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LEADING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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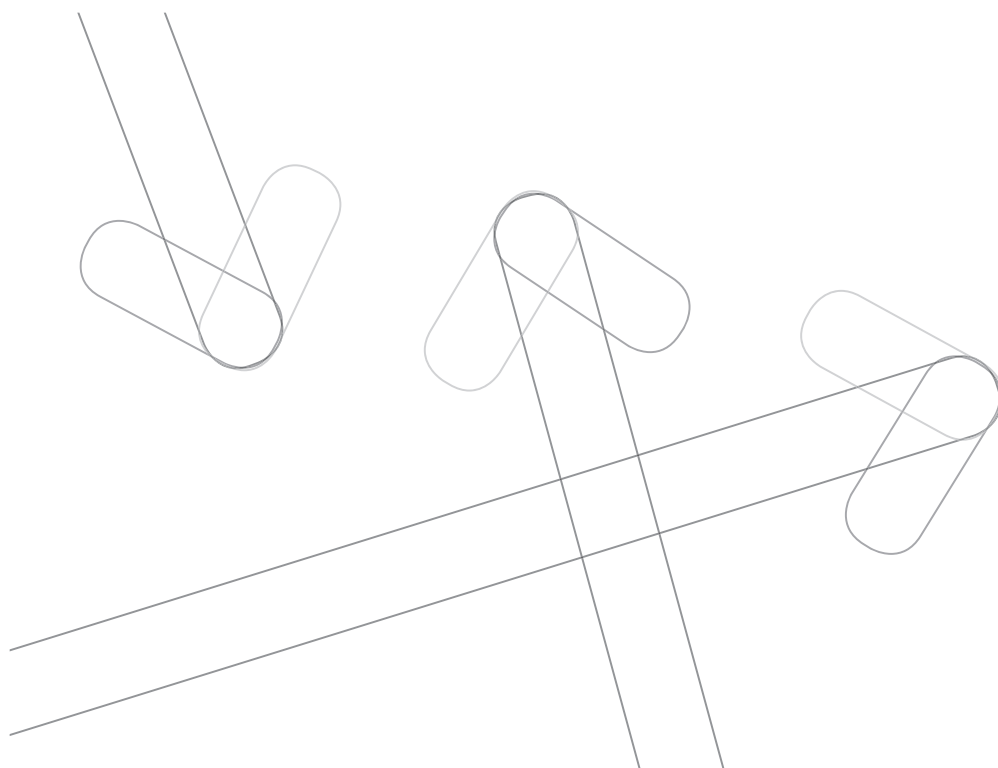
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LEARNING TO LEAD

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the meaning of leadership in the early childhood sector.
- Consider leadership of early childhood practice and the knowledge, skills and confidence required.
- Outline theories of leadership and their relevance to early childhood settings.





INTRODUCTION

What does the word ‘leadership’ conjure up for you? For many people the term is associated with individual job roles, with a job description which includes leading a team or an organisation. Thus, ‘leadership’ can be seen as the role of the ‘big boss’, the person who has the authority to hire and fire. In this chapter we aim to convince you otherwise, that leadership in early childhood settings is not the exclusive role of those who have ‘leader’ in their job title. We firmly believe that leadership can and should be part of everyone’s role, and especially so in the early childhood sector. This chapter also sets out our values and beliefs about leadership, based on our own experience and the experience of early childhood practitioners from a range of settings. We hope that you will see the importance of these values, whatever your role in the sector.

WHAT IS ‘LEADERSHIP’ IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR?

In our view, leadership is about using your knowledge, skills, personality and experience to positively influence practice. Every practitioner has the capacity to lead, and by doing so to improve opportunities for children and their families and promote ways of working which support staff development.

We consider that some roles are identified as ‘leader’ roles, but that all early childhood roles need people who can enact leadership. Practitioners do this by enacting the values and supporting the goals of the setting.

ACTIVITY 1.1: LEADERSHIP AND MY ROLE

Think about the work you currently do in an early childhood setting: this may be a formal job role or an informal one, or it may be your role as a parent or relative. Thinking about this role, answer the following questions:

- Do you know what the organisation or setting does?
- Do you know what your role involves?

As an early childhood practitioner you have the potential for leadership in your role and you have the potential to positively influence practice. We suggest that you keep a notebook or journal as you work through the activities in this book. Make a note now about what the organisation or setting you work for does, and what your role involves.

The above activity is intended to demonstrate that every practitioner has some understanding of the setting for which they work, and at least some understanding of the role they have within this setting. Your role may be as an assistant, as the overall leader of the setting, as a SENCO, a teacher, a room leader, a key person, a nanny, or one of several other roles. You may have a job description, or you may have a number of tasks which are your responsibility. Whatever your role, you have a part

to play. In this book leadership is seen as a component of every person's work in the early childhood sector. One participant in our research for this book, a senior early years educator, indicated what leadership meant to her:

'I think it means guiding and mentoring others, having the knowledge and confidence to deal with situations, and supporting others that have less knowledge of an area, so you can help them, and having ideas and implementing them and showing best practice, so others copy your good role model'.

Leadership may be taking overall responsibility for a whole setting or several settings, putting in place policies and procedures to enable the setting to achieve its aims, and providing a structure for the workforce to work with (therefore Chapters 5 and 6 will be particularly relevant to you if you are in this role). This is how many people view leadership, but leadership is much more than this. It might be looking for ways to do your own job more effectively, for example to work more productively with children and families, or to achieve the aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Chapter 7 considers ways in which all practitioners can promote positive ways of working with families. Leadership can include thinking creatively about your own work, how you might do something differently. Seeing leadership as part of your role can be empowering, it can make you feel you have an important role in the setting, and make others also realise the importance of their roles. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 aim to support such leadership practice within the practitioner role. Penn (2011) identified that there is a great deal that the early childhood practitioner *cannot* control about the setting in which they work, for example they cannot control the pay scales, or the curriculum, or government policy, or charges to parents. However, she also stressed that practitioners *can* control some elements of their work, and as such you do have control over the way you do your 'job on a daily basis' (Penn, 2011:149). As an example, one practitioner in our study, an early years educator, described that when she first started her job she suggested rearranging the way the room was laid out. As the room leader she discussed this with her manager and the other staff, and was encouraged to make this change. The very next day, furniture was moved around with the aim of improving the flow of the room: 'a home corner, and moving the cosy area away from the window, and moving the books ...'. The other practitioners in the room were pleased with the way it made an improvement. This example demonstrates the leadership that practitioners can exert over their practice.

In early childhood settings leadership is different from what is the case in many other sectors. It is different because *context* is all important. Garvey and Lancaster (2010) point out that in the business world competency frameworks which measure leadership knowledge and practice are commonplace, but that they do not take account of the importance of experience and context in the enactment of leadership. For early childhood education and care, context is crucial and the experience of the practitioner within that context can build a strong culture of development. What is also important in the early childhood sector is that the characteristics of early childhood leaders are often distinct from those of leaders in other sectors, being 'kind,

warm, friendly, nurturing and sympathetic' (Aubrey, 2011: 30). It is these same qualities which will support you to develop leadership in early childhood settings.

LEADERSHIP OF THE ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP OF PRACTICE

The different ways in which leadership is enacted are usefully identified by Whalley (2011b). In her consideration of the professionalisation of early childhood practice she identified two aspects of leadership, namely leading an organisation and leading practice. In this book we have devoted some chapters to specific roles within the early childhood workforce (leader of a setting, room leader, the key person). Here it is worth thinking about the overlap between leadership of the organisation and leadership of practice.

If asked the question 'What do leaders do?' three key elements spring to mind:

- Leaders identify and enact values.
- Leaders set the vision and goals.
- Leaders ensure legal and moral responsibilities are met.

However, these aspects of leadership can be enacted at many different levels. For example, the identification of values for a setting will typically be led by the main identified leader within the setting (and Chapter 6 focuses on leadership across a setting or settings), but a collaborative leader will want to encourage all the members of a team to have their say in this. If you are a member of the workforce within a setting, you can show leadership through your willingness to contribute to the development and identification of these shared values. In his book which considers how organisations are structured, Morgan (2006: 137) discusses the 'enactment of a shared reality' and the value of this to the success of organisations. Early childhood settings have their own culture in which beliefs, vision and values are shared, and where children, families and community can be understood and supported through these shared values, vision and beliefs. Thus, the collaboration between various members of the workforce to undertake the job of leadership is important in the early childhood sector.

ACTIVITY 1.2: THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

Thinking about the setting in which you work, or a setting with which you are familiar, ask yourself the question:

- Do you sometimes think that changes are needed in the setting?

If your answer is 'Yes', what would you then do about this?

You will need to consider this need for change. You have the potential for leadership in that you could reflect on current practice, think about alternative practice, read

about what others have written in relation to your ideas, and then present those ideas coherently to the person in charge of the setting, who might ask you to present your ideas to the other staff for discussion. This overall leader will be interested in your ideas if these fit with the overall values and goals of the organisation, and if the leader considers that your ideas might improve achievement of these shared values and goals while still meeting its legal and moral responsibilities.

In thinking about alternative ways of working you are clearly recognising that your role includes leadership. You may not have the final say as to whether your ideas will be implemented, but you are offering your experienced and informed view about potential changes. Doing this in a way which supports the organisation or setting is more likely to result in a positive response from the leader.

Not everyone who is part of the early childhood workforce will be confident enough to suggest changes, or to take up the leadership opportunities in their role. We hope you will find the chapters in this book helpful for you, so that you can begin to take up these opportunities and gain sufficient confidence to demonstrate some of the qualities of leadership. Jones and Pound (2008: 4) note that leadership influences 'others to improve and enhance children's care, learning and development'. We argue that leadership does not have to be in one direction only, that influencing improvements can occur from the bottom up, from the top down, or sideways (influencing colleagues).

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The terms 'leadership' and 'management' are often used interchangeably, but they have a different emphasis. Many roles combine elements of leading and managing, but it is useful to consider the difference. Whalley (2011b) clearly states the differences between the two. Leadership includes developing a vision and identifying shared values within the team, being accountable for quality, and taking responsibility for the needs of all stakeholders, for example children and families and other staff. On the other hand, management is seen as the effective deployment of resources, for example identifying staffing needs, organising a rota, and making sure that records are kept. Management will also include elements of planning and decision making. Leading changes in practice demands both leadership and management skills.

LEADING PRACTICE

We know from research, for example from the Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector study (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), that strong leadership is a key characteristic of an effective early childhood setting. These authors identified a reluctance to lead within settings, and a lack of qualifications in leadership across the early childhood sector. Our own experiences, and research for this book, have caused us to believe that all practitioners in early childhood settings have the capacity for leadership as part of their professional role and professional development.

In our view, the element of leadership which can be undertaken by *all practitioners* is the leadership of *practice*. Elements of leading practice identified by Whalley (2011a) include: being reflective and reflexive; having knowledge and understanding of children and their development; having knowledge and understanding of learning; valuing the child; and having a vision for practice.

To support leadership of practice, these elements can be incorporated into the development of all early childhood practitioners. For example, each practitioner can be encouraged to reflect on their practice and consider changes to practice. This can be done informally by the practitioner and by others in the setting on an ad hoc basis, but also formally with mentors. Although many starting practitioners will have no or limited knowledge of child development or of learning, this can be built into the development of the member of staff, through induction activities, expectations, reading and sharing in the setting. Valuing the child is an expected 'value' which can be reinforced by the culture of the setting, and as practitioners take this on board they can contribute to the culture, for example through reflection on activities within the setting and how those activities demonstrate the value of the child. A vision for practice is often something new employees have, or they can see different ways of doing things – this is to be encouraged, so that through reflection the need for changes in practice can be identified and planned for. The final chapter of this book considers ways in which we can improve practice through reflection. Activity 1.3 below is intended to support you in thinking about working collaboratively to support developments in practice.

ACTIVITY 1.3: VALUES IN PRACTICE

Esme is a new member of staff who has not worked in an early childhood setting before. She has noticed that the boys seem to avoid the dressing-up corner, whereas the girls play there quite often. When the manager asks her how she is settling in, Esme raises this point.

The manager suggests that Esme finds out more about what the curriculum says about opportunities to dress up, and also finds out what other staff think about this issue. Esme asks the manager if it is acceptable for her to ask the boys about dressing up, and the manager agrees.

When Esme asks the staff they are willing to share their experiences and ideas with her, and also suggest that she brings her ideas to the next team meeting.

→ Who is leading practice in this scenario?

In this example leadership of practice is demonstrated not only by Esme (who sees that something could change) and her manager (who is willing to support Esme to find out more and suggest changes), but also by the other staff who are willing to listen to ideas and suggest a mechanism to discuss those ideas and potentially make a change (the meeting). Discussing issues with the children (as Esme proposes) draws the children into leading development and change within the setting.

WORKING WITH OTHERS AS LEADERSHIP

In early childhood settings we work with children as well as parents, families and carers; colleagues who are assistants, managers, our boss, room leaders, and members of the multi-agency team; the local authority; schools; and other settings. You will be able to identify at least some of these groups of people in relation to your own role. It can be difficult working with other people, but it can also prove rewarding. The early chapters of this book focus on work within the setting, with children, families and other members of staff. Later chapters consider working with the multi-agency or interprofessional team, and across settings. If leadership is enacted in all roles within early childhood settings, then this is likely to lead to effective holistic practice (Allen & Whalley, 2010). The promotion of team and partnership working is essential within early childhood settings, because the setting alone does not form the child's world, and working with those who the child has contact with, or could effectively support the development of the child and family, is an important part of the early childhood practitioner's role.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR LEADERSHIP

We want to encourage you to think about your role within the early childhood sector and support you to develop leadership within that role. A good starting point here is to make a list of what you do and the knowledge and skills you utilise. Try Activity 1.4 now, noting down your responses. You may need to come back to this periodically, as you think of the various other things you do.

ACTIVITY 1.4: WHAT DO I DO? WHAT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE DO I USE?

Think about a typical day in your early childhood role. What do you do? Make a list of all the things which form part of a typical day in one column. Once you have done this, write down which skills and knowledge you might be using or might need to develop in another column. For example, you might use communication skills, organisation skills, or your knowledge of development, behaviour or hygiene. There are no right or wrong answers, and you can add to these lists at any time.

Table 1.1 Own Role

Things I do in a typical day	The skills I use or need	The knowledge I use or need
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We focus on some particular skills in this book, for example communication, assertiveness and resilience, to support you to develop these skills yourself, or help to develop these in others. By thinking about the skills and knowledge you already have, and the skills and knowledge you need, you can take ownership of your own professional development as an early childhood practitioner (see Chapter 5 for more on this topic).

LEADERSHIP AND CONFIDENCE

One of the benefits you will gain from reading this book will be a growing confidence in the importance of your role, and with that confidence should come the start of a positive spiral of demonstrating leadership. We consider that all members of the early childhood workforce have the potential for leadership in their role, and that using this potential can provide great satisfaction in the daily enactment of that role. We enjoy hearing stories from practitioners in a range of settings about how daily practice has been changed to improve outcomes for children and their families. Many of these accounts of changes in practice demonstrate a commitment to inclusive and collaborative practice. The values of early childhood practice are therefore strongly evident in leadership of practice, a point identified by authors in the field (Jones & Pound, 2008; Whalley, 2011b; Davis, 2012).

The importance of developing confidence has been identified in research by Hadfield et al. (2012) and by Davis and Capes (2013). Early childhood practitioners gain confidence through education and opportunities to engage with making changes to practice. A confident practitioner is one who is more at ease with considering opportunities for change, being pro-active in considering the way resources are used, in communicating with parents, in identifying training needs, and in sharing learning from training within the setting. This confidence is embedded in knowledge about best practice, understanding children and their development, and recognising the importance of being professional. Confidence in their own knowledge enables practitioners to consider the longer term and more holistic view as regards outcomes for children and families.

THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

This section presents a short description of a number of theories of leadership and evaluates opportunities for their use in the early childhood sector. Trends in leadership have changed over the decades. There has been a general shift from a focus on leaders' characteristics and the traits of a good leader towards more general leadership guidelines, organisational leadership, and the need for transformation and vision.

TRADITIONAL VIEWS

A traditional view of leadership, and very popular in the early days of work on leadership, was the trait or 'great man' theory, popularised by the Scottish philosopher

Thomas Carlyle (1869) in terms of history being largely explained by ‘great men’. In the 1860s this was argued against by Herbert Spencer, who focused on the role of society in shaping such ‘great men’.

From the perspective of leadership, ‘great man’ theory assumed that leaders are born rather than made, that leaders are charismatic and lead because of the people they are, that the skills of leadership are relatively rare, and that the traits of leadership are innate. Alongside all this, however, was an emerging recognition that ‘good leader’ traits could be learned and thus did not have to be innate. There was increasing interest in the trait approach to leadership from the 1940s on in fields such as psychology, looking at the particular characteristics of a good leader. This interest in trait theory declined in the 1970s and 1980s, although there has been some renewed interest more recently, and it continues to have a place in leadership texts (Daft, 2011).

The ‘great man’ view of leadership has never sat comfortably within the early childhood workforce where the emphasis is on care, compassion, collaboration, and being supportive. The very name given to the original theory, ‘great man’, disregards the female workforce, and Siraj Blatchford and Manni (2007) state that gender is largely ignored in the wider literature on leadership and management. Those who have identified gender in leadership writing tend to identify women as more participatory and democratic (see Scrivens, 2002, reporting on work by Shakeshaft), and again this does not fit with trait theory. However, Eagly and Carli (2007) have identified that strong leaders’ key traits, such as intelligence, the use of initiative and being able to persuade others, are found in women just as much as they are found in men. This focus on traits which can be learned, and which are just as likely in women as in men, is now much more evident in the literature (see for example Bennis, 2009) about leadership traits. Despite the increasing recognition of women as effective leaders, formal training for leadership roles may not be sought out by women and formal leadership positions are not sought out by women as often as they are by men (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Northouse, 2015). Women prefer to take on informal roles to support leadership.

So what does this mean for women in early childhood settings? The willingness to informally support leadership is very evident (Babcock & Laschever, 2003) and can be encouraged, for example in supporting practitioners to make suggestions for change. Provision of leadership training, for example through informal and formal professional development activities, and recording this training to recognise this leadership for individuals and across the setting, is a useful way of overtly identifying the leadership knowledge and skills within a team. Good use of mentoring can help to identify practitioners’ natural abilities as well as their training needs. For example, a new member of staff may need training in assertiveness (see Chapter 3) whereas a more experienced member of staff may need training in supporting positive staff morale. You might find it useful to revisit Activity 1.4 now as you think about your own development needs as a leader. A lead practitioner in our research for this book identified that she fully supported staff development and this occurred in many ways:

‘Through daily coaching, and through our performance review system, and supervision meetings, and training, we have different training pathways to support staff, our core pathway for everyone, and a senior pathway for anyone wanting to progress that way, and the leadership and management pathway, so lots of opportunities to access training both internally and externally’.

ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

With larger, more complex organisations has come the introduction of more hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership and management systems. These are more impersonal and based on the notion that employees must follow procedures rather than think for themselves. This can be beneficial for large organisations with lots of workers as it can keep control, but workers will often consider they have no voice in the organisation. The recent rise in large-scale businesses which run nurseries nationally and develop policies at a national level means that early childhood settings may be affected by such bureaucratic leadership. This can provide real challenges if the staff values in a setting are not the same as those of the overall national organisation. A successful organisation will recognise the local contexts of its settings, and provide sufficient flexibility for local leaders to implement local policies which reflect the needs of the local community.

The technical-rational view holds that leadership should be confined to certain individuals in appointed leadership roles. Technical-rational approaches emphasise maintaining the status quo. Formal structures are present in the organisation to achieve pre-set goals. For example, specific leadership posts with specific functions and specific authority mean such roles have both power and influence. Leadership is often top-down in this model. For the early childhood workforce leadership of practice is embedded in every role, hence this technical-rational model does not sit comfortably with most settings. However, putting in place specific roles to lead change in practice can have very positive effects, as was demonstrated through studies of the Early Years Professional role (Hadfield et al., 2012; Davis & Capes, 2013).

A range of other leadership theories can be useful in considering the practice of leadership. For example behavioural theories of leadership consider what a leader does rather than who the leader is. Traditionally the leader has been characterised as autocratic and authoritarian, democratic and participative, or laissez-faire in their style (Daft, 2011). In many early childhood settings democratic leadership is appropriate, although this can be more time consuming because greater consultation and communication with the stakeholders is required. Many now have a view that democratic leadership does not go far enough, and distributed leadership is more appropriate for early childhood settings. For example, Jones and Pound (2008: 4) state that ‘leadership is ultimately distributed, shared and dispersed in early childhood settings’ and there is discussion in the literature about the use of distributed leadership in settings (see for example Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011). In this sense leadership is inclusive of the range of practitioners within a team, who are each enabled to take responsibility for best practice within their role and influence best

practice within the setting through professional reflection and positive communication within the team. We consider shared leadership in Chapter 6.

These notions of democracy and shared leadership contrast with the view of leadership as transactional, based on leading a task or getting a job done, which may include rewarding staff for achieving higher targets. Such transactional leadership is often employed in call centres, but does not fit well with leadership in the complexities of early childhood settings.

LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE WITHIN THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

The idea that leaders need to be able to adapt to different contexts has been present in the literature for some time, with theories such as Fiedler's contingency model and Hersey and Blanchard's situational model (Daft, 2011). More recently these ideas have developed into a more modern institutional view of leadership. This view holds that leadership occurs within a changing environment and that all staff have the potential to lead. Leadership is seen as a *culture*, not necessarily designated to specific roles. Leadership exists in the relationships between people (for the early childhood setting this will include relationships with children, families, other staff in the setting and the wider interprofessional team), so interaction with others is the key. In this model, leadership emphasises the survival of the organisation as it changes and adapts to a changing society and changing demands. Changes in structure and the culture of the organisation are considered against the needs of the community. Different employees at different levels of the organisation can take different leadership roles. This type of leadership values the relationships between stakeholders (for example employer, employee, children and families, local community), group decisions are encouraged, and staff are involved and empowered. Influence can occur upwards and downwards. The model assumes a socially relevant organisation with links between the outside world and the internal world of the organisation. The culture of the organisation is developed in relation to its social relevance.

There are some elements of this model which sit very well with the early childhood workforce. For example, as leaders we want to ensure the culture of the setting matches the espoused values of the team, and supports children, families and staff in contributing positively to the setting. Also, because an early childhood setting does not exist in a vacuum, but as part of a community, changes in national and local policy will reflect the need for changes in settings. Strong early childhood settings with a culture of leadership embedded within all roles will be able to support changes while working for the integrity of the setting within its community.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

More recently, ideas about transformational leadership have been evident. Although the term 'transformational leadership' was used by Burns as far back as 1978, ideas about this theory have since developed. These focus on the necessity of the leader

having a new and clear vision, and being able not only to see the need for change but also to explain to stakeholders the purpose of that change (Northouse, 2015). Such leaders will need to motivate others in the organisation by engaging with all stakeholders both cognitively (so that they understand the change) and emotionally (so that they want the change). When major change is needed, transformational leadership can be very useful. Transformational leadership is particularly necessary to consider when the culture of the setting needs to change. A word of caution though: it is possible as a leader to get carried away with such a model, and ignore the values of shared leadership.

Theories of motivation linked to leadership are certainly not new, but as a component of transformational leadership theory they are worth noting. Earliest of these was Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. This theory suggests that unsatisfied needs act as a motivator, and once the need is satisfied, another need becomes a motivator. Staff who are asked to work in an environment which is too cold, and where they are unable to take appropriate comfort breaks, are likely to be poorly motivated because their basic needs are not being met. At the top of the scale of needs are those of self-actualisation, where creativity is encouraged as a motivating force within the job role. There are many criticisms of Maslow's theory, but despite these there is value in considering the theory. Other theories of motivation include Adams' (1965) equity theory, which states that people are motivated if they believe they are being treated fairly. In early childhood settings, having open communication and opportunities to discuss issues within the team can support a sense of fair play.

Consideration of motivation is useful for the leader in early childhood settings. Working with someone who is demotivated can have a strongly negative influence on others in the workforce, and can make work challenging rather than enjoyable. On the other hand, employees who are motivated tend to want to make the setting the best it can be, and will be more likely to suggest positive actions to improve things. Locke (1968) proposed that agreeing specific, relatively stretching goals can be used to motivate staff who are unmotivated, by focusing their attention on the job to be done. For example, setting a goal for a member of staff to find out about a topic and share this with the team at a meeting could make that member of staff feel trusted with a worthwhile and new task, and could also help them see learning and sharing as part of their role.

Work by Davis (2012) indicates that for early childhood leaders one theory of leadership is not enough, that these leaders draw from a range of theories to support their practice across the range of situations and activities which occur in early childhood settings.

REFLECTION POINT: LEARNING FROM LEADERSHIP THEORY

Based on the outline description of theories above, jot down your ideas about which elements of these theories you might find useful in your own practice.

THEORY TO PRACTICE

You may have included some of the following ideas as part of your reflection:

- I can learn to be a leader, I don't have to be born with leadership skills.
- I can identify the skills and knowledge I need to be a leader, and make a plan to develop these.
- Developing knowledge and skills within my job role will give me confidence.
- Leadership traits are not gender specific.
- A culture of leadership in a setting where everyone sees themselves as having a role in leading supports a strong setting.
- Setting specific but stretching goals can help to motivate people.
- Major change, such as a change of culture, may need transformational leadership.

As a key person, you might be interested to identify the skills and knowledge you wish to develop in relation to your leadership role working with specific children and families. As a room leader, you may identify a need to learn more about motivating staff and leading change. As a new member of staff, you might need to learn more about the curriculum and ways of working with children to lead their learning. Whichever role you occupy, you have probably realised by now that it is our belief that leadership is for everyone.

In Chapter 6 we develop these ideas of leadership and extend them to specific theories about leading change. These elements will be particularly useful for the person who is in overall charge of the setting or has responsibility for a number of settings.

Just before we end this chapter we wanted to point out that the role of the leader should be a positive one, namely to influence best practice and optimal outcomes for children and families, however poor leadership practice can have negative consequences. Work by Einarsen et al. (2007: 208) considered the concept of 'destructive leadership' and the way in which poorly constructed leadership can reduce staff morale and weaken team effort, limit opportunities for staff development, and reduce opportunities to work together with families to promote best outcomes for children.

Padilla et al. (2007) considered the notion further and identified that destructive leadership ignores or does not seek the views of others and hence is not collaborative. A destructive leader will impose targets without discussion, and without consideration of the specific abilities or aptitudes of the practitioner. Clearly, this type of leadership is not ethical and has no place within the early childhood sector. However, Padilla et al. (2007) go further in their article, recognising that for destructive leadership to succeed typically there will be followers who are susceptible to such destructive methods. Practitioners who lack self-confidence, a knowledge of their legal rights or understanding or awareness of the values of the early childhood sector may not realise that this type of leadership is unacceptable. Empowering practitioners, developing their assertiveness and confidence, will therefore mitigate against the potential for destructive leadership. A strong leader will put in place mechanisms to empower individual practitioners to speak up to ensure the best outcomes for children and families.

We hope, therefore, that you will realise the consequences of failing to enact positive and constructive leadership in your role. Leadership can be a powerful tool for improving outcomes for children and their families, but failing to enact such leadership could have significant negative consequences.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We agree with Jones and Pound (2008: 4) who recognise that 'everyone in early years care and education needs to develop their professional knowledge and skills and adopt a leadership ... approach'. Working as a practitioner within an early childhood setting you will be involved with at least one of the following elements of leadership: leading a child in their learning; leading within a whole setting; leading within a room; being a key person; leading across many settings; leading people; leadership with parents and families; leadership with other professionals; reflecting on leadership.

We have identified within this chapter that there are many theoretical approaches to leadership, and that practitioners can draw from these approaches where they fit with the setting. Leadership involves people, so much of what is written within this book is about working with others, namely children, parents, other staff. We hope we have convinced you that everyone who works in a setting has scope for leading practice.

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

We recommend that you explore the video material, and research findings, from the EYPS study to see how different practitioners enact leadership in their roles:

Hadfield, M., Jopling, M., Needham, M., Waller, T., Coleyshaw, L., Emira, M. and Royle, K. (2012) *Longitudinal Study of Early Years Professional Status: An exploration of progress, leadership and impact: Final report*. London: Department for Education. Available at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183418/DfE-RR239c_report.pdf

