can struggle to then see themselves as leaders (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004). There is a potential disconnect between the ability to teach young children and the ability to lead adults, as these tasks encompass different skills and purposes. Therefore, there cannot be a ‘one size fits all’ for leadership development programmes in ECE to fit all contexts and individuals (Davis, Krieg, & Smith, 2014), and effective professional development should be designed for the context and the needs of individuals within a context of on-going reflection and practice (Ryan, Whitebook, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2011).

Taken together there is an element to leadership development in ECE which suggests the need for individualised programmes that match the context and various leadership expectations (Rodd, 2001). The current lack of leadership development in ECE

addressing this need will require the creation of a leadership framework and strategies to remove barriers and deficit perceptions to enable opportunities for teacher leadership growth (Weisz-Koves, 2011). For programmes that do exist, there is a call for ECE leadership development programmes to move away from leadership development that doesn't fit the context in favour of a model of leadership that strengthens professional knowledge and leadership capabilities authentically within the actual ECE context (Stamopolulos, 2015). This is a call for both contextualisation and practical application. Abel, Talan, and Masterson (2017) suggest a framework to provide a 'whole leadership' approach to leadership training in ECE to engage individuals and provide an adaptive approach for leader development in the service of a more meaningful and practical approach to leadership development. Douglass (2017) goes on to say that not only does leadership development need to address the whole leader and enable the leader to see themselves as such, but they must be shown leadership redefined as "collaborative, relational, and purpose-driven" (p. 391), namely, leadership is about being fit for purpose: it is a practical as much as it is a theoretical endeavour.

## **2.7 Leadership Development in New Zealand ECE**

Leadership development in New Zealand ECE has been adversely affected by the rapid growth of the sector, by lack of formal leadership programmes, and by a lack of support from the Government (Weisz-Koves, 2011). Leadership professional development for the ECE sector has largely comprised of programmes at the individual organisation level, one off courses by outside providers, postgraduate leadership programmes, and sometimes individual support programmes through national bodies such as the Education Review Office, Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand (formally called the New Zealand Education Council), or Ministry of Education. There has been no state funded programme to support leadership development in ECE on any sustained basis. Leaders in ECE must balance professional development (PD) whilst working in their leadership role (Douglass, 2017; Hadfield & Jopling, 2018). There have been recent developments in New Zealand whereby the distribution of professional development funds is proposed to be facilitated and distributed by Communities of Learning (CoLs) and the New Zealand Education Council, (now the Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand), (Ministry of Education, 2017). At the time of writing this centralised funding was not yet in force.

Outlining the needs of the New Zealand ECE sector, Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, and Tamati (2009) recommend that leadership development for the ECE sector should include:

- Encouragement of distributed leadership approaches
- Support and mentoring by other leaders
- Opportunities for reflection on real-life experiences and scenarios
- Follow up support over a sustained period of time
- A programme based on the particular assessed needs of individual leavers
- A programme which is problem focussed and specific to workplace context
- Collegiality and networking opportunities
- Inclusion of the wider team in aspects of the programme
- On-going leadership development programmes

These suggestions call for developing leaders to reflect on real life scenarios to grow their self-awareness and leadership understandings (Layen, 2015), opportunities for mentoring and collaborative oral inquiry to strengthen practice (Nicolson & Kroll, 2015), and utilising networking supports to nurture leadership capabilities (Stamopoulos, 2015; Douglass, 2017). In essence they call for a practice-based development of expertise for leadership in the ECE sector.

Cherrington, Shuker, Stephenson, Glasgow, Rameka, Thornton, Sears, Goodman, Barker and Nager (2013) evaluated MOE funded ECE professional development programmes. They found that determining the effectiveness of professional development was contextual and highly complex. They found the quality of leadership of the service is positively related to the success of the professional development provided. The authors indicated that targeted and practical programmes were more beneficial than general and theory focused programmes where there was sufficient time to engage in the programme (Cherrington et al., 2013). This points to the need for teachers within ECE services to have the time available to them to explore and engage with the PLD opportunities that may arise. This is particularly true of leadership development (Ang, 2011).

In their study of NZ ECE leadership development, Ryder, Davitt, Higginson, Smorti, Smith and Carroll-Lind (2017) asked 'what leadership processes and structures do effective ECE leaders develop in their centres for the sustainability of the leadership culture?' The



authors conducted a nationwide survey comprising of two parts - first with a focus on the aspects of effective leadership for leadership development and sustainable leadership, the second with ten items revealing demographic variables (i.e., position of the designated leader, type of centre, gender, age group, length of time in ECE, length of time in the current posit, type of initial training, and additional training/qualifications). Leadership practices in eight early childhood services were then examined utilising a case study design, and 'designated leaders' were interviewed utilising open-ended questions to explore their espoused theories. The researchers found that ECE leadership was an organisational cultural practice and that the character of the centre and the position the individual leader held, influenced the leadership culture. Approaches common to leaders in the research included 'distributed, collaborative and/or shared leadership' and they found that leadership was located within teams in different ways, depending on the perceived skills and attributes of team members by the designated leader. Succession planning was also found to be a strong and widely represented concept amongst participant leaders. In this research, effective practice meant that the designated leaders' thoughts about their leadership practices were congruent with their practices. The researchers identified six key factors for leadership – being a good communicator, being relationship focussed, being caring to others, being supportive of the team, being a leader of growth and change, and being a critical friend. Whilst PLD on leadership was found to be highly valued by the leader participants, only a few had undertaken higher qualifications and not many of them had pursued a leadership focus. On the job learning was found to be one of the most important ways of learning to be a leader.

Klevering and McNae (2018) examined the leadership understandings and perceptions of five qualified, registered New Zealand early childhood leaders using a qualitative research framework underpinned by a constructivist paradigm. Interviews were semi-structured to gather participants experiences, understandings and beliefs. Participants were selected through purposive sampling as ECE qualified and fully registered leaders of either corporate or private ECE settings. Thematic analysis was used to examine reoccurring patterns and concepts from the transcribed interview data, and clustering and coding of key ideas or themes enabled patterns to be identified. They found that participants unanimously recognised leadership ability as extremely influential on high quality care and education for children. All participants believed that leadership was a shared role that everyone could either strive to be or be involved in. Participants

thought that a leader's role was to build leadership capacity in others and to 'lead by example.' Empowering others and building a positive organisational culture was central to the practice of effective leaders, as was leadership involving strong and trusting relationships. Participants believed that effective leadership required knowledge and experience and that a leader should be continually growing these skills. The researchers found that leadership definition was highly contextualised, that leadership was generally perceived as collaborative in nature, and that many leaders have a reluctance towards recognising themselves as leaders. Klevering and McNae (2018) also found a lack of leadership learning opportunities and lack of clear leadership pathways for the teachers in their study. They discussed a need for practical and context focused early childhood leadership and management learning opportunities to complement and enhance ECE leaders' experiences.

The current lack of centralised and practice-based leadership development programmes and resources for New Zealand ECE leaders, supports the proposition that New Zealand ECE leaders have likely participated in minimal, if any leadership development before taking on the role. Davitt and Ryder (2018) identified this in their report further, investigating their 'leaders growing leaders' research with a call for specific professional learning and development to support emergent and current leaders. Whilst the new leadership strategy from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand proposes to close the gap and even the field, the literature shows that there is an urgent need to focus on the development of ECE leaders within their contexts combining both theoretical and practical ways of knowing. While studies such as Ryder et al. (2017) and Klevering and McNae (2018) are emerging, there is certainly more to know about how ECE leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand have experienced their journey into leadership, and the ideas about leadership development in ECE.

This research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do NZ teachers become leaders in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings?
2. What are NZ ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development?
3. What are NZ ECE leaders' beliefs about leadership development?
4. What factors impact on NZ leaders' leadership in ECE settings?

## Chapter Three

### Methodology Chapter

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the descriptive interpretive, multi-phase approach taken in this research project. To conduct the study, survey and semi-structured interview were used to gather data on New Zealand early childhood leaders' experiences of leadership development. Data collection tools focused on capturing teachers' beliefs about leadership as well as their own personal leadership experiences and pathway. Data collection and analysis was designed to provide insight into the nature of leadership in ECE, as well as the leadership development experienced by those holding leadership positions. As outlined in the researcher background in the introduction, a primary motivation for conducting this study was to consider the types of supports that the ECE sector could provide to prepare their aspiring leaders for leadership; this motivation was also influential in the design of data collection and analysis.

This chapter provides information on the theoretical perspective that guided the study, as well as the research processes followed, including ethical considerations, participants, data collection and data analysis. The research is described in two phases: phase 1 survey and phase 2 interviews. The purpose of the study is to describe and understand ECE teachers' experiences of their leadership journey. It is guided by the following research questions: 1. How do NZ teachers become leaders in ECE settings? 2. What are NZ ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development? 3. What are NZ ECE leaders' beliefs about leadership development? 4. What factors impact on NZ leaders' leadership in ECE settings?

#### 3.2 Theoretical Perspective

This research is a descriptive interpretivist study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The descriptive interpretivist design is intended to describe the complexities of human experiences and their environment/s on participants' beliefs and understandings (Creswell, 2015). This view is guided by the assumption that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their everyday experiences. This approach was chosen as an appropriate framework given the research focus on gathering information from individuals about their diverse pathways into leadership

positions in ECE and the need to make sense of the various experiences and perspectives.

A key assumption of this research is that participants' understandings of their leadership journey are personal in nature and involve feelings and beliefs about both themselves and the early childhood sector (Creswell, 2014). The researcher seeks to understand and interpret the contribution of the participants (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). An interpretive approach to knowledge creation maintains the centrality of personal experience to knowledge construction (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This perspective emphasises the importance of the subjectivity in the interrelationship of researcher and participant (particularly in the interview environment), and the subsequent induction of meaning (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The interpretivist perspective on research recognises the researcher's own knowledge and experiences in the co-construction of meanings from responses.

The data collection methods used in this research are survey and interview methods. For the survey (phase one), the descriptive approach allowed participants to articulate their own understandings of their experiences in response to the survey questions through a series of open-ended questions. The interpretive element in the methodology then required the researcher to examine and describe patterns and trends across multiple participants. Given the interpretivist methodology, there was no assumption that all participants share the same meanings (Flick, 2011). For the interview phase (phase two) of the research, participants' ideas about leadership emerged as interviewees told their stories (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Thus, the descriptive interpretivist approach enabled the topic to be situated within participants' understandings but also interpreted within the context of the research questions (Creswell, 2015).

### **3.3 Research Design**

To explore early childhood leaders' beliefs and understandings of leadership, survey and interview methods were utilised across the two phases of the study to ensure that the data collected provided multiple perspectives (Punch, 2011). The research tools for both phases included primarily qualitative, open-ended questions to elicit participants' descriptions, however, the survey also included some closed ended and rating type

questions which enabled the generation of quantitative data, particularly in relation to the survey findings.

In phase one, a survey design was used to ensure a consistent exploration of multiple participants' beliefs and experiences regarding their leadership journey within the ECE sector. Questions were developed using contemporary leadership literature combined with the researcher's understandings of the topic under study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In phase two, participants self-selected for interview from the survey population providing their contact details and indicating their wish to participate. Interviews were semi structured to allow for emergent interactions between the researcher and participant (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The data for phase one and phase two were collected sequentially, and data analysis occurred after the completion of phase two interviews.

The target population for this research was qualified teachers in leadership positions that had leadership responsibilities related to both the day-to-day operations and teaching and learning programmes of early childhood centres in the lower North Island of New Zealand. For the purposes of this study, the participants did not include persons that held upper level leadership/management positions with wider responsibilities to more than one setting, or to those whose role was primarily administrative or organisational, for example centre owners, licensees, senior teachers, or curriculum managers.

### **3.5 Phase One: Survey**

#### **3.5.1 Participants/recruitment**

The participants for this study came from early childhood centres in the lower North Island of New Zealand including education and care and kindergarten services in order to enhance the manageability of the research design. The education and care services approached were not further organised by license size or hours, or community based/private/corporate for the purposes of this research. The early childhood leaders of the selected ECE services worked in roles as 'managers' (education and care) and 'head teachers' (kindergarten). All were required to have been previously early childhood teachers with the related qualification prior to their appointment into their leadership role.

For the initial survey, early childhood leaders within the education and care and kindergarten parameters were contacted to participate using the Ministry of Education Database. A total of 717 early childhood services located in the lower North Island of New Zealand, who met the participant criteria, were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey, the invitation included the link to the survey along with the information required for informed consent.

### **3.5.2 Survey design**

The survey data were collected through an online survey questionnaire using the programme Survey Monkey. The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions, however the majority of the questions asked were open, in line with the qualitative focus of the research questions. This enabled responses to be descriptive and provide rich data about participants' experiences (Flick, 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The survey questions were developed based on understandings emerging from the literature review. The questions provided a consistent platform aimed to illicit descriptive responses that revealed participants' constructions of leadership, as well as key experiences on their leadership pathway (Floyd, 2014).

The survey was written and administered by the researcher. The survey was piloted with students in the Massey University Early Years Research Lab, of which the researcher and her supervisors are members. Feedback was given, and questions were refined as a result. The survey comprised of 24 questions, four open-ended questions, 10 closed questions, and 10 questions which blended closed questions with the ability for participants to comment further. The first 10 questions explored demographics about the participant and their leadership position, including how many teachers they currently lead and how long they have been a leader. Next, research questions elicited responses on how the participant became a leader in ECE, what their experiences were of leadership development, their beliefs about leadership development, and what factors have impacted on their leadership. The final two questions concentrated on the possibility of a national leadership programme for ECE and what elements it might include. The survey concluded with an invitation to participate in the interview (phase 2). The survey can be found in Appendix A.

### **3.5.3 Survey administration**

The initial e-mail introducing the survey targeted leaders at the manager and head teacher leadership level. There was a time frame of six weeks to complete the survey as identified in the email, and two reminder emails were sent at intervals after the initial invitation went out, and before the survey closed. After the close date, all data were extracted from the Survey Monkey programme and printed as well as being exported into a spreadsheet for analysis.

### **3.5.4 Survey analysis**

Methods for analysis of data need to be systematic, disciplined and able to be seen and described (Punch, 2011). An excel spreadsheet was used to code the response data that was drawn out of the survey design programme Survey Monkey to ensure a systematic and robust approach was applied.

Data from closed-ended survey questions were analysed and summarised using simple descriptive statistics; primarily the percentage of respondents indicating different categories. Qualitative analysis was used to classify responses for the open-ended survey data and identify larger themes using thematic analysis. Both the survey and interview data were explored in parallel rather than sequentially to give a meaningful and coherent picture of the data (Punch, 2011). The survey and interview questions were framed, and the content areas designed, so that parallel analysis could occur. Classification of responses from open ended data were transformed into percentages of respondents providing various responses. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to further construct themes that emerged from survey data: themes which are not created with literal interpretation, but were generated conceptually (Ward, Comer & Stone, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a guide for six phases of analysis: familiarising with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report. This process was utilised to guide the analysis in consultation and feedback from supervisors.

## **3.6 Phase Two: Interviews**

### **3.6.1 Participants/recruitment**

At the completion of the survey, all participants, except for those in the researcher's own Kindergarten Association, were invited to volunteer for the semi-structured

interview. To volunteer for interviews, participants filled in the expression of interest section of the survey. Four interview participants were chosen from the 20 who provided their email details using purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Sampling aimed to identify participants based on their length of time in their leadership role compared to when they became registered as a teacher; their type of centre (e.g. community based, kindergarten, for profit; and their license size of service). The variation of leadership tenure (i.e., one new leader and three experienced leaders) and service type amongst participants generated key data from participants with different experiences.

Once participants for the interview (phase two) had been selected, an initial email was sent to the four potential participants inviting their participation. One potential participant was unable to be contacted and therefore another was selected using purposive sampling as described above. Once participants agreed to be interviewed, interview times were set up with the researcher. Three participants were interviewed at their workplace, and one at a local café by her request. Interviews took between 45 minutes and an hour to conduct. All interviews were carried out within a four-week period in February 2018. After the interviews were completed, an email was sent to those who were not selected, thanking them for their interest and the time they took to fill in the survey.

### **3.6.2 Interview design**

The interview is an effective way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2011). Therefore, the interviews were designed to be semi-structured and based around the research questions to provide a useful framework, but still allow for participants to offer meanings, interpretations and significance (Punch, 2011). Familiar language was used, and the questions were written so as not to be 'loaded' or 'leading' (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The interview questions were developed, redeveloped, reviewed and revised with supervisor assistance. As noted earlier, interview questions were developed specifically to ensure the data could be analysed in parallel alongside the survey questions.

The interview questions were comprised as follows: two questions explored participants journey into leadership, five questions investigating their evolution in their leadership



role, and six questions unpacking their opinions on leadership in the early childhood sector. The questions used in the interviews are in Appendix B.

### **3.6.3 Interview administration**

The researcher used a hand-held recording device to record the interviews for later transcription. All participants agreed to be recorded and the consent forms for the interview were signed before the interviews commenced (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The researcher conducted the interviews with minimal interruption (Flick, 2011) in a conversational but purposeful manner (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

Recorded interviews were downloaded to a laptop. The files were then named in a non-identifiable way. The transcribing of the interviews was undertaken by the researcher to allow for further engagement with the data.

### **3.6.4 Interview analysis**

Interviews were treated as case studies and a leadership journey description was used to report each of the cases. Use of narrative case study reporting supported the descriptive element of the methodology and enhanced the qualitative/interpretivist methodology guiding this research. Maintaining the responses as narrative descriptions also allowed the researcher to preserve the integrity of each participant's personal narratives.

An analytic strategy for the interviews was set up around case description structure, using the headings of qualification, role, preparedness etc. This framework for organising each case and the common themes within that, were subjected to thematic analysis. The interview data were analysed to identify key themes in teachers' experiences, beliefs, and understandings. As noted earlier, Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide for six phases of analysis: familiarising with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report was utilised.

Phase one and phase two findings were integrated through discussion of the themes that emerged in each data set. Thematic analysis was used to highlight common themes as well as areas of disagreement. Those findings were then related to the literature to make sense of the findings.

### 3.7 Ethics

All ethical considerations were upheld in accordance with the principles and guidelines of the Massey University Code of Ethics (2015). The nature of the study was such that the study was deemed to be low-risk, and ethical approval given accordingly. The researcher acknowledged the need to apply correct and robust ethical principles and responded to the ethical implications of the research in appropriate ways to mitigate any potential risk (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The two key ethical issues that were identified as significant to this study were conflict of interest, and participant rights.

In regard to conflict of interest, it was important for the researcher to consider whether her leadership role within a Kindergarten Association was of significance. There was no perceived conflict of interest in relation to the survey due to the anonymity of participants. However, it was decided that it would not be appropriate for leaders within the Association to be selected for the interview phase. Therefore, the information sheets/survey included a disclaimer that teachers from the researcher's own Kindergarten Association were ineligible for phase two of the study, to avoid any conflict of interest and to minimise any potential discomfort or reticence.

In relation to participant rights, the information sheets/survey disclaimer highlighted that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Full informed consent was possible given the nature of the study. Respondents could choose not to answer survey questions and interview participants could choose not to answer interview questions and to withdraw at any point. All expectations and how the data would be gathered was clearly explained. All participants were treated respectfully with any arising considerations taken into account. Should interviewees have requested someone in a support role such as a whānau member this would have been provided for.

Anonymity of research participants was of the utmost importance as their responses and comments may have an impact on their professional relationships should the comments be identifiable with the individual participant, or potentially influence the reputation of their employer. Thus, the survey was anonymous, and all names of interview participants were changed to protect their identity. Furthermore, any interview data with responses that identified the leader, or their workplace was not used, or partial data were used to ensure anonymity. All raw data were stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's place of work. Interview data were managed and

interpreted in consultation with the researcher's supervisors to minimise ethical dilemmas.

Full informed consent was sought as a prerequisite for participation in this study. The email invitation included an information sheet and participants were informed that completion of any question on the survey implied consent to first be given: participants had to read and agree that they understand their rights as participants before being able to begin the survey. For the interview, information sheets were provided to participants electronically and in paper copy, participants were also able to ask questions about the study and were required to provide written consent for participation. See Appendix C to F for consents and information sheets for both the survey and interviews.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the theoretical perspective, research design, and ethical considerations employed in the research. A descriptive interpretive, multi-phase approach has been adopted for this study focused on early childhood leaders' experiences of their leadership journey. Research design procedures for the recruitment process, data collection and analysis methods for each of the phases, survey and interview, were described. Information about participants and key findings are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four

### Findings Chapter

#### 4.1 Introduction

A qualitative research design combining both survey and interview methods has been used to explore New Zealand ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development and professional growth pathways. This chapter outlines results from the survey and from the interviews. Simple descriptive statistics are presented, along with the key themes and cases that emerged from the qualitative data in attending to the following research questions: 1. How do NZ teachers become leaders in ECE settings? 2. What are NZ ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development? 3. What are NZ ECE leaders' beliefs about leadership development? 4. What factors impact on NZ leaders' leadership in ECE settings?

This chapter is set out into sections covering the survey findings (phase one), including the demographics of survey respondents, and their responses to the leadership questions; the interview findings (phase two) set out as four case studies through a leadership journey description, followed by a summary of the interviews; concluding with an overall summary of the findings chapter including the 6 key findings that emerged from the data.

#### 4.2 Phase One – Survey Findings

Survey data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to ECE teachers in leadership positions in early childhood services within the lower North Island of New Zealand. Of the 717 kindergarten and education and care services sent the survey, 91 ECE leaders responded. Survey questions were designed to elicit information about respondents' views and experiences of their movement from being a teacher to a leader in ECE, including their experiences of leadership development, their beliefs about leadership development, and the factors that impact on leadership in ECE settings.

##### 4.2.1 Survey respondents

Participants in this research were all fully qualified teachers who currently hold leadership positions and have leadership responsibilities related to the day-to-day operations, and teaching and learning in early childhood centres. Of the 91 participants, 45% classified themselves as a Centre Manager/Supervisor, 35% as a Kindergarten Head

Teacher, and 20% as 'other' (See Table 4.1). The majority of participants were in teaching roles between 3 and 15 years before moving into a leadership role and over half the participants lead a group of 4-7 teachers (See Table 4.1).

The majority of participants worked at kindergartens, followed by 'for profit' then 'not for profit' ECE services. Apart from kindergarten associations, standalone services were the highest representations of participants ECE services alongside mainly being urban, and from the Wellington, then Manawatu regions (See Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percent of participants</b>
<b>ECE leadership position held</b>	
Centre Manager/Supervisor	45%
Kindergarten Head Teacher	35%
Other (i)	20%
<b>Years teaching before leadership role</b>	
1-2years	13%
3-5years	20%
6-10years	24%
11-15years	19%
16-20years	9%
21+	15%
<b>Number of teachers lead</b>	
1-3	10%
4-7	52%
8-10	19%
11-14	12%
15-19	0%
20+	7%
<b>Number of children centre is licensed for</b>	
0-25	10%
26-50	65%
51-75	12%
76-100	10%
101-150	2%
151+	1%

**Type of service**

Community owned	12%
Not for profit	16%
For profit	19%
Kindergarten	36%
Owner operated	12%
Other (ii)	4%

**Service structure**

Stand-alone service	31%
Part of an ECE franchise	3%
Part of a large ECE corporation	5%
Part of a small group of centres	21%
Kindergarten Association	40%

**Service area**

Rural	20%
Urban	60%
Inner-city	13%
Other (iii)	7%

**Location**

Wellington	40%
Manawatu	27%
Wanganui	7%
Taranaki	7%
Hawke's Bay	14%
Central North Island	8%

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*Note. Other category (i) included descriptions such as Team Leader, Centre 2IC, Assistant Manager, Development Manager. Other category (ii) included descriptions such as Special character, Owner/Operator. Other category (iii) included descriptions such as Coastal, Suburban, Semi-Rural. Due to rounding sums may not total to 100.*

**4.2.2 Respondents leadership activities/responsibilities and styles**

When identifying their leadership activities/responsibilities, nearly all of the respondents selected mentoring and supporting staff development, out of the 24 activities and responsibilities listed. The same was true of: engaging the team in internal evaluation, preparing for and liaising with ERO, promoting quality pedagogical

approaches to support teaching and learning, building connections with whānau and the community, alongside ensuring the centre is compliant and developing and implementing appropriate centre policies. Seventy percent of respondents said they had full teaching responsibilities with the remaining respondents claiming limited or partial teaching responsibilities, suggesting shared teaching and organisational elements of their role. Respondents included additional activities/responsibilities in the box provided citing connecting with schools and working with outside agencies as other significant activities/responsibilities of their role (See Table 4.2).

When asked to describe their leadership styles, over half of respondents self-identified their own leadership styles via a comment box as collaborative/distributed leaders followed by empowering/facilitative and then pedagogical. When demonstrating leadership, nearly all respondents selected the characteristics of being honest and communicative as the most important for them in their leadership role, with decisiveness being the least selected by respondents.

**Table 4.2: Respondents Leadership Activities/Responsibilities and Styles**

Characteristic	Percent
<b>Leadership activities/responsibilities (select all that apply)</b>	
Mentoring and supporting staff development	99%
Engaging team members in internal evaluation (self-review)	96%
Preparing for, and liaising with, ERO	96%
Promote quality pedagogical approaches to support teaching and learning	95%
Building connections with families and the community	95%
Ensuring the Centre is compliant (meets 2008 ECE Regulations)	93%
Developing and implementing appropriate Centre policies	93%
Developing planning and assessment systems	92%
Undertaking appraisals for staff and supporting them to achieve appraisal goals	90%
Setting the vision for the Centre and supporting unified engagement in the vision from the Centre team	89%
Purchasing resources and ensuring basic equipment present	89%
Managing the day-to-day running of the Centre (e.g. creating rosters, ensuring child data correct, accounts)	86%
Human Resources - performance management	84%
Setting the strategic direction for the Centre	77%
Managing support staff (e.g. teacher aide, kitchen staff, administrator)	77%

Teaching - Full teaching responsibilities e.g. regular and daily engagement with children	70%
Setting and managing a budget	69%
Preparing reports (e.g. company tracking reports, reports for professional leaders)	63%
Finding and providing professional development for team members/supporting a professional development programme	59%
Liaising with a Board or parent committee	54%
Human Resources - recruitment and hiring of staff	53%
Teaching - limited teaching responsibilities e.g. typically coverage of staff breaks	21%
Teaching - Partial teaching responsibilities e.g. set rostered times	16%
Other (i)	24%

**Descriptions of leadership style (open ended)**

Collaborative/Descriptive	56%
Empowering/facilitative	24%
Lead by example	10%
Pedagogical	7%
Transformational	6%
Visionary	3%
Transactional	1%
Relaxed	1%

**Characteristics most important to demonstrate in leadership role (select all that apply)**

Honest	92%
Communicative	92%
Collaborative	91%
Respectful	90%
Reflective	90%
Supportive	89%
Empowering	89%
Trustworthy	87%
Inspiring	87%
Competent	83%
Inclusive	83%
Flexible	83%
Forward-looking	80%
Emotionally intelligent	80%
Confident	79%
Enthusiastic	76%



Adaptable	75%
Constructive	70%
Engaging	70%
Decisive	65%

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*Note. Other category (i) included descriptions such as Fundraising/Grants, Emails/Correspondence, Learning Stories, Connection with Schools, Appraisals, Outside Agencies, Health and Safety, Local Iwi Connections, Maintenance/Property, Recruitment. Due to rounding sums may not total to 100.*

### 4.2.3 Respondents entry into leadership and key milestones

Thirty-eight percent of leaders who completed the survey indicated that they entered their first leadership position within the first five years of becoming fully registered/certificated. Fourteen percent selected that they had become leaders before they were even ECE qualified, whilst 18% were still on their provisional registration journey. Only 15% of participants indicated that they were well prepared for their leadership role, with 16% selecting that they were not prepared, 23% somewhat prepared, 41% moderately prepared, and 5% very well prepared (See Table 4.3).

Whilst describing the personal key milestones in their leadership journey, most respondents wrote about seeking career progression: *“I was already working at the centre and applied for the position due a person stepping down; I knew the team, structure and culture and wanted to change it”*, or feeling obligated to step up into a vacant leadership position *“(I was) left in charge of challenging centre, at which I'd been working for five weeks, when Manager resigned suddenly,” “I was asked as no one else was stepping up,”* as their main reasons for taking on the role. Most specified little or no leadership training with self-taught leadership and learning on the role *“needed for the centre to stay operational; taught and learnt on the job,” “little support and guidance,” “I had minimal support from a mentor for a month, then was on my own. I didn't even know the regulations!”* as characteristics of their journey. A few participants indicated mentoring or connecting with networks being key to their success *“during my first year in this position I had a formal mentoring relationship with an experienced ECE teacher which was put in place by the previous supervisor. This was extremely valuable to my integration into this role”* along with support from, or utilising, their team's knowledge and culture to evolve their leadership further (See Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Entry into Leadership**

Characteristic	Percent
<b>Timing of first ECE leadership role</b>	
In the first 5 years of becoming fully registered/certified	38%
5-10 years after I became fully registered/certified	20%
When I was still a provisionally registered/certified teacher	18%
<b>Impression of how prepared for leadership role</b>	
Not prepared	16%
Somewhat prepared	23%
Moderately prepared	41%
Well prepared	15%
Very well prepared	5%
<b>Entry into leadership and key leadership milestones (open ended)</b>	
Career progression/stepping up	79%
Learning on the job	29%
Improved centre service	29%
Self-taught leadership	28%
Mentoring/networking	20%
Teaching and learning	17%
No leadership training	12%
Leadership training	12%
Utilise team support	8%
Self-belief	6%
No/little support	6%

#### **4.2.4 Respondents opportunities to participate in leadership development**

Before taking on their leadership role, almost half of all respondents identified as having had no opportunity to participate in leadership training/development. Nearly a third selected participating in a one-off leadership professional development, a quarter had attended linked sessions of professional development, and one third had one on one mentoring by another leader. After taking on their leadership role 10% selected still not having participated in any leadership training or development. The remaining 90% selected having participated in either a one-off leadership professional development event or a sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions),

having one on one mentoring by another leader, or completed a postgraduate leadership programme.

When indicating the factors that most impacted upon their leadership journey, nearly all respondents replied learning on the job/through experience. Over half utilised books and literature on leadership to support their leadership journey, and 40% chose one off leadership professional development or having support from a mentor.

When asked what they would do differently if given the opportunity to restart their leadership journey, leaders overwhelmingly commented on having leadership training of some sort either before, or early on in their role, and having the support of either a mentor or a network of other leaders. Ten percent also commented on the desire to have had more experience before they took on the role to be able to cope or understand the actual pressures involved.

**Table 4.4: Leadership Development Opportunities**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Leadership development opportunities participated in prior to leadership role</b>	
No opportunities	45%
One on one mentoring by another leader	35%
One off leadership professional development	31%
Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)	18%
Postgraduate leadership programme	7%
Other (i)	19%
<b>Leadership development opportunities participated post leadership role</b>	
One off leadership professional development	65%
One on one mentoring by another leader	49%
Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)	45%
Other (please specify)	18%
Postgraduate leadership programme	14%
No opportunities	11%
Other (ii)	18%
<b>Factors that have most impacted on leadership journey (open ended)</b>	
Learning on the job/through experience	98%
Reading books on leadership	52%
One on one mentoring by another leader	47%
One off leadership professional development	43%

Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)	37%
Postgraduate leadership programme	13%
Other (iii)	8%

**What would do different if could redo leadership journey (open ended)**

Leadership training	56%
Mentoring/networking	26%
Nothing	13%
More experience	11%
Better employer	4%

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*Note. Other category (i) included descriptions such as Networking. Other category (ii) included descriptions such as Networking, Self-Taught. Other category (iii) included descriptions such as Networking, Learning from mistakes, Other leadership papers. Due to rounding sums may not total to 100.*

#### **4.2.5 Respondents' self-beliefs and advice for future aspiring leaders**

When asked about what advice they would give to an up and coming leader in ECE, 40% of respondents' comments highlighted a need for leadership training before entering into the role: *"take the opportunity to source as much leadership PD as you can."* Nearly half also suggested either a mentor or having a leadership network as support as well as utilising team support: *"look for and find good role models and mentors to support you on your journey."* Some suggested making sure to ask questions before agreeing to take on the role and knowing the scope and nature of the role: *"are you ready?" "ask how much dedicated time you are allocated off the floor a week to do administrative and business paperwork."* Whilst others stated that self-belief is the best support for a leader's journey *"believe in yourself and ensure you have support networks available to help you in your role."*

Over half of respondents selected that they felt that they are now an effective leader, with almost a third believing they are very effective and only 10% believing that they feel moderately effective. When asked about a nationwide training programme for early childhood teachers/leaders, nearly all respondents believed that there should be one available to new leaders. Of those that commented, there were suggestions that it should meet individual needs, be free of cost for participants, and treat all educational leaders the same across all sectors. When asked about what elements the programme should include, most respondents selected specific sustained leadership development opportunities for a nationwide training programme, with over half suggesting one-on-

one mentoring and a regular national or regional hui for new or existing ECE leaders as preferred options.

**Table 4.5: Advice for New Leaders and Effectiveness Now**

Characteristic	Percent
<b>Advice for an up and coming ECE leader (open ended)</b>	
Leadership training	36%
Mentor/networking	43%
Self-belief	24%
Utilise team support	24%
Ask questions first	3%
Be prepared to cry	1%
<b>How effective as a leader now</b>	
Not at all effective	0%
Somewhat effective	2%
Moderately effective	11%
Effective	56%
Very Effective	31%
<b>Elements to be included in a nation-wide ECE leadership programme</b>	
Subsidised/free leadership qualification	78%
Specific sustained leadership development opportunities (e.g. online group network, or regional cluster professional development)	77%
Regional or National Hui for all ECE leaders	56%
One-on-one mentoring	56%
Regional or National Hui for new ECE leaders	43%
Regional or National Hui for aspiring ECE leaders	36%
Other (i)	7%

*Note. Other category (i) included descriptions such as All of the above, Compulsory course, Support for Māori leaders. Due to rounding sums may not total to 100.*

### **4.3 Phase Two – Interview Findings**

Data were collected through individual interviews with teachers who self-nominated following participation in the survey. Twenty respondents self-nominated and four were chosen to be interviewed, with selection determined by the type of leadership development the participants' experienced in order to provide a range of data. All four interviewees were female. A description of each participant and her individual journey into leadership is described below. Each leadership story starts with the participant's

entry into leadership, followed by their reflections on their leadership journey including supports and professional development (PD) provided along the way. The leaders' stories also highlight key aspects of their leadership focus, the skills they feel are important in their role as leaders and the advice that they would share with those considering leadership roles. In summarising the four leadership stories, similarities across cases are highlighted and emerging key themes identified. Pseudonyms are used for each case.

#### **4.3.1 Interview narrative – Emma**

At the time of interview, Emma had been in her leadership role for 11 years and held a Bachelor of Education (Early Years) degree. Her leadership journey began when looking for a new job. She initially applied for a basic teacher's role at a small standalone community-based centre run by a committee, but *"I came to the interview and after the interview I left with being offered the Assistant Supervisor role but when I started, about six weeks later, they told me that I was going to be the Supervisor. So, I was really thrown in the deep end."* Emma had been told that the last supervisor had been there for 25 years and had resisted technology as well as spending money and working on team culture. Emma worked hard to bring the centre up to quality as she defined it - fighting to get a computer at first, then upgrading the non-compliant playground, sorting out policies, and managing existing staff performance alongside inducting a new team.

Emma talked about how unprepared she felt, and how she believed her initial teacher education programme did not set her up to enter into a leadership role: *"I was not prepared. I was thrown in the deep end. And like I say, University does not prepare you for a leadership role. They prepare you for a teacher's role and even then, there are lots of things you don't know because you have to get into it and be part of a teaching team, rather than a student to learn it. So, there is a lot of stuff and I think they should warn you that it (staff/leadership challenges) is normal to come out."*

Having now been in a leadership role for 11 years, Emma reflected on how her leadership had evolved through learning on the job as she went, commenting that *"it has come through trial and error."* She worked hard to seek out information such as phoning the Ministry of Education with questions about policies, regulations and so forth but for leadership knowledge she felt she was on her own. Emma shared how

disappointed she was by most leadership PD that she found and how the PD did not give her the practical skills she desperately sought, except one that offered sustained leadership support over several months with a mentor. *“She (professional development mentor) has a lot of knowledge and experience and so when she comes in, she looks at how you work and says have you tried this, have you tried that and that is great, it’s what you want. Otherwise you don’t know what else you can do.”* This experience inspired her to seek out a leadership network of other ECE leaders in her area as support and for building her leadership knowledge in her own way. Emma now identifies herself as an effective leader and credits the experiences and mistakes she has made to the successes she has as a leader now.

For Emma, the most important focus of her leadership is the children, stating that *“the most important is that the children are loved and are safe, that is paramount and then everything follows that.”* She valued the practical skills of teachers over qualifications and looked at teaching practice above all else when employing staff. This belief is reflected in how she saw her own leadership style and how she valued practical leadership skills over qualifications. She once looked into post graduate study in leadership but was put off by *“all the theory.”* Instead she suggested practical skills workshops *“where people come together and learn different strategies – there is someone who organises it and that and shares the research they have done and that but also time to talk.”* By allowing time for the ECE leader attendees to talk, Emma reiterated the need for networking and the sharing of practical ideas to support leadership growth.

When asked about the leadership skills needed to be successful, Emma spoke of the value of communication with all stakeholders and being a pedagogical leader for the teaching team – through leading by example. She reflected on how important a leadership mentor is, noting how they are common in other sectors to help produce measurable learning and growth, but are severely lacking in ECE. *“I wish I had one, I really do. When I first started, I didn’t know anything.”* Emma spoke of how she created her own network of local ECE leaders to support her leadership knowledge, growth, and understandings. She maintained that mentors for new ECE leaders are really important as *“you can’t download to your staff because that is unprofessional, and you have to be the rock of the Centre at all times and that can be hugely demanding and stressful. But you have to, you have to be the rock of the Centre because they depend on you. So, it’s*

*nice to be able to leave the Centre and go and talk to someone that you know you can talk confidentially to – you have to find that right person though – and talk about things that ... or just get them out of your head. You know, this has happened, or I am really stumped with it or I am dealing with this difficult issue or I think I will do this and this, do you think that's right."*

Emma spoke of the need for a leadership development programme for ECE leaders because of the many leaders she knows that are struggling or who are *"stuck in a rut."* She spoke of many ECE leaders out there with no support and no guidance. Her advice for teachers interested in becoming leaders in ECE, was to examine whether leadership is right for them before jumping in, and to get some experience behind them in a leadership support role. She says that once in the position, leaders need to rely on the strengths of the team and to get to know them well. Emma reiterated the need for new ECE leaders to find a good mentor or at least a support network of fellow ECE leaders. Lastly, she advised new leaders to find as much practical leadership PD as they can in the early years to support them and to ensure they don't feel as alone as she did in trying to find leadership knowledge and information.

#### **4.3.2 Interview narrative – Sarah**

Sarah has been a Kindergarten Head Teacher at her Kindergarten for ten years and has a Diploma of Teaching ECE and a Bachelor of Education and *"before that I was a teacher in a variety of kindergartens 10 years, but I have relieved in leadership roles. Here I was just leading a team of two and then after about three years we became a team of six and a Teacher Aide so that changed my leadership journey; well continued it."* Sarah was encouraged to apply for the position by the Kindergarten Association Senior Teacher at the time, after Sarah had been relieving in the Kindergarten Head Teacher position for 6 weeks.

When asked about how prepared she was for her leadership role, Sarah spoke of how apart from the occasional temporary leadership role, she had no formal PD or support networks to contribute to her leadership knowledge prior to taking up her first leadership position. She wished there were mentors and PD support for her as there is now for new leaders within her Kindergarten Association. She described her experiences in the following way, *"I think probably now there is more support around leaders and more mentoring and things. That was a while ago, so probably not as*



*prepared as a I could have been and just support systems in place that could have been more supportive.”*

Related to her leadership journey Sarah reflected on how her confidence has grown over time and as a result of the leadership knowledge she has gained along the way. In addition to various PD opportunities, she also completed her own research and readings in self-directed study. Sarah spoke at length of the lack of practical leadership skills being offered for PD and how she has had to seek these out on her own. Sarah identifies herself as being an effective leader now within her role due to the experiences and learning she has sought out and applied to her leadership practice.

For Sarah, quality education for children and empowering her team and the community to grow is most important in her role as a leader. She valued not only the Code of Ethics (now the Code of Professional Responsibility) and rights of children, but also ensuring that the community sees their kindergarten as a community resource. She talked about how focusing on leading the children, team, and community had evolved over time in to a distributed approach to leadership. She believed that *“your leadership grows as well as well as your ability to lead”* over time in the role. She spoke of how she had only recently mastered having courageous conversations with difficult team members and the significant role that her support network played in being able to develop that skill.

In describing the leadership skills needed to be a successful leader in ECE, Sarah identified a mix of both theoretical and practical leadership knowledge as being important. Sarah also thought that alongside theoretical and practical leadership knowledge a mentor is the best support for growth as a leader: *“so that mix of theory and research, but I think one of the most important things is also having mentors and support people around you so that you can share and develop strategies from others.”*

When asked about the potential of a national ECE leadership programme for the sector Sarah immediately spoke of how a mentoring system would work the best: *“I do think it’s important that you have a beginning mentoring system but also one that continues during your journey because I do think that sometimes things come up that you just don’t see coming and it’s how you deal with those.”* She believed such a programme would also help unite the sector and close the divide between kindergartens and early learning centres. As she considered advice for aspiring or new leaders, she cautioned

them to ensure they are well informed of what the position entails before they take that leap. She suggested they ensure they have a support network of fellow leaders or a one-on-one mentor to support them as they learn on this journey. She encouraged potential new leaders to not only to be personally and professionally 'ready' but to ensure they have a good support system of family and friends for their leadership journey.

#### **4.3.3 Interview narrative – Moira**

Moira is the manager of a not for profit community service run by a parent committee. She was first 'shoulder-tapped' to take on the overarching leadership position within her centre when she was already the Head Teacher of a room, for the previous two years and a teacher for three years prior to that. The previous manager had been there 25 years so Moira still felt new to the role, even though she has now been there for over 4 years. Moira has a Bachelor of Education (Early Years) and a postgraduate diploma in Leadership and Management. She thanked the leader who had first approached her for believing in her abilities to lead when she did not see this in herself.

There was no support for Moira when she entered the new leadership role and although she had a partial mentor at times, she had to seek out knowledge and PD herself. She sought out a support network of fellow ECE leaders, but as a standalone service (not part of a wider network of centres) she was unable to gain entry into any group or form her own due to the perception of centres being in competition and that people would 'steal each other's ideas.' Moira talked of how hard this was for her and how she modelled her journey on not repeating perceived mistakes that her previous leaders had made, commenting that *"I knew what I wasn't and how I wouldn't be a leader because I had seen things I didn't like and didn't enjoy. So, I knew that I wouldn't be implementing them."* She believed that leadership style is not established until you are in a leadership position and suggested new leaders seek out available PD opportunities in the meantime.

Moira reflected on how she had grown stronger in her role over the years and how her personal teaching philosophy influenced this growth: *"I have always been an advocate for the children and my colleague's, but I think the stronger I have become in a leadership role, the more I have been an advocate for my personal philosophy."* She believed that her experience in previous teams had supported her transition into her

current leadership position by the experience and learning she had gained. Moira talked of how her state of mind had been very important to her journey as a leader. She was steadfast about the vision she had for the centre and how she sought to create this in the best way she knew how. In a previous role she had had to push her own philosophy and vision to one side due to the owners own personal vision, so in her current leadership role she actively sought to ensure she held true to her own beliefs and philosophy. She now believes herself to be an effective leader due to her growth and experiences as a leader over the years.

When asked about the skills ECE leaders need to be successful, Moira spoke of self-belief being very important to support strong leadership, noting *“you need to believe in why you came into this profession in the first place. It is really hard sometimes when you have those bigger bodies dictating and pointing the finger at you.”* She also spoke of how supporting the team, and the team sensing that belief is important in leadership. She spoke of needing to have been an ECE teacher before taking on a leadership role in ECE, reflecting *“I think you should be a teacher first; you have to understand where the teachers are coming from and you have to be able to recognise when they won’t speak up and when you are putting pressure on them because you have had that pressure put on you.”* She believed that good leaders need to be able to have a relationship with many people and understand people’s different personalities.

Moira described the importance of ensuring that PD that supported the development of knowledge and skills for leadership is offered to new ECE leaders. She believed that new leaders need practical courses focusing on the development of practical leadership skills, such as having difficult conversations, preparing for ERO review visits, writing policies. This was due to the struggle she had in her role and from what she was still experiencing, for example when new legislation or regulations are implemented from the government/Ministry, and how she has had to learn how to integrate these into her centre practices and policy herself.

When asked about a potential nationwide leadership programme Moira was adamant that there be some acknowledgement that leaders do not know it all and need wider and more comprehensive support from the Ministry of Education to meet requirements of leaders within the regulations, for ERO, setting up a new service and so forth. She thinks a leadership programme would support this current need/gap within the ECE sector and should be for anyone going into a leadership role - even being integrated

with a post graduate qualification. Moira also spoke of the benefits of such a programme enabling the creation of a leadership network – something she feels is sorely lacking from her professional life due to the competitive nature of the ECE sector. When asked about advice for new teacher leaders, she suggested they seriously think about whether this is the pathway they want to take. She stated that *“the passion has to be there for the teachers as much as the job – if you don’t enjoy the job and don’t enjoy teaching, if you are not willing to be there 150% for the teachers, then don’t sign up for it. Because that is what it needs to be.”*

#### **4.3.4 Interview narrative – Vanessa**

Vanessa was offered a temporary Head Teacher position at her large, for profit centre within the first year after she graduated. Someone was needed to fill the position and she felt it was her obligation to take on the role as most of the rest of the team were not qualified in ECE. She didn’t feel that she was *“shoulder tapped,”* more that it was a natural progression for her to move up into the leadership vacancy. In describing her decision to become a leader, Vanessa commented that *“nobody ever particularly inspired me, but I always wanted to be more than just a teacher. Teaching is great, but I always wanted to do more than that and always felt that it would be good to work at high level and just do more and not just settle.”* Therefore, when she was offered the role in a more permanent capacity, she accepted. Vanessa has a Master of Arts in Psychology and a Graduate Diploma in ECE.

When describing her preparedness for the leadership role, Vanessa explained she did not feel prepared at all even though she had some leadership theory behind her. She had participated in her organisation’s leadership PD programme but found it had not prepared her for all the day to day practicalities of leading: *“I went into this course thinking it was going to be all about policy and compliance and that for some reason – more about management but instead it was more about delegation, teamwork... there was a big project around facing your biggest fear and strategies to put in place to learn and move past that.”* To support herself she had been seeking out readings and books alongside asking other fellow leaders’ advice to help her with the ‘on the job’ aspects of her leadership role.

Vanessa’s leadership journey was supported somewhat by her organisation’s leadership programme, but she attributed much of her growth to experiences that had dented her

confidence and that she has had to come back from in order to continue to lead. For example, changes in management at her centre affected her journey and she felt these changes contributed to her leadership experience being *“up and down.”* For Vanessa, overcoming this challenge positively impacted on her sense of herself as a capable leader and belief in herself as an effective leader now. Her story however is one of isolation, as whilst she had other leaders, she could seek advice from she did not have a network group for support and felt alone with the pressures of her role. She reflected, *“I think there definitely needs to be ongoing mentorship but within a Centre or Kindergarten environment there should be a Manager or Supervisor that can do that, someone within the organisational structure that can do that.”*

Vanessa felt that her greatest responsibility as a leader is to inspire and empower others. She believed in growing other team members and *“inspiring in terms of where we are heading in terms of vision and in terms of the environment and in terms of how we teach and what we teach.”* She did this through role modelling for her team with her own teaching practice as well as through her leadership. She had undertaken readings in the area of inspiring and developing others and this, alongside *“ascertaining what the team needs,”* had supported her current leadership style. Whilst she had a clear vision for the centre, she had realised it through collaboration with her team and ensuring that she had *“brought them along with her”* towards a shared vision for the centre.

Vanessa believed that in order for ECE leaders to be successful they needed to have basic leadership knowledge such as *“knowledge of what is important as a leader; things like empowerment, inspiring and to be aware and know about things like delegation, teamwork and how to specifically do that.”* She believed that developing these elements in practice is important as *“it is one thing to know it and know that it is important, but it is another thing to actually be able to build those skills and have the skills to do it.”* Vanessa spoke of leaders needing to understand themselves as leaders to ensure they do not lead from a deficit place of not understanding themselves or how they lead others. She believed that leaders need to ensure they *“bring their team along with them”* in the creation of a team vision to ensure ownership but to also enact collaborative leadership.

When considering the possibilities of a potential leadership programme for either aspiring or existing ECE leaders, Vanessa related it to her own leadership programme experiences. She believed that the mainly theoretical base of most post graduate

programmes shows the lack of attention to practical skills that leaders need to be successful in their roles. She believed it needs to be *“really relevant to working on the floor with children. Obviously, there will be theory, but it needs to be really useful for what it is like day to day working with children; I think that would be really great. So, things like those basic practical skills – leading meetings, customer service, delegations, communication, building a team, etc.”* She advised new or aspiring leaders to *“go for it”* but to ensure they are really intentional with what they are doing and to understand that they can’t do it on their own – they need some sort of leadership training, a good mentor, or to do lots of reading up on leadership. She also felt that there are not a lot of perks in taking on the extra work and responsibility as a leader aside from learning and growth as a professional and person.

#### **4.3.5 Summary of interviews**

When looking at the research questions, the interviewees responses highlighted, alongside the survey data, that NZ teachers become leaders in ECE settings mainly through either being asked to move into the leadership role due to suitability/being needed to step into a vacant role due to lack of another, or as part of career progression. All the interviewees’ experiences of leadership development prior to taking on their first leadership role were very limited with Emma, Vanessa and Sarah all suggesting that the professional development they accessed did not support them with the practical aspects of their roles. All four interviewees had to learn on the job as they went along or seek their own knowledge/support.

Their beliefs about leadership development highlighted a desire for leaders to have access to leadership development prior to taking on a leadership role and for this development to have practical as well as theoretical aspects with Emma placing particular emphasis on the combination of both practical and theoretical professional development. The utilisation of a mentor was also believed by all four to have a positive effect on leadership development, as stated specifically by Vanessa, Sarah, and Emma in their interviews, as was access to a leadership network which was of particular importance to both Moira and Emma. There was indication from all four interviewees that a nationwide leadership programme for ECE leaders alongside the compulsory sector would best support new ECE leaders. All four interviewees highlighted that a main barrier to effective ECE leadership was not having leadership training before they

entered the role and a lack of support they received from their team/organisation/leader colleagues once in the role.

#### 4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings from the present research, both survey and interviews, provided similar stories of experiences and perspectives across the individual responses from ECE leaders that participated in the research. Integrations of findings across the phases resulted in six overarching messages from the present study. This included:

1. **Lack of preparedness before taking on a leadership role.** Lack of preparedness to take on their first leadership position was articulated by most participants. Only 20% initially felt well or very well prepared to take on their first leadership role.
2. **Improved feelings of effectiveness after a period in the role and subsequent leadership support.** After a period of time in their role 56% felt effective as a leader with 31% feeling very effective. Although 80% of respondents claimed that they did not feel prepared for their initial leadership role, 87% of respondents believed that over time they had become effective leaders of their ECE service. Participation in leadership professional development and/or experience/on the job training has supported leaders to grow their skills to a point where they feel effective in their role.
3. **Leadership professional development and skills can be self-taught.** Over half of leaders responding via survey, and all of the interviewees, had had some sort of leadership PD after they had become a leader, but 97% of respondents stated that learning of the job/through experience was the most salient factor in their leadership journey.
4. **Mentoring and networks are valuable, but currently limited.** The desire to have access to a mentor or leadership networks was shared by all respondents. The value of both mentors and leadership networks came up in the majority of open-ended question responses and all of the interviews. Yet, respondents indicated the availability of suitable mentors varied.
5. **New leaders value practical over theoretical approaches to leadership development.** Most leaders responded that they would have wanted to have had the opportunity to participate in some sort of leadership training/development before taking on their first leadership role, and that ideally this should be practical as well as theoretically grounded.
6. **A national professional development programme for ECE leaders would elicit positive change for the sector.** Ninety-seven percent of leaders believed that there should be

some sort of nationwide government funded and organised leadership training programme for ECE leaders. They believed this could take place alongside other education sectors and other PD provision that is currently available.

The six key messages from the findings are discussed with more detail in the discussion chapter.



## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### 5.1 Introduction

This research has investigated a group of New Zealand ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development, before and after taking on their leadership role. It has explored their beliefs about leadership to further advance understanding of leadership development within the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood sector. This chapter will explore the six key messages from this research: 1) lack of preparedness before taking on a leadership role; 2) improved feelings of effectiveness after a period in the role and subsequent leadership support; 3) leadership professional development and skills can be self-taught; 4) mentoring and networks are valuable but currently limited; 5) new leaders value practical over theoretical approaches to leadership development; and 6) a national professional development programme for ECE leaders would elicit positive change for the sector. The potential implications of this research will be discussed alongside limitations of the research and potential areas for future research.

#### 5.2 Lack of Preparedness Before Taking on a Leadership Role

The study showed that most respondents moved into their first leadership position because they either sought career progression or felt obligated to step up into a vacant leadership position with little or no leadership training prior to taking the role. Moreover, findings highlighted that even after taking on a leadership position participation in a leadership programme was variable. Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, and Briggs (2004) have suggested that fragmented pathways for ECE leaders without appropriate supports for leadership can have a negative impact on quality. Their work showed that a lack of support impacts tamariki, whānau, and teaching teams as new leaders grapple with learning the management and leadership aspects of their role largely unaided. Respondents in this research spoke of the consuming nature of their own leadership journey, especially at the outset. Similarly, Newton, Riveros and da Costa (2013) noted that the lack of support for new leaders has an impact on leadership development for a sector as a whole because of not only the links between quality provision and leaders' development but the leadership experience for the leader being negative. Participants in this research support those findings by indicating their lack of preparation for their leadership role was a negative aspect of their leadership journey.

Leaders lack of preparation can be a key determinant in the reduction of quality provision in the ECE sector (Weisz-Koves, 2011; Bloom & Bella, 2005; Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2014; Ang, 2011; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004). Moreover, past leadership development research has shown the decrease in leadership development alongside the increase in leaders' workloads/expectations and requirements from stakeholders can negatively impact quality in ECE (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Davis, Krieg & Smith 2015). Respondents in the presented study also commented on the increased complexity that their leadership role entailed which draws into question how these conditions are influencing quality in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **5.3 Improved Feelings of Effectiveness After a Period in the Role and Subsequent Leadership Support**

Despite the varied preparation, training and supports, and the perceived effectiveness professional development when it was received, most leaders reported feeling effective or very effective as a leader. Although leaders gained confidence in their effectiveness overtime, this research did not examine whether this resulted in improved quality in practice. Research in the area of leadership suggests that training and initial buy-in to the role are critical to be effective. For example, Xu and Patmor (2012) research suggests that leaders need formal leadership training for sustained leadership improvement although not all completed 'formal' training in their study. Many of the varied pathways contrasts with the idea that leaders need to self-identify as leaders first to be effective (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015) or that leaders need to be shown leadership defined in a certain way to become effective in their role (Douglass, 2017).

According to Ang (2011), 'effective' leaders are able to communicate and enact the overall vision for their service, as well as reflect on and engage with the changing context, this takes skill and requires new leaders to access support to develop those skills. Clark and Murray (2012) highlight the importance of leaders being supported to develop their skill sets. This suggests that the leadership supports that leaders did receive or seek out for themselves was essential.

### **5.4 Leadership Professional Development and Skills can be Self-Taught**

A key aspect of leaders' experiences was their perception of the benefit obtained from any professional development they participated in (or desired to participate in). Many

of the ECE leaders utilised books and leadership literature to supplement their knowledge. This highlighted a distinct willingness to grow into their role. Nearly all of the respondents indicated that learning on the job/through experience was the most salient factor in their leadership journey. In their study on NZ ECE leadership development, Ryder, Davitt, Higginson, Smorti, Smith and Carroll-Lind (2017) found that participants viewed on the job learning as the most important way of learning to be a leader.

Given the limited supports available to leaders, learning on-job or engaging in self-teaching to support leadership is a reality in the sector. Carver (2016) also asserted that many teacher leaders have had to learn on the job, and that ongoing learning is one of the ways of learning to become an effective leader. Findings in this research support that ongoing learning is key to leaders feeling effective in their roles.

### **5.5 Mentoring and Networks are Valuable, but Currently Limited**

Many respondents in this research utilised either a mentor or network to support their growth and development as a leader both formally and informally. Unlike other training and professional development supports, mentors and network support offer an on-going interpersonal aspect to supporting emerging leaders. Augustine-Shaw and Reilly (2017) have identified that an interpersonal and growth focused approach to leadership development is key to sustaining an effective leadership model in ECE settings.

Respondents in the present study took the time to express the benefits gained in their leadership development from engaging with mentors. Augustine-Shaw and Reilly (2017) have proposed that mentors' most important work is to support the mentee to grow and develop their own individual strengths through sustained interactions over time. Some respondents spoke of the need to have someone to talk to: to 'download' with in a confidential way with someone who not only understands but can support the practical knowledge needed by the new leader.

Notably, many leaders in the present study were left to identify and develop the mentor support relationships by themselves, and that with no formal structure guiding those relationships there expressed variable outcomes from their experiences. Moreover, some leaders were unable to access mentors due to the highly competitive nature of

the sector and the absence of trained mentors in roles within services (Augustine-Shaw & Reilly, 2017).

In addition to the supports of mentor, the desire for collaborative opportunities to strengthen practice through leadership networks was also identified by respondents as being valuable in their development as leaders. The survey respondents talked about seeking support networks on both an informal and formal basis. One of the interviewees had set up her own leaders network in her area, comprising of different local ECE services leaders, where as another had sought several times to join or create one but was barred due to a sentiment of competition existing between her local ECE leaders/services.

Expressed benefits of networks focused on having a group of peers to share leadership ideas, skills, and experience with. Stampopoulos (2015) and Douglass (2017) both emphasise the benefits of utilising networking supports to nurture leadership capabilities and the positive long-term effects these can have for participants. In the present research, some respondents pointed out that networking was a useful way to access the expertise one needs to support their role when effective mentors are few and far between.

Taken together, the present research supports the case for the development and training of skilled mentors to support the leadership journey of new leaders within the sector. This finding supports the work of Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, and Tamati (2009) where they recommend that leadership development for the ECE sector should include the proliferation of mentors and networks for supporting leaders.

### **5.6 New Leaders Value Practical over Theoretical Approaches to Leadership Development.**

Leaders consistently expressed a desire for practical leadership professional development rather than theory focused professional development, as they felt their role as a leader consisted of practices and skills. For example, interviewees spoke about professional development needing to have relevance to the actual role they are performing. Relevant leadership development therefore needs to be not only be practical as it applied to the lived context of leadership, in addition to growing leaders' learning and understanding of different leadership approaches.

Leaders in the present study thought that ongoing leadership development rather than one off provocation were more influential of practice than theoretical courses of study. A lack of contextually relevant learning opportunities for new leaders is identified by Klevering and McNae (2018) as a missed opportunity for a practice focused leadership development programme. These authors noted that whilst postgraduate study was highly influential on leaders, that a sustained progressive approach was best, and one grounded in skills as well as knowledge. This highlights the reflective nature of the leadership (Klevering & McNae, 2018) and is consistent with Nicolson and Kroll (2015) who propose that effective leadership support programmes demand an intentional co-inquiry into practice. Rodd (2001) suggested a need for individualised programmes in ECE aligned to the context in which practice takes place, as well as leadership development that strengthens professional knowledge and leadership knowledge authentically within the ECE context (Weisz-Koves, 2011; Stamopolulos, 2015).

Overall the literature on leadership development calls for developing leaders though supports that utilise real life scenarios to grow their self-awareness and leadership understandings (Layen, 2015), for opportunities for mentoring and collaborative oral inquiry to strengthen practice (Nicolson & Kroll, 2015), and to utilise networking supports to nurture leadership capabilities (Stamopoulos, 2015; Douglass, 2017). This research found a similar articulation of needs from leaders in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

### **5.7 A National Professional Development Programme for ECE Leaders Would Elicit Positive Change for the Sector**

Respondents and interviewees were overwhelmingly in support of aspiring or new leaders having leadership training either before, or early on in their leadership role. There was also support for having either a mentor or a network of other leaders. Many had commented on the desire to have had more experience before they took on their leadership role to be able to cope with or have an understanding of the actual pressures involved in being a leader, prior to employment.

Leaders articulated their hope for a national leadership programme for new leaders and were envious of the support given to leaders in the compulsory sector. While leaders still saw a role for local networks as appropriate, they believed that being a professional leader in ECE should attract the same central government support as the school sector. There was a sense that creating a collaborative network through meeting up together

with leaders across the sector would be beneficial to leadership development and sustained connection for leaders. A regional programme for leadership development was popular in the hopes of respondents alongside a call to include current leaders as well as new/aspiring leaders into such a programme.

Davitt and Ryder (2018) agreed that ECE leaders getting specific professional learning and development to support both emergent and current leaders within Aotearoa New Zealand would be beneficial. Klevering and McNae (2018) further support sector wide professional development for ECE leaders within NZ and highlight that such support is currently lacking. Past research suggest that a lack of a clearly defined leadership progression is a hindrance to the construction of a practically sound and useful model of leadership development in ECE settings (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Ang, 2011; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Klevering & McNae, 2018). The findings of this research support the call for the consideration of sector-wide professional learning for leaders in the ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. The extent to which this is delivered through the newly released Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Leadership Strategy (2018) and the Educational Leadership Capability Framework (2018) is still to be determined.

### **5.8 Implications**

This research has significant implications for professional development programmes for leaders within ECE not only within Aotearoa New Zealand, but the wider sector. It has shown a lack of ongoing and contextually relevant professional support for current ECE leaders prior to and as they moved into their roles and continued their roles as leaders. Giving voice to leaders within the sector through this research may encourage others to ask for help before they accept their new role and seek connection with other leaders in the local area.

This research has highlighted that professional development programmes to support new leaders needs to have a strong emphasis on practical skills alongside theoretical frameworks for understanding leadership and practice. This finding highlights a pragmatic need within the sector for leaders to access professional development that makes a difference to their practice, not only the way that they think about their practice as a leader. Furthermore, this research points to a need for longer term engagement with providers where growth and development is tracked over time in a

way that is both results focused, and relationship driven with preferences for opportunities for mentorship and building supportive networks.

### **5.9 Future Research**

The present study focused on teachers' experiences as they entered into leadership roles. The research and previous research in this area draws into question the notion that a good teacher will make a strong leader because the skills and attributes for a great teacher are not necessarily easily transferred into leadership skills. Several respondents described the difficulties they had transitioning from teaching children to leading adults. The scope of this research did not allow for further exploration of the differences between teaching children and leading adults, and what this could mean for future professional development for ECE leaders. This is may be a key area for future research.

While the design of the present study allowed for a breadth of respondents' perspectives, followed by the depth of a few individuals' experiences, the extent to which influential factors, such as respondents' qualifications and how these may have or may have not impacted on their feelings of effectiveness as a leader was not explored. Qualifications including postgraduate programmes in leadership may have affected the way that leaders think about their capabilities and could be an area for future research.

Finally, it is important to note that this research focused on education and care leaders and kindergarten head teachers whereas leaders in home-based care, Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo and Pasifika ECE were not considered in this research. Again, this is an opportunity for future research across the broader sector.

### **5.10 Limitations**

The study employed a survey followed by select respondent interviews. A key limitation of this approach was that the survey was only put out to the lower North Island and that the response rate was low - only 91 responses out the potential responders from the 717 survey invitations sent out. That said, the data provided powerful descriptive information in response to the research questions. Survey is often limited by response rate and this is particularly true of online survey tools (Wright, 2005). Future research utilising a national survey to further explore leaders' experiences of the leadership journey with a view to improving PD provision maybe another area for further research.

Interviewing only four respondents was a further limitation. More interviewees would have provided richer data and could have provided extra insight into the lived experience of leaders within the sector. Due to the small nature of this study, information about respondents' ethnicity and culture was not sought or reported to avoid unfounded generalisations being drawn based on a small number of participants. Nonetheless, past research has suggested that culture is an important factor in leadership development. A larger group of survey respondents and case studies would not only provide potentially useful findings, but it would also enable a more diverse cultural and contextual experience to be recorded, leading to further insights that may be of more specific use to a continually diverse sector and the provision of contextually and culturally responsive leadership development.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

The present study sought to explore the experiences of current ECE leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand relating to their leadership journey, as well as inform professional development providers to understand the needs of new and incumbent leaders. Findings indicate that currently, many ECE leaders feel poorly equipped to take on their leadership role and that ongoing leadership was largely self-initiated. Given the importance of ECE leadership for quality ECE there is a need for more focused development of ECE leaders to strengthen and deepen their leadership capabilities. A national leadership development programme may help strengthen the ECE sector by ensuring stronger support for all services and emerging leaders. Supports developed should focus on practical leadership practices as well as theories of leadership when it comes to supporting new leaders and the need for on-going mentorship and support networks within the wider ECE sector.



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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

### 1. What is your ECE Centre leadership position?

- Centre Manager/Supervisor
  Kindergarten Head Teacher
- Other (please specify)

### 2. Do you currently hold Education Council teacher registration/certification?

- Yes
  No

### 3. Which of the following qualifications do you hold? (tick all that apply)

- DipTchng ECE
  PGDip Early Years
- BEd Tchng Early Years
  PGDip ECE
- BEd
  MEd
- BEd ECE
  Higher Dip Teaching
- Grad Dip ECE
- Other (please specify)

### 4. How many children is your setting Licensed for?

- 0-25
  76-100
- 26-50
  101-150
- 51-75
  151+

### 5. How would you describe your centre?

- Community owned
  Kindergarten
- Not for profit
  Owner operated
- For profit
- Other (please specify)

### 6. Please describe how your service is organised

- Stand-alone service
  Part of a small group of centres
- Part of an ECE franchise
  Kindergarten Association
- Part of a large ECE corporation

### 7. How would you classify your Centre:

- Rural
  Inner-city
- Urban
- Other (please specify)

### 8. What region is your centre located within?

- Wellington
  Taranaki
- Manawatu
  Hawke's Bay
- Wanganui
  Central North Island

### 9. How many teachers do you lead within your setting?

- 1-3
  11-14
- 4-7
  15-19
- 8-10
  20+

### 10. How many years have you been in an ECE Centre leadership role (combined, if non-consecutive)

- 1-2years
  11-15years
- 3-5years
  16-20years
- 6-10years
  21+

### 11. Which of the following activities/responsibilities are part of your leadership role?

Select all that apply

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managing the day-to-day running of the Centre (e.g. creating rosters, ensuring child data correct, accounts)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Purchasing resources and ensuring basic equipment present                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources - recruitment and hiring of staff   | <input type="checkbox"/> Setting and managing a budget   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources - performance management  | <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging team members in internal evaluation (self review)                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting the vision for the Centre and supporting unified engagement in the vision from the Centre team          | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring the Centre is compliant (meets 2008 ECE Regulations)                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching - limited teaching responsibilities e.g. typically coverage of staff breaks                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for, and liaising with, ERO   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching - Partial teaching responsibilities e.g. set rostered times  | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing reports (e.g. company tracking reports, reports for professional leaders) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching - Full teaching responsibilities e.g. regular and daily engagement with children                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring and supporting staff development  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finding and providing professional development for team members/supporting a professional development programme | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing planning and assessment systems  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managing support staff (e.g. teacher aide, kitchen staff, administrator)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Promote quality pedagogical approaches to support teaching and learning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting the strategic direction for the Centre  | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing and implementing appropriate Centre policies                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liaising with a Board or parent committee   | <input type="checkbox"/> Building connections with families and the community                                |

Undertaking appraisals for staff and supporting them to achieve appraisal goals

Other (please specify)

## 12. How would you describe your leadership style?

## 13. Which of the following characteristics do you believe are the most important to demonstrate in your leadership role? Choose all that apply

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forward-looking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competent               | <input type="checkbox"/> Constructive  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy             | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful              | <input type="checkbox"/> Reflective    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident               | <input type="checkbox"/> Communicative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotionally intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic            | <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring               | <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive               | <input type="checkbox"/> Empowering    |

## 14. At what point of your teaching career did you take on a leadership role?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Before I was a qualified teacher                              | <input type="radio"/> 5-10 years after I became fully registered/certified  |
| <input type="radio"/> When I was still a provisionally registered/certified teacher | <input type="radio"/> 10-15 years after I became fully registered/certified |
| <input type="radio"/> In the first 5 years of becoming fully registered/certified   | <input type="radio"/> 15+ years after my full registration/certification    |

## 15. How prepared did you feel for this leadership role?

1 - not prepared	2 - somewhat prepared	3 - moderately prepared	4 - well prepared	5 - very well prepared
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 16. Briefly describe your entry into a leadership role and some of the key milestones in your leadership journey.

17. Which of the following leadership training/development opportunities had you participated in before you became a leader? Check all that apply

- One off leadership professional development
- Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)
- One on one mentoring by another leader
- Other (please specify)
- Postgraduate leadership programme
- No opportunities

18. Which of the following leadership training/development opportunities have you participated in after you became a leader? Check all that apply

- One off leadership professional development
- Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)
- One on one mentoring by another leader
- Other (please specify)
- Postgraduate leadership programme
- No opportunities

19. What factors have impacted the most on your journey as an ECE leader? Check all that apply

- Learning on the job/through experience
- Reading books on leadership
- One off leadership professional development
- Other (please specify)
- Sustained leadership development programme (e.g. 2-5 linked sessions)
- One on one mentoring by another leader
- Postgraduate leadership programme

20. What would you want to do differently, if you were able to start your leadership journey again?

21. What advice would you give to an up and coming leader in ECE?

22. How effective do you feel as a leader now?

1 - not at all effective

2 - somewhat effective

3 - moderately effective

4 - effective

5 - very effective

23. Do you believe that there should be a nationwide leadership training programme for early childhood teachers/leaders? (e.g. programmes currently provided for Primary and Secondary school aspiring leaders?)

Yes

No

Comment:

24. If so, which of the following elements would you want to see this programme include?

Regional or National Hui for aspiring ECE leaders

Specific sustained leadership development opportunities (e.g. online group network, or regional cluster professional development)

Regional or National Hui for new ECE leaders

One-on-one mentoring

Regional or National Hui for all ECE leaders

Subsidised/free leadership qualification

Other (please specify)

25. If you would like to nominate yourself to be interviewed one-on-one about your leadership and leadership development experiences following from this initial survey, then please provide your contact details below. This is an open invitation and you are under no obligation to participate in these interviews.

The interview is expected to last between 30-45 minutes and will be scheduled at a time convenient to you, either face-to-face or via Skype/Zoom.

Please note that should you choose to submit your name and contact details additional information will be sent to you for your consideration and further consent. All survey data will be kept confidential and you will not be identified.

PLEASE NOTE: All participants from the Ruahine Kindergarten Association are ineligible for face-to-face selection due to the researcher being employed by this Association, and in order to minimise any potential discomfort or reticence. Please do not add your details here if you are employed by the Ruahine Kindergarten Association as you are not eligible for selection for interview.

Name:

Email address:

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### **Interview Protocol**

Interview Conducted By: Megan Edwards

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location:  Leader's centre     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Recorded by: \_\_\_Audio

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview that builds upon the original survey related to ECE leadership and leadership development. I will use an audio recorder to record the interview and have the interview transcribed. I will provide you with a copy of your interview.

This interview will use a series of guiding questions to learn more about your perspectives about leadership in ECE. Any information you share is confidential and you will remain anonymous in any of my write ups or reports. You can ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any time and you can ask to stop at any time.

I encourage you to speak openly and honestly about your perspectives of your leadership journey and leadership in general. Thank you again for your participation in my research. Do have any question before we begin.

### **Interview Questions:**

Tell me about your journey into a leadership role in ECE?

- Did you apply for your leadership position or were you approached/shoulder tapped?
- Was there someone that inspired you to take on a leadership role? Who/how?
- Did you feel prepared for this role? Why/why not? (May be multiple roles)

Please tell me about the way in which your leadership has evolved over time?

- What were some of the key milestones in your journey?
- In what ways has your roles, responsibilities or priorities changed or not changed?

From your viewpoint, what is your most important responsibility as a leader in ECE?

- What experiences have led you to that perspective?
- Have you always viewed this as most important?

What do you think ECE leaders need to know to be successful leaders?

- What types of practical or theoretical knowledge do they need?

What do you think ECE leaders need to be able to do to be successful leaders?

- What types of decision making and communication skills do they need?
- What supports do they need?



How do you think ECE leaders should gain knowledge and skills to be successful leaders?

- Would you be more interested in theory based learning through study or courses, or one-on-one, apprenticeship supports such as mentoring? Explain why?

Please describe any leadership training/development you participated in **before** you became a leader?

- What characteristics of this training did you find effective? Why?
- Which characteristics did you not find effective? Why?

Please describe any leadership training/development you participated in **after** you became a leader?

- What characteristics of this training did you find effective? Why?
- Which characteristics did you not find effective? Why?

What role has being mentored played in your leadership development?

- What are your thoughts on/experiences of mentoring?
- If you were not mentored in your leadership journey, what are your thoughts about it?

What has been the most challenging aspect of your leadership journey for you?

- How were you supported? Did you feel prepared?

What factors have most impacted on your leadership journey?

Tell me about what you think the early childhood sector might need in regards to developing its aspiring leaders.

- What types of national, regional, or local supports would you like to see?
- How might a national leadership development programme be helpful?

What advice would you give to an aspiring leader in today's ECE leadership climate?

## Appendix C: Survey Consent

### NZ Early Childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development

Kia ora Early Childhood Leader.

Thank you for taking the time to support my Masters in Leadership and Administration research thesis, which is focused on exploring early childhood teachers' pathways into leadership and their experiences of leadership development.

This survey comprises of 25 questions and should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and invites you to share your experiences as an early childhood leader of an early childhood centre, and the leadership development you have participated in.

This research is seeking the perspectives of qualified and registered early childhood teachers who are currently in leadership positions and have leadership responsibilities related to the day-to-day operations, teaching and learning of an early childhood centre (e.g. Centre Manager, Centre Supervisor or Team Leader of an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centre, or the Head Teacher of a Kindergarten) from the Central/Lower North Island, to allow for an appropriate sample size for a Masters research thesis.

The survey is voluntary and completed anonymously. Your responses to survey questions will be taken as your consent to participate.

At the end of the survey there is an opportunity to nominate yourself to be interviewed one-on-one about your leadership and leadership development experiences. This is an open invitation and you are under no obligation to participate in these interviews. Please note that should you choose to submit your name and contact details all other survey data will be kept confidential and will not be identified.

Thank you for your time and contribution.

Ngā mihi,

Megan Edwards.

[AGREE AND TO GO TO SURVEY](#)

**Appendix D: Interview Consent****Early childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development****PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL (ECE Leader Participant)**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature**

:

.....

**Full Name  
- printed**

.....

## Appendix E: Survey Information Sheet



### Survey Information Sheet

#### Early childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development

Kia ora Early Childhood Leader,

My name is Megan Edwards and I am completing a Masters in Leadership and Administration with Massey University. As part of my research thesis, I am seeking to explore early childhood teachers' pathways into leadership and their experiences of leadership development.

I would be grateful if you could take approximately 10-15 minutes to help me with my research by completing this online survey.

(A direct link to the survey is at the bottom of this information sheet)

#### **What is the study about?**

The aim of this study is to explore early childhood teachers' leadership development and professional growth pathways into leadership positions in New Zealand. I am specifically interested in finding out:

1. How do NZ teachers become leaders in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings?
2. What are NZ ECE leaders' experiences of leadership development?
3. What are NZ ECE leaders' beliefs about leadership development?
4. What factors impact on NZ leaders' leadership in ECE settings?

ECE Leadership pathways are currently not clear in New Zealand, and this research aims to explore and describe leadership pathways to help inform further leadership development within the sector.

#### **Who are the intended participants?**

I am inviting qualified and registered early childhood teachers who are currently in leadership positions and have leadership responsibilities related to the day-to-day operations, teaching and learning of an early childhood centre. I am interested in all experience levels (including new leaders and long serving leaders) to gather a range of perspectives from our sector. As a potential participant you might be a Head Teacher in Kindergarten or a Centre Manager, Centre Supervisor or Team Leader in education and care setting. This research aims to recruit participants who are in

leadership positions that involve regular contact with children and families. For the purposes of this study, the participants do not include those that hold upper level leadership/management positions with wider responsibilities to more than one setting, or whose role is primarily administrative or organisational, for example Centre Owners, Licensee's, Senior Teachers, or Curriculum Managers.

### **Details about the survey**

The survey comprises of 25 questions encompassing a mixture of multiple choice, rating, and open-ended questions. It will only take you up to 10 to 15 minutes to complete and allow you to share your experiences of moving from an ECE teacher position into an ECE leader position.

At the end of the survey there is an opportunity to nominate yourself to be interviewed one-on-one about your leadership and leadership development experiences. This is an open invitation and you are under no obligation to participate in these interviews. Please note that should you choose to submit your name and contact details all other survey data is still kept confidential and will not be identified.

### **Participant Rights**

There is no obligation to accept this invitation. If you *are* interested in taking part in the study, please click the link below. Your responses to survey questions will be taken as your consent to participate. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question or to discontinue the survey at any point. You may contact me to ask questions about the study at any point, and you have the right to see a summary of the research findings at its conclusion upon request.

The survey is completed anonymously. Anonymity will be upheld by ensuring that neither participants nor centres can be identified through any of the information published.

### **Data Management**

Responses from the survey will be stored securely and will only be accessible by the researcher and the research supervisors for the sole purpose of completing this thesis and as the basis for publications and/or presentations. Data will be destroyed after 5 years. If you would like a summary of the study findings, please email me.

## **Click the following link to access the survey:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JZHDFG2>

### **Further information**

If you have any questions regarding the study or survey, please feel free to contact me, [meganedwards@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:meganedwards@hotmail.co.nz) or my research supervisors Dr Tara McLaughlin, [T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz](mailto:T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz) and Dr Karyn Aspden, [K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz).

Thank you for your time. Ngā mihi.

### **Ethics**

*This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

## Appendix F: Interview Information Sheet



### Early childhood teachers' experiences of leadership development

#### INFORMATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADER PARTICIPANTS

Kia ora. My name is Megan Edwards and I am completing a Masters in Leadership and Administration with Massey University. As part of my research thesis, I am seeking to explore early childhood teacher's pathways into leadership and their experiences of leadership.

Thank you for your interest in participating in a face-to-face interview that builds upon the original survey related to ECE leadership and leadership development. The following information outlines the nature of the interview and the expectations and rights of participants.

The interview will be face-to-face, either in person or via video call (Skype/Zoom) as described below:

##### Face-to-face interview

The interview is expected to last between 30-45 minutes and will be scheduled at a time convenient to you. To enable accurate recording of the interview an audio recording will be used that will later be transcribed. The transcribed data will be given to you for approval and emendation before being used.

All data gathered for this study will be kept in a secure and confidential manner and used for the purposes of the thesis, and any ensuing publications and presentations. Confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms, no personally identifiable information will be shared about you or your setting.

Please note that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the interview at any time;
- request someone in a support role such as a whānau member to be present with you for the interview;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- ask any questions about the research at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; and
- be given access to a summary of the research when it is concluded.

As there are multiple participants for face-to-face interviews, over and above the limit of four, a selection process will occur from which you may be selected. The selection process will

follow purposive sampling to gather perspectives of leaders with differing experiences, where possible, and from differing services types including size, context, and location.

All participants from the Ruahine Kindergarten Association are ineligible for face-to-face selection due to the researcher being employed by this Association, and in order to minimise any potential discomfort or reticence.

If you have any questions regarding the study or survey, please feel free to contact me, [meganedwards@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:meganedwards@hotmail.co.nz) or my research supervisors Dr Tara McLaughlin, [T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz](mailto:T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz) and Dr Karyn Aspden, [K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz).

*This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

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Ngā mihi.