Pedagogical leadership: A case study of the Educational Leader in an early childhood setting in Australia

Doctor of Education

Thesis

College of Arts and Education

Victoria University

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Declaration

I, Mary Josephine Hughes, declare that this Doctor of Education dissertation entitled 'Pedagogical leadership: A case study of the Educational Leader in an early childhood setting' is not more than 60,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This dissertation contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this dissertation is my work.
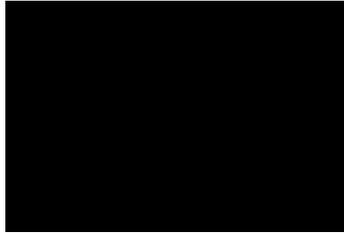
Signature____ _____ Date: 8th July 2019

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have contributed to making this thesis a reality.

My heartfelt thanks are extended to my wonderful supervisors, Associate Professor Anna Kilderry, Associate Professor Kim Keamy, Associate Professor Bill Eckersley and Dr. Jeanne Marie Iorio. You encouraged me to think, to question and look beyond the obvious. I have truly appreciated your positive and constructive feedback throughout the research process and learned so much from all of you over the past seven years.

I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the participants in the study who so generously shared their time, thoughts, ideas and reflections with me. In particular, I thank 'Emma', the Educational Leader at the centre of this study, whose passion and commitment to the children, educators and families at the pre-school was awe inspiring.

To my friend and colleague, Dr Carol Carter, I extend my grateful thanks to you for reading my drafts and providing your insightful feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the constant and ongoing support of my family: My mother who was with me for the first three years of the journey, my father who would have been so proud, and to my children Alexandra, William and Nicholas. Last but not least, my deepest gratitude to Michael, who has shown endless patience over the last seven years, motivating and encouraging me to complete this research. Thank you.

Contents

List of figures

List of tables

Abstract

Over the last decade, the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Australia has undergone major reform with both federal and state governments introducing learning frameworks to address the quality of early education and care. The National Quality Framework (NQF) (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2018a) was established to raise quality and ensure that every Australian child receives the best possible start in life. As part of these reforms, the National Quality Standard (NQS) (ACECQA, 2018a) stipulates a requirement for the appointment of an Educational Leader in all prior to school settings: someone who will support, guide, and build the capacity of educators. The role of Educational Leader in ECEC is relatively new and there is a limited amount of research in this area.

The aim of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of, and insight into, the day-to-day pedagogical leadership enactment and decision-making of Educational Leaders, with a view to broadening current definitions and understandings of the role. A constructionist approach that ascribes to an interpretivist theoretical perspective underlies the qualitative single-case study design adopted in this study. The research was conducted within the context of one early childhood education setting in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It involved participants with different roles in the setting, aimed at exploring how pedagogical leadership is understood and enacted.

A qualitative single-case study design was selected to generate thick descriptions of how the Educational Leader gives direction, professional insight and informed expertise to educators in an ECEC setting, with major attention given to the

uniqueness and complexity of the single case. Multiple methods of data collection were used over a six-month period: semi-structured interviews, shadowing, and the analysis of documents, artefacts and social media posts. Shadowing is not a commonly used method in early childhood research but was used in this study because of the richness of descriptive data that it offered and because of its suitability to the setting.

The study sought to address two research questions: 'How does the Educational Leader provide pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators in a particular early childhood setting?' and 'What are the influences that determine how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to educators in a particular early childhood setting'? Analysis of the data identified two main findings that addressed these questions. The first highlights the main features of the day-to-day functions of the Educational Leader at the setting. The second highlights some factors that influence the work of the Educational Leader. At times, these factors encourage success in their work and at other times they constrain success.

The findings from this study provide a better understanding of the Educational Leader role in early childhood education and have the potential to inform policy. Of scholarly significance is the contribution of the shadowing method in research methodology, which is particularly useful in small-scale studies such as this one. Furthermore, the study contributes knowledge to the ECEC sector by providing insight into factors that influence how leadership practice is shaped and how the role of the Educational Leader is enacted in an ECEC setting.

Glossary

Approved provider: A person, group of persons or entity, such as a private or public company, corporation or co-operative, with provider approval from the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (ACECQA, 2011a) to operate an early childhood service. This includes the principal of a school that operates a pre-school on the premises.

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019): A triennial population measure of how young children have developed by the time they start school. It measures five key areas of early childhood development: Physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills.

Australian Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): The independent national authority that assists governments in administering the National Quality Framework (NQF) for children's education and care.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008): An observational instrument to assess classroom quality with a focus on the processes in which educators interact with children.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG): The is the peak intergovernmental forum of Ministers of Education from each state and territory in Australia.

Curriculum: In the early childhood education context this includes the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (*Early Years*

Learning Framework, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, p. 45, adapted from *Te Whāriki* Ministry of Education, NZ, 2017).

Early childhood teacher: A person with an approved early childhood teaching qualification (according to the *National Regulations*). Centre-based services are required to have an early childhood teacher in attendance, with particular requirements based on the size of the service (ACECQA, 2018a).

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): For this study the term refers to all programs that provide care and education to children under the age of six.

Educational Leader: An individual who undertakes a designated pedagogical leadership role in an early childhood educational setting. The Educational Leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle in the service (ACECQA, 2018a, p. 303).

Educational program: In ECEC this is based on an approved learning framework and is delivered in accordance with that framework. It focuses on the developmental needs and interests of children and takes into account individual differences and abilities of each child (ACECQA, 2018a).

Education and care service: Provides education and care on a regular basis to children under thirteen years of age. This includes services for children under the age of eight and out of school hours care (OSHC) for children up to age thirteen.

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations 2010 (2010): The purpose of the applied lase system is to set a national standard for children's

education and care across Australia. There are some varied provisions as applicable to the needs of each state or territory.

Educator: An individual who provides education and care for children as part of a service. This includes Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care graduates and those holding Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Excellent rating: The highest overall rating level under the National Quality Standard (NQS) assessment and rating process (ACECQA, 2018a, p. 624). Services can be rated excellent, exceeding, meeting, working towards or significant improvement needed to meet the NQS (ACECQA, 2018a).

Kindergarten: A term used in some jurisdictions, including the jurisdiction in this study (the State of Victoria), for an early childhood education program, known in other jurisdictions as pre-school, pre-preparatory and reception.

Long day care: Provides education and care for children aged six weeks to five years, for up to ten hours per day, five days per week.

Nominated supervisor: An individual who is nominated by the approved provider of a service to be the nominated supervisor. In this study this refers to the pre-school director (ACECQA, 2018a).

National Quality Framework for Early Childhood (NQF): Developed in response to the Council Of Australian Governments (2009) reform agenda (COAG, 2009a).

National Quality Standard (NQS): These are for early childhood education and care programs. There are seven quality areas relevant to important outcomes for children: educational program and practice; children's health and safety; physical

environment; staffing arrangements; relationships with children; collaborative partnerships with families and communities; and leadership and governance (ACECQA, 2018a).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): An international organisation that aims to promote policies that will improve the economic and social wellbeing of people around the world.

Pedagogical leadership: An emerging discourse in early childhood. It refers to the way in which the central task of improving teaching and learning takes place in educational settings (Ord, Mane, Smorti, Carroll-Lind, Robinson, Armstrong-Read, Brown-Cooper, Meredith, Richard, & Jalal, 2013).

Pedagogy: Early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning (DEEWR, 2009).

Pre-school: A service that provides an early childhood education program, delivered by a qualified teacher, in an ECEC service. Alternative names include kindergarten, pre-preparatory and reception, depending on state or territory (ACECQA, 2017, p. 428).

Pre-school program: An early childhood educational program that is implemented by a qualified early childhood teacher in an ECEC service. It is provided for children either one or two years before grade one of formal schooling (ACECQA, 2018a, p. 630).

Technical and Further Education (TAFE): These institutions in Australia provide predominantly vocational courses mostly qualifying under the National Training

System/Australian Qualifications Framework. Early childhood courses at certificate and diploma level fall under this category.

Teacher: A person who holds an approved early childhood teaching qualification in accordance with Regulation 137 of the National Regulations (ACECQA, 2018a).

Validation Application Document (Victoria): This document is used to present evidence that an early childhood teacher meets the criteria to progress from salary subdivision 2.5 to salary subdivision 3.1. An early childhood or kindergarten teacher can apply for salary progression if they are employed in Victoria under either the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2016 (VECTEA) or the Early Childhood Education Employees Agreement 2016 (EEEA).

Vocational Education and Training (VET): Enables students to gain qualifications for employment in the workplace. It focuses particularly on vocational and practical skills training. The providers of VET include TAFE institutions and other government, private and community groups.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Early Childhood and Educational Care (ECEC) context

The early years in a child's life have been acknowledged as important in forming the foundations for lifelong learning and social participation. Having access to high quality early learning and care has been recognised as a key factor in determining the long-term benefits and outcomes for children from birth to eight years of age (Fleet, Soper, Semann, & Madden, 2015; Nuttall, Thomas, & Wood, 2014; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016). In response to this, successive Australian governments have placed early childhood education and care at the forefront of national and state legislation to address quality standards in the sector (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009a).

In 2006, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to a program of reform, built on a vision of improving the wellbeing of all Australians (COAG, 2009a, COAG, 2009b). These reforms, under the banner of the National Quality Framework encompass national licensing regulations, National Quality Standard (NQS) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) were developed to guide educators in all early childhood education and care settings across Australia (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2009). In 2012, all Australian states and territories agreed to the establishment of the National Quality Framework (NQF) to "raise quality and drive continuous improvement, ensuring that Australian children in a range of early childhood settings receive the best possible start in life" (ACECQA, 2012, p. 85). These settings include kindergartens, long day care centres, early learning centres, pre-schools within schools and out of school hours

care settings (OSHC). OSHC is included within the framework although it caters for children up to the age of twelve in primary school settings.

The *National Quality Framework* (ACECQA, 2018a) stipulates a requirement for the appointment of an Educational Leader in each setting. Regulation 118 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (ACECQA, 2018a) requires that the approved provider of an early childhood service must appoint an Educational Leader in writing and note this designation in the staff record of the service. The person nominated should be an educator, co-ordinator or other individual who is suitably qualified and experienced and can lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) in the service (ACECQA, 2017). According to the *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Regulations* (2011) the nominated person 'might be an early childhood teacher, a manager or a diploma qualified educator within the service' (ACECQA, 2017, p. 87). The legislation is quite brief in its description of the position, which allows Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service providers to make their own decisions. Consequently, the role of the Educational Leader varies from setting to setting according to the context, needs and requirements of each. In this study, capital letters will be used to denote the title of the Educational Leader to avoid any confusion with the generic expression 'educational leader'.

1.2 Defining leadership in ECEC – A contested space

No one definition of leadership applies in the diverse and complex field of ECEC. Within the literature on leadership in ECEC, the value of one standard definition is frequently questioned (Fasoli, Scrivens, & Woodrow, 2007; Waniganayake & Semann, 2011; ACECQA, 2017) and the need for, and appropriateness of, a single

definition remains contested. The Early Childhood Australia's Leadership Capability Framework (Early Childhood Australia [ECA], 2016b, p. 7) notes that leadership in the field of early childhood is "complex, dynamic and varies from situation to situation and from culture to culture". It is generally accepted that early childhood leadership is underpinned by the values and beliefs of the society, community and organisation to which it belongs; for instance, the way leadership is defined and explained will vary greatly between educators in Australia, Finland, New Zealand, China and the United Kingdom (UK) (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2017).

In Australia, diverse programs and structures within the early childhood sector prevail (private, for-profit, not-for-profit, philanthropic, corporate, institution and community) and contribute to multiple definitions of leadership. This makes leadership in the sector an elusive phenomenon (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). Kagan and Hallmark (2011), however, view this diversity as a strength, arguing that it allows for exploration of a range of leadership approaches.

Rapid change and growth continue to occur in the sector, and researchers in the area (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015; Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2017) agree that further work is needed to contribute to more dynamic understandings of early childhood leadership that are relevant in the twenty first century.

1.3 The Australian policy context

In this section, I provide an overview of the policy landscape in the Australian ECEC context, and the key role policy plays in influencing the work of educational leaders. Significant changes have taken place in the way that ECEC settings are managed and governed in Australia, particularly over the past three decades. For example,

Waniganayake et al. (2017) contend that "the Australian policy context influences just about everything relating to teaching and learning in early childhood settings" (p. 22). This includes levels of teacher qualifications, curriculum and access to services for children and families.

Historically, government involvement in ECEC has changed in accordance with changing priorities, social pressures and the political ideology of the day (Brennan, 1998). Provision of childcare during World War 2 enabled women in Australia to participate in the workforce, although funding and support was decreased after the war when women were actively encouraged to return to domestic duties. Social change, including the rise of the women's movement during the 1960s and 70s, saw the Whitlam Labor Government focus on increasing provision of quality early childhood education and care for children and families. At the time, these reforms represented some of the most powerful and notable changes to the Australian constitution since Federation. The Whitlam Government lasted only three years in office but their reforms in ECEC were significant. They set up an independent Children's Commission in 1975 to oversee *The Child Care Act,* which had "the major carriage of policy-making, funding and administrative tasks for Commonwealth Children's Services" (Australian Pre-School Association [APA], 1975). The proposed programs recommended by the commission were to be "flexible, community-based and integrated and the rigid distinction between educating children and caring form them was no longer to be made" (Brennan, 1998).

In the following years, governments expanded the provision of early childhood services with a view to increasing Australia's productivity and encouraging more women to join the workforce (Brennan, 1998). The Hawke/Keating Labor

Governments (1983–1996) promoted policies that encouraged for-profit (including corporate) providers to enter the early childhood market, shifting the responsibility for ECEC services away from government to the private sector (Brennan, 1998). This move was further developed by the conservative Howard Government. By the end of the 2000s, almost three quarters of childcare provision in Australia was under private ownership, with a large proportion under the governance of companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. However, the bottom line for these companies was shareholder profits, not their responsibilities to children and families. With the collapse of two of the major publicly listed childcare companies in 2008 and 2009, and the subsequent fallout for children, families and communities, governments found they needed to urgently address the quality issue of early childhood education and care provision in Australia (Waniganayake et al., 2017).

In 2006, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) *Starting Strong II* report ranked Australia poorly in a range of indicators for early childhood in relation to other OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006). This influenced the Rudd Labor Government to embark upon a national agenda to reform early childhood programs. The reform agenda was premised on a "…comprehensive set of aspirations, outcomes, progress measures and future policy directions in the key areas of early childhood, schooling and skills and workforce development…" (COAG, 2009b, p. 4). The report acknowledged the growing recognition that early access to ECEC provides young children, especially those from low-income and second-language groups, with a positive start in life.

1.3.1 Policy and legislation in times of change

In the Australian context, all three tiers of government (federal, state and local) play a role in the provision of early childhood education and care. Historically this created a 'patchwork' (Pascoe & Brennan, 2017) of ECEC services because of the complex and multi-layered systems in place. Prior to the COAG reforms introduced in 2009, policies varied from state to state about qualifications for those working in the early childhood sector, costs to families and school starting ages. When the Australian Government took steps to address these issues, it did so by working towards the implementation of a more consistent national approach to early childhood education and care (Waniganayake et al., 2017). In 2006, COAG committed to a program of reform built on a vision of improving the wellbeing of all Australians. The National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECDS), *Investing in the Early Years*, was a collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments (COAG, 2009a) established by the Rudd Government. This collaboration aimed to ensure that by 2020 'all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation' (COAG, 2009a, p. 13). National efforts to improve child outcomes would, in turn, contribute to increased social inclusion, human capital and productivity in Australia. This would ensure that the country would be well-placed to meet future social and economic challenges and remain internationally competitive. Following the establishment of NECDS, a national reform agenda was created, emphasising quality learning and development programs for educators with the aim of achieving the best outcomes for children. The reform agenda encompassed a range of initiatives, including national licensing regulations and a national quality assessment and rating system. As part of this reform agenda, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) was

developed to guide educators in all early childhood settings across Australia. The influential role of the Educational Leader in inspiring, motivating, affirming and also challenging or extending the practice and pedagogy of educators was reiterated in 2018 when Quality Area 7 of the NQS was updated and renamed 'Governance and Leadership' (ACECQA, 2018a).

1.4 Governance and leadership in ECEC

In this section of the chapter, I consider the relationship between governance, management structures and leadership in early childhood settings. The title 'Governance and Leadership' (Quality Area 7 of the NQS) more closely reflects the recognition and importance placed on the links between quality provision and leadership in ECEC (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2017). Waniganayake et al. (2017) define governance as the formal authority and accountability arrangements established within an organisation (p. 61). Kagan and Hallmark (2011) laments that there is limited understanding of governance matters in the ECEC sector and describes the situation as educators 'flying the plane while building it' (p 5). To date, there has been limited research and writing on this topic (Vitiello & Kools, 2010; Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). Waniganayake et al. (2017), point out that "governance involves looking at the structures and processes of how an organisation functions in delivering its services according to its set objectives" (p. 61). Management structures influence how governance is established and carried out in early childhood settings. Governance underpins the work of everyone and can assist leaders in creating order, consistency and predictability in organisational decision-making (Waniganayake et al., 2017).

1.4.1 Leadership and management as interwoven dimensions

In this section of the chapter, I explore the dimension of 'management' and the impact that both leadership and management have in the delivery of quality education and care programs. In recent times, a shift in thinking about leadership - from a management perspective to a leadership perspective – as the understanding of drivers for quality programs has grown (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015; Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). Leadership is aspirational and encourages people to focus on the future through the attainment of shared goals and a common vision. Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) point out that in ECEC, the terms 'manager' and 'leader' are used interchangeably and often the roles are intertwined. In most settings, people have to both manage and lead in the complex decisions they make every day.

ACECQA snapshot reports indicate the high proportion of stand-alone EC services that are found in Australian enterprises and have traditionally been located outside the education sector (ACECQA, 2018a, p. 7). Australia has a high proportion of non-government or privately-owned ECEC services, and services highly subsidised but not managed by government (Waniganayake et al., 2017; Productivity Commission, 2014). Management and leadership are, of necessity, intertwined in this highly regulated environment. It is worth mentioning here the legislated quality assurance processes with which all ECEC services must comply. With a strong emphasis on governance, quality and accountability, some suggest that early childhood educators and leaders are losing the ability to engage in professional debate and are, instead, focused on how best to be compliant (Sims, Waniganayake, & Hadley, 2017).

Quality Area 7 of the NQS, Governance and Leadership (ACECQA, 2018a) 'focuses on effective leadership and governance of the service to establish and maintain

quality environments for children's learning and development' (ACECQA, 2018a, p. 278). Effective leaders are described in the NQS as having a pivotal role in setting strategic directions for the service's continuous improvement. Fostering professional values in their service and clearly communicating shared goals and expectations within their service. Educational leaders 'support educators to develop the curriculum and reflect on their practice to identify opportunities for improvement' (ACECQA, 2018b, p. 278).

Quality Area 7 has two standards that focus on governance and leadership at the service. The standards are of key importance to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework and these are:

- 7.1 Governance. Governance supports the operation of a quality service. There are three elements contained within this standard. 7.1.1: Service philosophy and purpose; 7.1.2: Management systems, and 7.1.3: Roles and responsibilities.
- 7.2 Leadership. Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community. There are three elements contained within this standard: 7.2.1: Continuous improvement; 7.2.2: Educational leadership, and 7.2.3: Development of professionals (ACECQA, 2018, pp. 278-279).

Approved providers are mentioned in the Guide to the National Regulations (ACECQA, 2010) as playing a crucial and influential role in supporting and developing leadership at the service level. Large providers are encouraged to use their organisational infrastructure and available resources to offer mentoring, peer to peer reviews, shared administrative systems and policies (ACECQA, 2010). Large

providers are defined by ACECQA (2018b) as approved providers who operate more than twenty-five services, while small providers operate just one service. Medium providers operate between two and twenty-five services. The number of children enrolled in each service might range from 25 to over 150. In this study, the approved provider and case study is a primary school, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.5. There is the potential, therefore, for the school to offer the pre-school resources and support beyond that expected from a community-based or privately-run small provider. While there is no requirement for large providers to implement system-wide benefits to their services, there is much to gain from this additional guidance and support around leadership and service management. Implicit in this, however, is a need for mutual understanding of what kind of support and resources are required.

1.5 Contemporary understandings of leadership in ECEC

There are two dominant understandings of leadership in ECEC. The traditional, hierarchical model, where the director leads and educators follow, still persists in many settings. More contemporary understandings, however, have shifted from this top-down, hierarchical model to notions of leadership as interdependent and relational between the leader and the led (ACECQA, 2018b).

Understandings of leadership in early childhood has seen a gradual shift over the past three decades towards a reconceptualising of what is means to be a leader and to enact leadership. Nevertheless, managerialist discourses are still often conflated with leadership discourses. In theorising leadership in ECEC, Rodd (2013), Heikka, (2013), Ronnerman, Grootenboer and Edwards-Groves (2017), have drawn on business and school leadership literature by Sergiovanni (2015), Harris and Spillane

(2008) and Timperley (2012a), to examine the nature of leadership in ECEC. Nuttall and Thomas (2014) specifically discuss the nature of leadership in ECE. They point out that when the concepts of 'leader' and 'leadership' are referenced in the ECEC literature, they are sometimes positioned within an educational leadership discourse and at other times within a managerialist discourse. A traditionally-held view is that of a top-down, hierarchical model where centre directors have followed a 'command-and-lead approach' based on job title and position within the organisation. This approach, contend Nicholson and Maniates (2016), positions leaders as managers and the resulting confusion between leadership and management responsibilities continues to present problems today. Another view moves from the traditional approach of positioning an individual as a leader to a more inclusive socially-constructed phenomenon embedded within the practices of leadership (Waniganayake et al., 2017).

This shift from a top-down, hierarchical model to notions of leadership as interdependent and relational between the leader and the led (ACECQA, 2017) reflects the nature of a sector that generally constitutes groups of educators working collaboratively. A relational notion of leadership moves away from a focus on the individual leader to a more participatory focus (Nuttall & Thomas, 2014). Stamopoulos (2012) writes of leadership as consisting of professional knowledge, professional identity, using an interpretive lens and developing relational trust. Adding to this, Waniganayake et al. (2017) argue that ECEC theorising has moved to a more inclusive socially-constructed phenomenon embedded within the practice of leadership. Nevertheless, this shift towards new ways of thinking about leadership has been slow across the sector.

Theories supporting conceptualisations of leadership, such as distributed leadership, are being discussed and applied in early childhood settings. Distributed leadership "recognises the role that all professionals within an educational setting play in implementing change, and that it is through collaboration and collectivity that expertise is developed" (Clarkin-Phillips, 2018, p. 22). This model is particularly suited to early childhood settings given the relational nature of teaching in the sector. Hybrid leadership, where combinations of individual leadership co-exist alongside patterns of distributed leadership and emergent leadership (Bøe & Hognestad, 2014; Gronn, 2011), as well as intentional leadership (Waniganayake et al., 2017), are models that have emerged in recent times. These are also recognised as being well suited to early childhood contexts (Nuttall & Thomas, 2014). These theories are examined in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

There is, however, a range of barriers that affect services' ability to effectively practice leadership at an operational level. These include entrenched views of leadership as positional, and competing demands and priorities that constrain the time and resources available to develop good leadership. Henderson, Nuttall, Kriegler and Schiele (2016) along with Moss (2013a) argue that there are long-standing historical, cultural and social differences at play within the early childhood-school relationship and these impact on how leadership is viewed and how it is enacted across the settings.

1.6 The Educational Leader

Significant to this study is the legislative requirement introduced by the Rudd Labor Government in 2012 requiring the appointment of an Educational Leader in all ECEC services in Australia (ACECQA, 2018a). The introduction of the national educational

reforms through the NQF brought fundamental changes to the ECEC sector. This created an environment where the focus is on high-quality learning experiences for children and a responsibility for teachers and educators to take on formal and informal leadership roles.

As already discussed, the requirements surrounding the Educational Leader position can be found in NQS Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership (ACECQA, 2018b). While the NQS is clear that the Educational Leader has an influential role in inspiring, motivating, affirming and extending the practice and pedagogy of educators, anecdotal evidence from the sector suggests that many educators attach confusion and anxiety to the role and the experience and knowledge it demands (Fleet et al., 2015).

The requirement for service providers to designate, in writing, a suitably-qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual as Educational Leader is set out in Regulations 118 and 148 of the NQS (ACECQA, 2018b). However, neither the NQS nor the legislative standards are prescriptive about the qualifications, experience and skills needed, nor do they include a role description for the person designated as the Educational Leader. It is stated that "the flexibility of these provisions allows approved providers to choose the person in the service best suited to take on this role" (ACECQA, 2018, p. 2).

When the requirement for the appointment of an Educational Leader in all early childhood settings was first articulated, the NQF stated that approved providers must "identify an educator or co-ordinator to lead the development of programs and ensure the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning within the service" (COAG, 2009c, p. 13). COAG listed the following expectations

(note: in the original document, COAG did not number the items, however, I am numbering them here in order to make it easier to draw attention to the clauses I am critiquing):

1. Have current knowledge of child development and effective approaches to teaching and learning;

2. Have a knowledge of planning, assessing and documenting children's learning and the importance of sharing information with families;

3. Oversee and lead other educators to implement the EYLF including pedagogy and curriculum decision-making;

4. Plan and deliver the pre-school program for children in the years prior to school;

5. Work with other educators in observing, supporting and extending children's learning and lead discussions on reflective practice;

6. Support educators in the process of assessment for learning;

7. Lead and share information, knowledge and expertise on practice, policy developments and community changes that may impact on curriculum;

8. Be a professional role model for high-quality education and care for children;

9. Build the capacity of all educators by supporting and mentoring others to take on leadership roles in areas of expertise or of potential interest (COAG, 2009a, pp. 30-31).

These elements suggest that Educational Leaders have the knowledge and expertise, as well as the confidence, to influence the knowledge and practices of

other educators within the setting. However, Nuttall et al. (2014) argue that teachers and educators in ECEC are generally not skilled in promoting adult learning and development (Clauses 3 and 9). Similar to Whalley's (2006) study in the UK, Nuttall et al. (2014) found in their study in Queensland and Victoria, Australia, that teachers and educators in ECEC are usually educated in child development and ECEC curriculum and have limited knowledge of how to promote adult learning and development. There are calls for a greater understanding of who is taking on the role of Educational Leader in Australian services, and further investigation into the ways early childhood educators negotiate these discursive possibilities as Australia's ECEC policy reforms continue to be implemented (Nuttall et al., 2014).

1.6.1 Choosing the Educational Leader

When choosing an Educational Leader, it is suggested by the NQS (ACECQA, 2012) that an approved provider needs to consider whether the person is suitably qualified and experienced and, crucially, whether they are willing to take on the role and have time provided to enable them to do it. There does appear to be a randomised approach to the appointment of Educational Leaders, as identified by Rouse and Spradbury (2016), with varying emphasis placed on the qualifications or professional knowledge of the person appointed. In a small-scale qualitative research study investigating how educational leaders working in long day care settings in urban Australia perceive their role, Rouse and Spradbury (2016) found that some participants were appointed to the position despite not actively seeking to apply for the role. Others came to the position unwillingly and felt poorly prepared and supported to meet the challenges presented (Rouse & Spradbury, 2016).

Developing and implementing educational programs and ensuring the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning within the setting are stated requirements for those who undertake the role of Educational Leader. Heikka and Waniganayake (2011, p. 510) argue that "pedagogical leadership is connected to not only children's learning but also the capacity-building of the early childhood professional, and values and beliefs about education held by the wider community" and that this is fundamental to leadership in ECEC.

1.6.2 Educational Leader or Pedagogical Leader?

The original formulation of the role of Educational Leader was captured in the term 'pedagogical leader' when the NQF was released in 2009 (COAG, 2009a). The NQF created an expectation that ECEC services would enable leadership practices that could lead change in pedagogy and curriculum and foster the professional growth of educators. This was a shift in thinking for most educators; it contrasted with the traditional focus on management, which was generally how leadership was viewed in early childhood settings. By 2011 the title Educational Leader was used in the NQS documents to describe the person appointed to the designated position (ACECQA, 2011a). The expectations were still the same – an individual who was confident in their knowledge of both child development and ECEC curriculum and able to influence the knowledge and practice of colleagues (Nuttall et al., 2014). It appears that giving the role the title Educational Leader denotes some positional authority, whereas the term pedagogical leader was perhaps perceived as not as strong and perhaps lacking in the desired emphasis.

Globally, the position of pedagogical or Educational Leader is not required in a formal sense as it is legislated in Australia, although the UK's Early Years

Professional Status (EYPS) comes close. The EYPS was introduced by the Blair/Brown Government in England in 2007. Until 2013, all early years' children's centres were required to appoint at least one Early Years Professional (EYP) who was responsible for curriculum, learning and professional development of staff within the setting (Simpson, 2010). A similar initiative now exists in the UK, known as Early Years Teaching Status (EYTS), and teachers are required to meet the Teaching Standards for Early Years (Department for Education [DfE], England, 2019). In the New Zealand context, designated leaders are appointed as pedagogical leaders within settings, responsible for leading the learning of educators rather than focusing on management and administration. However, there is no legislative requirement for the appointment of someone to fill the role and in some ECEC settings they may have other leadership roles, such as director or manager (Ord et al., 2013).

Pedagogical leadership has traditionally been a key focus in ECEC in Norway and Finland, with an emphasis on higher-level qualifications and ongoing professional development for all staff (Broström, Einarsdottir, & Pramling Samuelsson, 2018; Nygård, 2017). The role of pedagogical leader is usually undertaken by centre directors who generally do not have a teaching role. They do, however, undertake significant management duties within the service (Broström et al., 2017; Einarsdottir, 2015).

1.7 My position in the research

My interest in leadership began early in my career when, as a young teacher, I was appointed to the role of curriculum co-ordinator at the primary school where I worked. Middle-level leadership in schools was new, and in my case, there was no position description or guidance as to what the role would entail. Most of my time

was spent organising and allocating resources, reporting at staff meetings, giving 'tips' and survival strategies and booking professional development sessions for teachers. At the same time, I had an almost full-time teaching load. School principals quickly realised that curriculum co-ordinators needed support, consequently professional learning opportunities were provided so that we could influence and change practice in schools. In reality, however, this was not sufficient to prepare us for the job we were expected to do. As the teaching profession became more proactive in bringing about change and improving practice, 'co-ordination' became 'leadership'. This change in terminology signalled a move to a broader definition of what it was to be a leader in an educational setting.

My experience of leadership roles in a range of schools over the next twenty years varied considerably and deepened my interest in leadership in education. As a middle leader, I had no interest in becoming a school principal and I did not see my current role as a transition to more senior leadership. However, I did move into the tertiary sector as a sessional academic (performing arts) in a post-graduate teaching program while working part-time as a classroom teacher. At this time, I was motivated to extend my knowledge and thinking about leadership and enrolled in, and completed, a Master of Literacy Leadership. Importantly, I still did not wish to transition to a senior leadership role in schools but rather sought to improve my knowledge and practice as a middle-level leader.

In 2011 I left the school sector to work as a full-time academic in an early childhood and primary teaching undergraduate program. For the first few years I lectured mostly in early childhood subjects, the reason being that my initial teacher qualification was a Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education and I had

worked in the Early Years in England for a short time. I was curious about leadership in the sector and, in particular, the newly created role of Educational Leader. Reflecting on my experience in England, where I worked in a small team of teachers and educators led by an experienced early years teacher, I pondered what this might look like in an Australian setting. When I visited pre-service teachers on professional placements, I struck up conversations with Educational Leaders and eventually decided to take my curiosity to a new level. Consequently, I began my doctorate in 2013 with the aim of gaining insight and further understanding of the important role of Educational Leader.

My position in this research is complex. I have been a teacher in early childhood, primary school and tertiary settings. In my current role as an initial teacher educator of pre-service early childhood teachers, I consider the sector through a different lens. In addition, I am not an 'insider' or 'outsider' in this research but more of an 'inbetweener', a term used by Milligan (2016) to describe a researcher who is neither entirely inside nor outside the field. In Chapter 6, Section 6.5, I reflect on my position in the shadowing process, describing myself as a 'knowledgeable outsider' as, despite being part of the culture under study, I did not always understand the subculture of the setting.

My aim in undertaking this research is, to provide important and useful insights into the role of the Educational Leader along with reflecting upon my own journey in a teaching career that has spanned three decades.

1.8 Aim of the research

My aim in this research is to investigate the pedagogical support the Educational Leader provides to other educators in one ECEC setting. I aim to assist with

clarifying current working definitions and understandings of the role in one particular setting. As indicated earlier, the focus is to develop a deeper understanding of, and insight into, the role of the Educational Leader in day-to-day pedagogical leadership enactment and decision-making.

Frameworks such as the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009), the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Department of Education and Training [DET], (2016) and the Australian National Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2012) highlight the role of educators and teachers and their implementation and assessment of curriculum. How an Educational Leader provides direction, professional insight and informed expertise to educators in a particular early childhood education setting is examined in depth.

This research will contribute to an understanding of the factors that influence the role of Educational Leader. It will build on earlier research in the area of leadership in early childhood education undertaken by Hard (2006), Stamopoulos (2012), Rodd (2013), Fonsen (2013), Nuttall et al. (2014) and Waniganayake et al. (2017), among others.

1.9 The research questions

In this research I examine the pedagogical leadership provided by the Educational Leader in an Australian context in a particular ECEC setting. Two research questions guide this study. The main question is: 'How does the Educational Leader provide pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators in a particular early childhood setting?' Seeking the answer to this question will enable me to examine the day-to-day key functions that the Educational Leader undertakes as part of the role. The

second research question is: 'What are the influences that determine how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to educators in a particular early childhood setting'? Seeking the answer to this question will enable me to identify and examine the factors that influence how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to educators in the setting.

The academic contribution of this research will be to generate new knowledge about the role of the Educational Leader in providing pedagogical support to educators in the early childhood sector. The findings from the study will contribute to knowledge in the field by examining what the Educational Leader's role is in an early childhood setting. This has implications for policy, practice and research in the area. Also of significance is the contribution of shadowing to research methods for use in small contexts such as the centre in this study.

1.10 Statement of significance

The findings from this study will provide insights and a deeper understanding of the role of the Educational Leader in an early childhood setting. This study is, however, the study of a single case, therefore the insights gained are not generalisable to other settings and contexts. There is potential for the findings from this research to contribute to more informed policy regarding the role of the Educational Leader in ECEC. The study offers an opportunity to contribute to the commentary on pedagogical leadership through a considered understanding of what the day-to-day implantation of the Educational Leader role is like.

1.11 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters. In Chapter 1 I have introduced my research study with an explanation of the Australian policy context and contemporary understandings of leadership in early childhood education. An overview of the NQS requirements for the appointment of an Educational Leader in all Australian early childhood settings is included. In Chapter 2 I present a review of relevant literature and provide some historical background to the topic of the Educational Leader role. I examine theories and models of leadership from the business and school sectors and consider how they align with the unique context of early childhood education.

I justify the use of my chosen theoretical framework in Chapter 3. I provide an explanation of constructionism as the underlying epistemology and interpretivism as the theoretical perspective used to gain a deep insight into the role of the Educational Leader. A single case study design is used in the research and I have described this methodology in detail, including a description of the methods used to collect data. Site selection, participant selection, the ethics process and trustworthiness are explained in Chapter 3, which concludes with my description of the data analysis process.

In Chapter 4 I present the research findings and a detailed discussion that relates to the first research question. I include links to the literature in discussing how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators in one early childhood setting. The research findings and a detailed discussion are continued in Chapter 5, in which I specifically address the second research question relating to the influences that determine how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to others at the setting. Finally, I draw together the findings of

the research in Chapter 6 and outline the significance and contributions of the study.

I also report the limitations of the study and present options for future inquiry.

Chapter 2 Literature review

I begin this chapter with a review of material in the broader literature and give some historical background, both in the Australian context and internationally (Section 2.1). This context positions my study in a wider contemporary understanding of leadership in general, and more specifically, leadership in ECEC.

A substantial body of research into leadership practices exists from the business and school sectors. However, I considered literature that relates mainly to the school sector because of the closeness to ECEC contexts. It is worth noting, however, that positional authority has, until recently, dominated understandings of leadership in organisations (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Fullan, 2011; Sergiovanni, 2015). Unlike the business and school sectors, where women have been largely invisible in leadership positions, ECEC has traditionally been, and continues to be, a female-dominated field with most leadership positions filled by women. Feminist scholarship draws attention to the gendered nature of the ECEC field, and in Section 2.2 of this chapter I explore the increased research in this area that has emerged in recent times.

In Section 2.3 I consider models and styles of leadership that reflect a shift away from a single leader in ECEC to a more inclusive and socially-constructed phenomenon. In recent times there has been an increase in the number of scholars who discuss and theorise distributed and relational understandings of leadership in ECEC.

This study focuses on the early years, so defining pedagogy (Section 2.3.2) in this context is both appropriate and necessary. Pedagogical leadership is an emerging discourse in ECEC but has been well understood and researched in the school

sector. National and international interest in pedagogical leadership in ECEC is, however, increasing, with a growing body of research about the impact of early childhood programs on children's outcomes and lifelong learning. The role of Educational Leader and the enactment of this role in relation to curriculum and pedagogy in an ECEC setting is becoming a growing focus of attention.

2.1 An historical overview

Understandings of leadership have evolved and changed, particularly over the past century. The term 'management' was used throughout the early part of the twentieth century rather than the term 'leadership' when describing the relationship between manager and worker. A 'worker' in these situations can be defined as someone who works at a specific job and does not have a designated position of authority in the workplace. Worker productivity was a key focus of early twentieth century discussions of leadership and management, and the emergence of new approaches to management emphasised economic efficiency in the workplace. The term 'management' used in Winslow Taylor's 'scientific management' approach during the 1910s changed the way leader-managers interacted with employees and handled the production of goods (Savino, 2016). In contrast, experimental research – itself indicative of a 'scientific' approach to management - such as the Hawthorne study in the United States (US) during the 1920s (Landsberger, 1958) suggested that new ways of viewing the worker and leader/manager required attention (Cuff, Payne, Francis, Hustler, & Sharrock, 1984). This view, termed the 'human relations' approach, proposed that, unlike the view held in the scientific management theory, workers were influenced by the input of managers (Northcraft & Neale, 1994; Shoemaker, 2000).

Douglas McGregor's work over three decades fundamentally altered the course of management theory (Bobic & Davis, 2003). McGregor's perspective saw management as more than simply giving orders and coercing obedience; it was a careful balancing of the needs of the organisation with the needs of individuals (Bennis, Heil, & Stephens, 2000). His definition of Theory Y and Theory X classified leadership style according to how the individual leader viewed the worker (Arslan & Staub, 2013). After almost three decades of investigation into working conditions and workers' attitudes toward their jobs, McGregor argued that Theory X managers believe that workers are inherently lazy and unmotivated and must be controlled. Conversely, McGregor saw Theory Y managers as those who hold assumptions that workers care about the organisation, will seek responsibility, and exercise self-control (Schulz & Schulz, 1998; Arslan & Staub, 2013). Hard (2005) argues that these theories have relevance today in that their implications influence broader social views of what leadership is about and how it is conducted. Hard (2005) contends that if the dominant view of leadership in a field is predicated on the Theory X approach, then in contexts where interpersonal relations are highly valued, such as ECEC, the adoption of this leadership approach may not be appealing.

Positional, or formal leadership roles, and informal leadership opportunities exist in the field of ECEC (Aubrey, 2011; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Rodd, 2013). Some research has been done in terms of formal and informal leadership roles within educational contexts, although this work is limited in number in ECEC. A formal leader is one who holds an appointed leadership position - that is, having positional leadership (Black & Porter, 2000; Northcraft & Neale, 1994; Nordengren, 2015). An informal leader demonstrates leadership qualities such as the use of relevant skills and commitment to achieve group goals, and high visibility via

discussion and contributions from a non-defined leadership position (Northcraft & Neale, 1994). Blackmore (1999) views the usual conceptions of leadership in a positional sense as problematic since they involve top down or hierarchical images. In contrast, she sees educational leadership, in particular, as "worked from the bottom up" (p. 2). This is particularly relevant in ECEC where most day-to-day work is carried out in teams and is collaborative in nature.

Research studies undertaken in the school sector may have relevance in early childhood; sometimes it is useful to draw on what is happening in the school sector, but sometimes it is not. For example, Nordengren (2015) uses network theory to examine informal leadership activity within a school setting. This mixed methods study found that while expertise is an important component of the effectiveness of informal leaders, the less tangible elements of human relationships also play important roles in connecting informal leaders with colleagues. A small number of studies from the UK and Australia describe how formal and informal educational leadership enactment can operate within early childhood contexts (Grarock & Morrissey, 2013 Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). Findings from Siraj-Blatchford and Manni's (2007) qualitative research in their Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS) study in the UK have revealed the importance of both positional and informal leadership in improving educational practice in early childhood settings (2007). A common finding across these studies is that the distinction between formal and informal leadership is an important one as it illustrates the potential for there to be more than one leader in an organisation and that leadership is not purely positional (Hard, 2006b). However, a perception that a teacher's qualifications "does not buy authority" suggests that a view of positional leadership appears dominant in many day care centres, according to the findings of a Victorian study undertaken by

Grarock and Morrissey (2013, p. 4). This qualitative study focused on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to be educational leaders in Victorian childcare settings just at the time the regulatory requirement for a designated Educational Leader was introduced. A series of semi-structured interviews with eleven early childhood teachers was conducted to explore their experiences as teacher leaders. Some participants identified the lack of a formal title as a barrier to their enactment of leadership, while participants who did have formal or designated positions of authority were confident in their ability to effect change across the centre. Grarock and Morrissey (2013) call for further research on how the designated Educational Leader makes decisions and directs the work of other staff in ECEC, and an understanding of the barriers that leaders face in carrying out their work.

2.2 'Nice Ladies'

Although this is not in itself a feminist study, ECEC has traditionally been, and continues to be, a female-dominated field. Feminist scholarship draws attention to the interplay of gender, power and work (Fletcher, 2001; Hard, 2006, as well as notions of leadership (Collinson & Hearn, 2000; Eveline, 2004; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). These interplays suggest that leadership in the ECEC field is complex and multi-faceted, as evidenced in the following discussion.

The current context of ECEC in Australia has a long history that contributes to the contemporary constructions of the field and impacts leadership understandings, aspirations and enactment (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013; Wagner, 2006). A number of studies (Brennan, 1998; Coady, 2017; Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013; Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006) confirm that Australia has a strong history of care and education in the field of early childhood. However, opinion is

divided in the literature about the philosophic reasons for this. Coady (2017) argues that many of the women who were prominent in the establishment of kindergartens in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria during the latter part of the nineteenth century were undeniably feminists, part of the first wave of feminism. In her examination of their views on education for very young children, Coady (2017) makes it clear that while the women were active in the women's suffrage movement, they also added to the debate about philosophies of education, control of educational institutions, and the necessity, or otherwise, for training early childhood teachers. Other scholars (Boreham, 1996; Wollons & Wollons, 2000; Hard, 2006; Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013;) make the point that many of the early kindergartens had their roots in philanthropic work and were firmly based in the tradition of middle and upper-class women's charitable work (Brennan, 1998). The intent was to reform working-class family life and improve the living conditions of the poor. In response, the kindergarten movement emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century as both a philanthropic and educational endeavour. Kindergartens played an important role in society and, it is argued by Wollons and Wollons (2000) and other authors such as Boreham (1996), the activities of the kindergarten movement could easily be construed as control exercised by the socially powerful over the poor, as 'philanthropy' with strong class control. This may imply that leadership in these settings was of a hierarchical, masculinist nature, despite the fact that most of those in leadership positions were female. Certainly, the early history of the kindergarten movement reflects women's increasing influence in Australian public life at the turn of the twentieth century (Mellor, 1990).

Internationally, rationales for early care and education provision vary but include the influence of the German educator Froebel, whose work around access to learning

and nurturing environments for children inspired the kindergarten movement (Brennan, 1998). The influence of Froebel's philosophy spread worldwide, and it is argued by Wollons and Wollons (2000) and Coady (2017) that his theories, although open to interpretation, controversy and disagreement, are important when considering the influence and kind of feminism expressed by the early kindergartens in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

In Scandinavian countries, childcare involving education is considered a right for children. Policy has been "used to pursue gender and social equity while also promoting high levels of labour-market participation" achieved mainly through high levels of tax (Fine, 2007, p. 165). Care and education were formally combined throughout the Scandinavian countries in 1991 with the establishment of playschools or 'leikskoli' (the Icelandic term for 'kindergarten' or 'preschool') (Fine, 2007; Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir & Coleman, 2014).

Some feminist literature draws attention to the notion of women's ethic of care as service to others, but this care is often invisible and devalued (Acker, 2004; Fletcher, 2001; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). This notion of 'caring and nurturing' is perhaps not seen as important unless as a source of profit, argues Acker (2004), and that in spite of rhetoric to the contrary, caring work is devalued and "so are those who primarily do that work" (p. 27).

The 2006 OECD *Starting Strong II* report (OECD, 2006) (in which eight countries participated) observed that the changing patterns of women's workforce participation were a key political factor influencing ECEC service provision. It was noted by the authors that real equity amongst genders will require that domestic work and child

care responsibilities not be confined to the responsibility of women alone (Hard, 2011).

Sparks and Park (2000) assert that a gendered division of labour may arise when organisational roles are institutionalised with jobs becoming segregated along gender lines. This phenomenon certainly seems to be the case in the field of ECEC. For example, Hard's (2005) research work over fifteen years identifies discord with traditional leadership models and rationales and explores alternative approaches to leadership in the highly feminised field of ECEC. All of Hard's studies are qualitative in orientation and take as a starting point the understanding that leadership in ECEC is difficult to define and is also contextually based. Hard (2006; 2008) identifies a culture of compliance within the feminised workforce in early childhood settings and goes further in exploring the notion of 'horizontal violence' as an impediment to leadership enactment. The term 'horizontal violence' originated in nursing literature and describes "hostile, aggressive, and harmful behaviour by an individual or a group toward a co-worker or group of co-workers via attitudes, actions, words and/or other behaviours" (Thobaben, 2007, p. 82). The notion of 'horizontal violence' as it is described by Hard (2006) in ECEC contexts highlights contradictions between a lingering discourse of 'niceness' and a culture that condones behaviours that marginalise and exclude others. The outcome of this culture is a powerful expectation of compliance that does little to foster or encourage leadership activity (Hard, 2006).

Davis, Krieg and Smith (2015) note that many current dominant discourses of leadership are hierarchical and positional and leave early childhood educators "hesitant to take leadership roles or, once within them, are limited by how they can

speak and act" (p. 145). They urge for the creation of opportunities for more collaborative, ethical, inclusive and socially just communities.

2.3 Theories of leadership

Theories, models or concepts, and styles of leadership provide frames of reference to discuss, interrogate or adapt early childhood leadership in an ever-changing workplace (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). In this section of the chapter I begin with a review of the literature and discussion of the main theoretical foundations of leadership. An exploration of leadership research follows, examining frameworks and models in general and within the early childhood sector in particular.

Differences exist between understandings of the terms 'theories', 'models and/or concepts', and 'styles' of leadership. Theories provide a basis for understanding leadership, and they constantly evolve in an ever-changing world. However, within the ECEC and school literature, sometimes these terms are used almost interchangeably. Older theories are drawn from business contexts and are based on male, middle-class perceptions of leadership (Waniganayake et al., 2017). Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) describe theories of leadership as "a dynamic system of ideas and concepts generated by research across a number of fields" (p. 12). Some authors differentiate between older paradigm theories, where leadership is viewed as a process, and newer paradigms or models, where emphasis is placed on the power and importance of followers in ultimately legitimising and enabling leadership (Bryman, 1996; Kotter, 1990). McDowall Clark and Murray (2012) note a shift in viewing leadership from the old paradigm, which focused on personal attributes and position, to a new paradigm, which reflects an understanding of leadership in the twenty-first century. However, Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018)

advise caution when viewing any leadership theories, models and approaches, as these are useful as a base to inform thinking, but not as an end point. They reason that leadership in early childhood contexts is dynamic and new ways of conceptualising leadership need to be explored further.

Leadership style refers to the ways in which leaders behave, respond to others and interpret information (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) argue that leaders in ECEC must adopt a style of leadership based on professional beliefs, values and early childhood knowledge in ways that empower others to collectively drive positive change. Hallet (2013) states that leaders also hold responsibility for reviewing, building and strengthening their personal leadership style through ongoing professional learning, critical reflection and self-review. Some would argue, however, that it is what leaders actually do rather than their style of leadership that is important in educational contexts (Blackmore, 2001).

Yaverbaum and Sherman (2008) maintain that theories, models and styles do not teach how to lead, but attempt to explain some of the concerns and dynamics that leaders typically encounter and how they respond to them. In addition, Rodd (2013) suggests that no single theory can explain all aspects of any phenomenon as theories are constantly changing and evolving. As new information becomes available, these theories are modified and adapted to take new thinking into account.

The notion of leadership has been explored extensively in the behavioural and management sciences (Baruch, 1998) and researchers have sought to identify the means and strategies by which effective leaders "get the job done" (Sarros & Butchatsky, 1996, p. 4). As previously mentioned, much of the literature to date focuses on school-based leadership (Gurr, 2004; Spillane et al., 2007; Fullan, 2011;

Sergiovanni, 2015), although in recent times scholars have explored the notion of leadership in the field of ECEC.

Previously, the blurring of the boundary between leadership and management in ECEC has been mentioned (Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, & Tamati, 2009). Going further, Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) point out that the distinctions made in the business literature are not as applicable to early childhood contexts, where many leaders lead and manage at the same time. However, the newer discourses and models of leadership that have emerged in ECEC in recent times make more explicit use of terms such as 'educational leadership', 'pedagogical leadership' and 'intentional leadership' (Ord et al., 2013). It has been suggested by some authors (Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2015; Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2016; Ord et al., 2013) that a model of distributed leadership is highly suited to educational settings such as ECEC, given the collaborative and collective nature of this sector.

2.3.1 Distributed leadership

A clear definition of distributed leadership is difficult to find within the literature. The definitions that do exist differ from each other, sometimes widely and sometimes more in nomenclature than in essence (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Spillane, 2005; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Bennet et al. (2003) identified two major conceptual discussions of distributed leadership that emerged during the early 2000s: those of Gronn (2002) and Spillane et al. (2004). Gronn's (2002) discussion of distributed leadership suggests that a growing dissatisfaction with the notion of visionary leadership and organisational change, in favour of flatter structures, has fuelled interest in the notion of distributed leadership. He goes

further, arguing that distributed leadership has special relevance and applicability in a contemporary, information-rich society and may be a more effective way of coping with society. Gronn's extensive work over two decades in theorising distributed leadership reanalyses empirical studies by other researchers (Bennett et al., 2003), while Spillane uses small-scale qualitative case studies in schools to examine leadership practice. Spillane (2005) maintains that distributed leadership is "first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines and structures. Though they are important considerations, leadership practice is still the starting point" (p. 144). Rather than viewing leadership practice as the product of a leader's knowledge and skill, Spillane (2005) argues that the distributed perspective defines it as the interactions between people and their situation. This view has particular relevance in the field of early childhood education where the emphasis is on relationships and interdependence among people within an early childhood centre (Colmer et al., 2015).

Although distributed leadership has broad theoretical meanings, it commonly includes concepts of interdependence, leadership practice and professional learning (Harris, 2009). Rather than a specific model, there are potentially many ways of distributing leadership within an organisation, contend Colmer et al. (2015). When reviewing the literature, it is clear that distributed leadership research in ECEC settings is relatively young, with most research emerging in the early 2000s and focusing on the study of school-based leaders (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor 2003; Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007). One example that illustrated just how new the research field was in this area in 2003 involves a literature search undertaken for a report by a team from the National College for School Leadership (Bennett et al., 2003) in the UK. The

project team carried out a review of the literature on distributed leadership in school settings, initially restricting their search to writings published or presented at conferences since 1988. With disappointing results, they brought forward the cut-off publication date to 1996, which made almost no difference. Most of the empirical studies examined in the report are forms of qualitative case studies in schools after the year 2000, with Spillane et al. (2004) and Gronn (2002) being key figures in the conceptual discussion of distributed leadership.

Within the field of ECEC, the literature is even more sparse and difficult to locate. By linking early childhood and school leadership research, Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala (2013) sought to establish a new research agenda on distributed leadership in general and within early childhood education organisations in particular. In their review of the literature, Heikka et al. (2013) found conceptual confusion or ambiguity in the diverse nomenclature used when referring to distributed leadership, such as 'democratic leadership' (Woods, 2004) and 'shared leadership' (Pearce & Conger, 2002). Hartley (2007) describes this situation as 'conceptual elasticity' while Lakomski (2008) reflects that it is 'horses for courses'. Some scholars refer to distributed leadership as a general category to include terms such as 'shared', 'collective' and 'dispersed' (Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2007), which adds further to the confusion. Alternatively, this could be seen in more favourable terms in that there might be resistance to generating a single definition that is appropriate for all settings. Spillane's (2005) example of "a case of old wine in new bottles" (p. 144) aptly describes how leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of leaders, followers and their situations, thus breaking new ground rather than simply relabelling old ideas.

It is not about the sharing of tasks in an organisation, argues Heikka et al. (2013); distributed leadership is more complex and involves deeper levels of interaction between members working through shared goals. Further studies in the UK show that there are many ways of proceeding towards an embedded degree of distributed leadership where planning and progression are wide-ranging and continuous (Harris & Allen, 2009; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004; Ritchie & Woods, 2007). However, according to a New Zealand study undertaken by Timperley (2005), distributing leadership across more people could be risky business for school leaders, as well as those in other educational settings, and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence. Timperley (2005) suggests that increasing the distribution of leadership "is only desirable if the quality of the leadership activities contributes to assisting teachers to provide more effective instruction to their students, and it is on these qualities that we should focus" (p. 23).

It is important to note that distributed leadership does not replace positional leadership structures (ACECQA, 2017; Glatter, 2009) and site leaders play an important role in co-ordinating leadership and developing leadership capacity among group members (Lewis & Murphy, 2008). The 2007 ELEYS study in the UK found that to achieve positive educational outcomes, positional leadership of the director and nominated pedagogical leaders is essential to create the conditions necessary for collaborative and distributed leadership (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). If this is the case, hybrid leadership may be more appropriate in ECEC settings and communities of practice (Bøe & Hognestad, 2014) where the leaders' presence can serve as a catalyst for building and supporting learning communities.

2.3.2 Pedagogical leadership

This study focuses on the early years, so a definition of 'pedagogy' in this context is necessary. The EYLF refers to pedagogy as:

> the holistic nature of early childhood educators' professional practice (especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships), curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning. When educators establish respectful and caring relationships with children and families, they are able to work together to construct curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local context. These experiences gradually expand children's knowledge and understanding of the world. (DEEWR, 2009, p. 11)

Pedagogical leadership is an emerging discourse in ECEC but has been well understood and researched in the school sector. Gestwicki and Bertrand (2011) warn, however, that conflation of understandings of 'leadership' between school and ECEC settings fails to recognise the distinctive conditions under which ECEC educators do their work, particularly the wide range of qualifications (or no qualifications) within staff teams.

Increasing attention is now being given to the kind of curriculum that best supports children's learning and development in the early years, and the role educational leaders have in guiding educators in their curriculum decision-making and planning. Waniganayake et al., (2017) argue that the term 'pedagogy' is

> … the art and science of education. In EC contexts, it gives a focus to educational theories, relationships, strategies and practices that educators can draw on when they make curriculum decisions and work with children in learning contexts to support and enhance their learning. (p. 102)

The implication here, argues Waniganayake et al., (2017), is that in this important time of change in the ECEC sector, leaders must seize the opportunity to shape and influence what happens in the future – particularly in relation to curriculum for young children. Abel, Talan and Masterson (2017) expand on this in describing the activities of individuals exercising pedagogical leadership in early childhood settings as "attending to curricular philosophy, assessing children's development and learning, using data for evaluation and optimizing learning" (p. 4).

Improving pedagogical practice of the early childhood workforce is seen by policy-makers and scholars as an important strategy in ensuring that children experience a high-quality program (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). The term pedagogy often outlines the 'how' in teaching, according to Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018), and curriculum the 'what'. Other scholars disagree and see a blending of the terms in early childhood education, for example, in the indirect teacher actions that include setting up active learning environments for children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010).

A broad framework for leadership proposed by Kagan and Bowman (1997, p. 12) identifies pedagogy as one of five key areas that "expands conventional notions … suggesting that leadership in early care and education actually has many functions or parts". Research into early childhood teacher's pedagogical approaches using play as a foundational element (Katz, 1999; Siraj-Blatchford, 1999) suggest that there are a number of key factors of pedagogy particular not only to ECEC. This includes instructional techniques, encouraging involvement and fostering engagement.

The Longitudinal Study of Early Years Professional Status (Hadfield et al., 2012), explores and describes how educators who are designated EYPs improve and sustain practice quality through pedagogical processes and wider leadership. This study found that the cohort of educators are more willing and confident about taking on a practice leadership role in their settings and are exercising a range of approaches contextualised to the settings in which they operate. Significantly, 87% of participants stated that gaining EYPS had a positive impact on their ability to lead improvements in their settings.

Major changes in the practice of the ECEC workforce have taken place in recent times. Nuttall et al. (2014, p. 359) argue that:

> … at the same time as educators are learning to implement the pedagogy implied by the EYLF and engage with the expectations of the new accreditation system, many are also having to adjust to reconfigured work patterns and adopt new professional roles.

Nuttall et al.'s (2014) study compares the pedagogical leader imagined in regulatory reforms with the educational labour described by participants in the study. Nineteen early childhood leaders from Queensland and Victoria were participants in the study, which included centre directors and experienced educators (in Queensland) and centre co-ordinators (equivalent to directors) in Victoria. The findings from this study highlight the tension between 'management' and 'leadership' in ECEC, which is unsurprising, state Nuttall et al. (2014) when participants are speaking out of discourses that are familiar to them (p. 365). Participants who were centre directors expressed ambivalence about the Educational Leader role and how it might change their own role. For some of these directors, it was difficult to let go of their traditional managerial role and take up the challenge of working with staff to develop

pedagogical practice within their services. Negotiating tensions between policy and practice was a feature of the data, with participating directors attempting to weave new possibilities into established discourses in order to understand the relationship between leadership and learning (Nuttall et al., 2014, p. 368).

Similarly, recent studies investigating enactment and implementation of pedagogical leadership in Finland (Fonsen, 2013; Heikka, 2013) also support the view that "pedagogical leadership is connected with not only children's learning, but also the capacity building of the early childhood profession" (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011, p. 510). Fonsen's (2013) participatory action research study, carried out in seven municipalities in Finland, investigated the implementation of pedagogical leadership by centre directors. This study was based on the contextual leadership theory developed by Nivala (1998), which highlighted the importance of the core task of ECEC. Findings from Fonsen's (2013) study indicate that pedagogical leadership is understood as a contextual and cultural phenomenon. In the Finnish context, a distributed leadership perspective suggests that not only are interactions between stakeholders crucial in achieving pedagogically sound early childhood education programs, so too is the interdependence between macro and micro leadership enactments (Heikka, 2014, p. 259).

Current discourse around pedagogical leadership highlights the issue of preparation of early childhood teachers both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. A study by Watson and Wildy (2014), which explored the pedagogical practices of pre-primary teachers in Western Australia, found that effective leadership preparation, particularly for pedagogical leadership, "is critical to the success of teachers' effectiveness … to build confidence and for reflective practice" (p. 82). Kindergarten

and pre-primary schooling are considered to be the early years of schooling in Western Australia, although compulsory attendance begins in the pre-primary year at age five. Similarly, Waniganayake (2014) reflects on what has been achieved over the past two decades in promoting leadership studies in early childhood degree courses in Australia. She urges further research on what is needed in preparing future teachers for leadership enactment within the sector. Campbell-Evans, Stamopoulos and Maloney (2014) go further, making a case for changes to be made to tertiary training in undergraduate and postgraduate studies to build leadership in early childhood settings.

What a teacher or educator believes about children and how they grow, learn and develop will influence the way they teach (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). For Educational Leaders, there is a need to possess the knowledge and skills to guide others and build on their pedagogical base, argue Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018). Constructions of childhood have moved well beyond the notion that children are passive recipients of knowledge, with skills transmitted to them by adults. The image of children as active participants (in their worlds) has permeated early childhood education and is visible in the pedagogy of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). However, this is not always the case. Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) argue that over a decade ago, Yelland and Kilderry (2005) called for early childhood educators to rethink pedagogy and practice to meet the new demands of the changing context of childhood. One of the challenges the sector faces is rapid change. As argued by Linden (cited in Moloney & Pettersen, 2016), external change has occurred so quickly in ECEC that new change arrives before past changes have been embedded and evaluated.

Attention has been drawn in recent times to the tensions that exist in the area of early childhood pedagogy, both internationally and in Australia (Barblett, Knaus, & Barratt-Pugh, 2016; Gibbons, 2013; Gunnarsdóttir, 2014; Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). Traditional early childhood pedagogical strategies, such as play-based learning, are being replaced in some cases by more formal strategies focused on the early development of academic skills (Barblett et al., 2016). I have observed this anecdotally when pre-service teachers return from teaching placement, and although not common, it does happen. Pre-service teachers relate that, in some instances, there is significant pressure on staff from parents who want their children to be 'a step ahead of their peers'. Tutoring services such as Kumon (2018) and Begin Bright (2018) claim on their websites that their data shows a sharp increase in enrolments of three-year-old children in the last five years, from parents who want them to "enter kindergarten with an academic advantage and skills essential for learning" (Kumon, 2018). However, a philosophy that values memorising information and learning from photocopied worksheets is completely at odds with a philosophy of free play and learning through play. There is an opportunity here for Educational Leaders to actively address this issue by supporting colleagues and collaborating with parents and families as partners in children's learning.

It is claimed that in countries such as the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, ECEC is becoming more school-like (Gibbons, 2013; Alcock & Haggerty, 2013) with a focus on academic programs used to gain positive results in future standardised tests. Alcock and Haggerty (2013) use the term 'schoolification' (p. 138) to describe the positioning of ECEC as preparation for school and the workforce, with the child as a future economic resource. They voice their concerns about current policy development in New Zealand, which views education as being solely a preparation

for economic futures (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013). The challenge for Educational Leaders, say Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018), is to encourage open discussions amongst staff and assist others to develop and enact pedagogy that is an art, a craft and a science (Waniganayake et al., 2017).

2.3.3 Instructional leadership in the early years

In recent times, instructional leadership has emerged in school literature, however, it is almost non-existent in early childhood research. An extensive search of the literature produced a small number of articles and reports with most of these placed in school settings and referencing pre-prep classrooms as part of the wider school context (Abel, Talan & Masterson, 2017; Pacchiano, Klein, & Hawley 2016). However, instructional leadership for learning has the potential to play a significant role in leading instruction, with the Educational Leader as a coach and mentor for staff in ECEC settings. The recent *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* report (Gonski, Arcus, Boston, Gould, Johnson, O'Brien, & Roberts, 2018) acknowledged the important role that high quality early education in the years prior to school can play for a child, although it stopped short of making specific recommendations for ECEC. Significantly, the report highlighted areas such as children's transition to, and success at, school, and the engagement and support of parents and carers as critical to learning and development in the early years (ACECQA, 2018a). This has important implications for Educational Leaders as instructional experts in ECEC, not only in the ways they coach and mentor others, but in how they initiate professional conversations and model ethical practice in order to build the capacity of others on the team (Waniganayake et al., 2017). However, whether Educational Leaders themselves receive professional development in how

to effectively coach or mentor others is open to debate. Nuttall and Thomas (2013) note that while most Educational Leaders are well-versed in learning and teaching, and child development, they are often not equipped with the skills to coach and mentor others. As mentioned previously, this was one of the expectations of the person filling the role according to the NQS (COAG, 2009a)

Researchers (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016; Hattie, 2012) suggest that it is more effective to have teachers working collaboratively, and for high effect, using a coaching approach to support one another. This approach is supported by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2012), which is concerned mainly with leadership and professional standards in schools, although it very briefly addresses early childhood on its website. A focus on quality improvement and investment in a stable, well-supported and professional workforce is vital according to a recent report, *Lifting our game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions* (2017), which complements the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* report (Pascoe & Brennan, 2017). The *Lifting our Game* (2017) report highlights the importance of effective and positive transitions to school and places greater emphasis on the continuity of learning for young children.

Educational leaders in early childhood and school settings are often viewed as the drivers of organisational change. By looking closely at the research in schools, Pacchiano et al. (2016) developed a comprehensive implementation framework that articulates a road map for instructional leadership in early childhood settings, an approach they describe as "bold and unprecedented" (p. 2). This US study offers a professional development intervention that cultivates instructional leadership and

instils cultures of collaboration that successfully impact teaching and children's learning. Pedagogical leaders "shape teaching through day-to-day practices of instructional leadership in this approach and drive continuous improvement by facilitating routine teacher collaboration and practice improvement" (Pacchiano et al., 2016, p. 1). Locally, the authors of the *Victorian Advancing Early Learning Study* (VAEL) (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2017) developed, piloted and tested the effectiveness of a professional learning program on the quality of educator-child interactions in ECEC settings where Educational Leaders and educators were trained and coached in the use of evidence-based strategies. The term 'instructional leadership' is not used in this study, however there are distinct similarities to the professional development intervention model presented by Pacchiano et al. (2016). The rationale of the VAEL study was to test the effectiveness of a professional learning model that focused on improving the quality of educator-child interactions in ECEC settings. It aimed to do this by "providing educators with specific pedagogical training and coaching on the application and use of evidence-based teaching techniques that were likely to improve child outcomes in language and conceptual development" (DET, 2017 p. 10). Key components of both the VAEL and Pacchiano et al. models are collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders, building and maintaining a 'whole of centre' approach to quality improvement through a participatory action process, professional learning (training, expert coaching and educational leadership), and tracking and assessing the effectiveness of the implementation process. In Victoria, a research study conducted by Nolan and Molla (2017) used data drawn from the state-wide Professional Mentoring Program for Early Childhood Teachers (2011-2014) to identify what constitutes effective teacher professional learning through mentoring. The findings

from this study indicated that teachers' "contexts of practice need to be considered in designing professional programs such as mentoring in ECEC, and to conceptualise learning as a socially situated practice rather than a detached pedagogic event" (Nolan & Molla, 2017, p. 258). This is important when considering the diverse nature of ECEC settings throughout Australia.

In a case study research project undertaken in Finland (Heikka et al., 2016), it was noted that pedagogical leaders used instructional techniques with children but that this approach was rare when interacting with staff. It appeared that the pedagogical leader in this context usually enacted leadership in indirect ways.

2.3.4 Intentional leadership

Moloney and McCarthy (2018) argue that intentional leaders in ECEC have a strong commitment to leading in the best interests of children, families and educators. Intentional leadership is concerned with relationships, reciprocal learning and reflection (Biddle, 2010), as well as with vision, communication and empowerment (Bryman et al., 2011). Moloney and McCarthy (2018) 'borrow' from Waniganayake and Semann (2011), suggesting that intentional leadership in the ECEC context is "a journey of joint inquiry, exploration and reflection that can involve everyone who believes in making a difference for children" (p. 24).

Distributed models of leadership are seen by some as an effective means of embedding intentional leadership practice within ECEC (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018; Waniganayake et al., 2017). Distributed leadership, with its multiple layers, emphasises interdependent interaction and practice (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018) and can create opportunities for all staff to have a voice.

Early Childhood Australia's (2016a) Code of Ethics, although not a legal requirement, is explicit in stating that educators' professional responsibilities entail advocating for the provision of quality education and care, and laws and policies that promote the rights and best interests of children and families. Moloney and McCarthy's (2018) research found that in ECEC, intentional leadership for effective inclusion must be fostered and supported. They argue that intentional leadership is "the 'superglue' (Bolman & Deal, 2017) that unites, motivates and empowers all educators to work towards a common goal; that of creating an inclusive culture within the entire setting" (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018, p. 12). Early childhood leaders are, therefore, in an ideal position to identify and act on issues that affect children's rights, wellbeing and development.

2.3.5 Hybrid leadership

A range of different constructs can be used to describe and define the way that leadership operates in educational settings, in particular the field of ECEC. Until recently, binary constructs of leadership have existed in which either a traditional, hierarchical model, or a distributed, shared form of leadership is preferred, but not both (Bøe & Hognestad, 2017a; Townsend, 2015). A more sophisticated alternative has been proposed by a number of authors, which is to consider leadership as a hybrid activity, one which entails a range of approaches inspired by varying ideals (Bøe & Hognestad, 2017a; Gronn, 2011 Townsend, 2015). In this study I use the term 'hybrid leadership' as a shorthand way of considering the Educational Leader's solo leadership actions within a community of practice in which all staff participate in knowledge-sharing. This includes the director, teachers and educators who share issues and problem-solve with one another throughout the working day.

As Gronn, (2011) points out, distributed leadership developed as an analytical framework in response to the heroic view of leadership and has had a great impact on research into educational leadership. Going further, Gronn (2009) proposes a hybrid leadership framework for understanding formal teacher leaders' roles at the middle management level (a term borrowed from the school sector). This has the potential to offer a more holistic understanding of leadership practices than distributed leadership (Bøe & Hognestad, 2014; 2017b). Gronn (2011) describes hybrid leadership as combinations of concentrated individual leadership that co-exist alongside patterns of distributed leadership and emergent leadership. This alternative suggested by Gronn establishes the unit of analysis for leadership research as being the 'configuration' of leadership, a perspective that is especially helpful in trying to understand leadership in complex contexts such as ECEC settings (Bøe & Hognestad, 2017a; 2017b; Wallace & Poulson, 2003).

Research into hybrid leadership in ECEC is limited, and a thorough search yielded a very small number of studies in schools and just one undertaken in early childhood. This small-scale Finnish study conducted by Bøe and Hognestad (2014) involved six formal teacher leaders and examined how they encouraged and fostered knowledge development in communities of practice through the lens of hybrid leadership. Findings from this study showed that hybrid leadership practices for knowledge development are significant for strengthening communities of practice. By providing knowledge development using hybrid leadership practices, within which solo and shared leadership practices are intertwined, leaders can – through their participation in communities of practice – take advantage of situated work (Bøe & Hognestad, 2014).

2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have examined the literature that positions this study in the context of a wider understanding of leadership in general and, more specifically, pedagogical leadership in ECEC. I have considered literature from the school sector, where research is plentiful, and explored the emerging body of research in leadership in the field of ECEC.

Chapter 3 The research design

As outlined in Chapter 1, the focus of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of, and insight into, the role of the Educational Leader in day-to-day pedagogical leadership enactment and decision-making. In Section 3.1 of this chapter I provide the theoretical framework for the research. Section 3.2 describes the rationale for a single case study approach using multiple methods of data gathering. In Section 3.3 I examine these data gathering methods as devices for collecting data in interpretive studies. In Section 3.4 I outline the techniques used to establish the credibility, transferability and confirmability of the data, to ensure the research is trustworthy. Section 3.5 positions this research as ethical in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2018).

3.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is the over-arching term that describes and justifies the theoretical tradition from which the researcher comes, and the theories embedded within it (Silverman & Gelfand, 2000). It emanates from, and is directed by, the purpose of the research and the two research questions that guide this study. As a researcher, I accept that knowledge is viewed as the outcome or consequence of human activity "that is problematic and ever-changing" (Lincoln & Guba, 1990, p. 26).

According to Crotty (1998), there are four elements of the research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Constructionism is the epistemological stance that shapes this research study. Blaikie (2007) states:

"the notion of constructionism can be applied to social actors socially constructing their reality by conceptualising and inferring their own actions, experiences, the actions of others and social situations" (pp. 22-23). The participants in this study constructed their reality of the Educational Leader role as they saw it in their own context. The theoretical perspective underlying the design of the research is interpretivism, an approach that holds that knowledge can be gathered through people's interpretations and understanding. It is through the perceptions of participants, interpreted through their words and actions, that the constructed meaning of their experiences is understood. The methodology chosen is single case study, which, according to Yin, (2013) focuses on a typical or representative case, giving a 'close-up' view of the subject of study (the case) as it is played out in a real-life setting. The methods of data collection used were: semi-structured interviews, shadowing, and the examination of documents, artefacts and social media posts. The research framework I adopted is summarised below in Table 1. This is followed by a description of each of the research elements adopted in this study, as shown in the second column of the table.

Table 1. The research framework

Elements of the research process	Approach adopted in this study
Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical perspective	Interpretivism
Methodology	Single case study
Methods	Semi-structured interviews Shadowing Documents and artefacts Social media

3.1.1 Constructionism

Constructionism holds that there is no objective truth to be discovered, but that we construct meanings of various phenomena through our engagement with life experiences and situations (Crotty, 1998). My focus throughout this study was on gaining an understanding of the participants' interpretations of reality derived from social interaction and interpersonal relationships. This took place within the context of the selected case site, a pre-school setting in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It involved participants who "construct differing meanings in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Constructionism is highly suited to exploring how pedagogical leadership is understood and enacted by those involved within the setting.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

An interpretivist approach was adopted for this study. This approach provides a way of interpreting and understanding the world from the perspective of lived experience. The interpretivist approach holds that knowledge can be gathered through people's interpretations and understanding (Crotty, 1998). In this study, by adopting an interpretivist approach, my emphasis was on gaining a deep insight into the role of the Educational Leader; their daily enactment of the role and the factors that influence how they carry out their role.

3.2 Methodology

As indicated above, I selected a single case study approach (Yin, 2013) for this research. This was because I wished to study the specific case in depth, to gain a greater understanding of the role of Educational Leader. Yin (2013) defines case

study as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 14). This case study was designed to be "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Yin, 2013, p. 15). The benefits of a single case study are: depth is a feature, as is scrutiny of the context; richness is ensured (some of the richness can be taken away when there is more than one case); and single complex networks and environments have their own culture and unique features (Merriam, 1998). Using a single site enabled me to collect rich and detailed data through interviews, shadowing and the collection of documents and artefacts. This is a strength of the study.

This research gives a "thick description" (Denzin,1989; Geertz,1973; Ryle,1971) of the role of Educational Leader in one setting, with major attention to the uniqueness and complexity of the single case. 'Thick description' goes beyond surface appearances to include the context, detail, emotion and webs of social relationships (Ponterotto, 2006). It allows the reader to 'see' the lives of participants because of the way the text is written.

In designing the case study, the following components provided by Yin (2013, p. 35) were addressed:

a) The main research questions in this study were narrowed down to one main question and an additional guiding question. These were very specific, which kept the study within its limits.

b) The 'unit of analysis' comprised the context in which the Educational Leader was situated. This unit consisted of the director, teachers, educators and the

Educational Leader. Parents, children and others associated with the setting were not participants in this research as they may not have known specifically how the Educational Leader supports and guides others pedagogically.

3.2.1 The single case study

Single case study (Yin, 2013) has been identified as having utility and relevance for examining evidence-based practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) (Kratochwill & Levin, 2014; Lobo, Moeyaert, Baraldi & Babik, 2017). Barton, Ledford, Lane, Decker, Germansky, Hemmeter and Kaiser (2016) viewed single case study research as a strength in a recent study into an early intervention program for pre-school children in the US. They noted that, given the dynamic nature of the methodology, when designed and analysed in a rigorous manner it was particularly well suited to examining differences across participants.

Goings, Davis, Britto and Greene (2017) chose a single case design for their research focused on a student who participated in a university-based mentoring program in the UK. They argued that this methodology allowed for an in-depth examination of the student's experiences and provided new insights into how the phenomenon of mentoring impacted on one college student's academic trajectory and his desire to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy.

Given the limited research into the role of Educational Leader in ECEC settings in Australia, in this study I provide an in-depth examination of the Educational Leader's experiences and the day-to-day enactment of the role. The aim is to give new insights into how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators and the influences that determine how this is done.

3.2.2 Selecting the sample case

A feature of qualitative inquiry is that it typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, including single cases. The power of purposive (or purposeful) sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth, focusing on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest. Teddlie and Yu (2007) argue that purposive sampling is undertaken for several kinds of research including a focus on specific, unique issues or cases, but it does involve a trade-off: On one hand it provides greater depth to the study and on the other hand it provides less breadth. Purposive sampling, Caulley (1994) contends, is a strategy used to examine select cases without needing to generalise to all such cases; the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it.

There is a range of purposive sampling types. For this study the technique I used to select the site was typical case sampling. This is a type of purposive sampling in which "subjects are selected who are likely to behave as most of their counterparts would" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 368). This does not mean that the sample is representative of others, rather that it is illustrative of other similar samples. Stake (2005) argues that selecting a case that may be typical is relevant, but researchers could also consider selecting cases that offer an opportunity for learning.

In the context of my research, the selected site reflects a typical case sample because the criteria used for purposeful selection could be applied to like services. My purpose in choosing this approach was to find an early childhood setting that would be typical or illustrative of other similar settings, with participants who I believed were typical of most of their counterparts. However, I needed to

acknowledge that typicality is subjective, and as Keamy (2003) argues, not all the participants' colleagues would necessarily see them as typical, and as researcher I might not share the same perspectives. Keamy (2003) goes further, stating that this need not be an issue of great concern but can be viewed as "a continuum of possibilities rather than a single way of doing things" (p. 121).

The criteria established for the selection of my research site were the following: It must be a registered ECEC setting with a nominated Educational Leader holding a teaching qualification; it must have six or more staff members who would be potential participants, therefore generating sufficient data for the purposes of the study; it needed to be within a reasonable driving distance from my home and workplace; and it had to have been awarded 'meeting' status or above according to the National Quality Standard framework.

Conditions for my research included the setting being available for a specified time; all educators of the centre being willing to sign an agreement to participate in the study; and the site having a diverse practice environment which would contribute to data collection, with an environment, size and structure typical of other settings. A combination of the learnings from the literature review and my own experience also assisted in framing the selection of the site.

The early childhood setting selected for this study needed to have an overall rating of 'meeting' the seven quality areas of the NQS. All services approved under the Education and Care Services National Law are assessed against the seven quality areas of the NQS. They are then given an overall rating based on these results. Services must display their ratings at all times, and these can be found on websites such as the National Register (ACECQA, 2018), Starting Blocks (ACECQA, 2018)

and MyChild (DET, 2019). Using these websites as a guide, I was able to examine the quality of education and care services available in the range of settings that met the criteria.

I narrowed the search down to five centres and pre-schools, four of which showed no interest in participating. Through my professional networks, my fifth potential site proved to be one in which all educators, and Emma (pseudonym), the Educational Leader, agreed to participate in the study. After an initial discussion about the study, Emma agreed to participate if consent was gained from the approved provider and the director of the setting. Although I felt that I had found a suitable participant for the study, I was not in a position to insist on, or influence, Emma's decision to participate. After a short period of time, I received confirmation that the approved provider (the school principal) and the pre-school director had agreed to participate in the study.

The ethics application (approved prior to commencement of the research) contained plain language statements and written information about the study. These were provided to the approved provider (the school principal) and director of the pre-school who subsequently signed and returned the consent forms. These are stored in a locked facility at the university where I work. More details about the ethics process is provided in Section 3.5. In addition to the director and Educational Leader, four members of staff agreed to be participants, giving a richness and depth to the data collection.

3.2.3 The case site

Clearview Primary and Pre-school (pseudonym) provides a service for children and families, with the pre-school and school integrated in one location. In recent years, a

new hall and gym facilities have been added to the main office and classroom areas that were built in the post-World War 2 era in response to rapid urban growth in the area.

Most children transition from the pre-school to the primary school, and many have siblings who also attend. The Philosophy Statement for the pre-school states that it fosters strong links between the pre-school and the primary school with the aim of ensuring that pre-school children and families feel part of the primary school community. There are opportunities for the pre-school children to visit the school regularly, engage in transition programs and participate in whole school activities such as assemblies and school events.

The pre-school is located within the largest of the school buildings, at the end of a long corridor. Double glass doors separate the pre-school from the school and this allows for safe and easy access to the school classrooms when required. These double doors are locked on the school side but are unlocked from the pre-school side and can only be accessed through the pre-school staff area. The outdoor area is self-contained but located within the school playground. This gives the pre-school children the opportunity to interact with the school children, which they do on a daily basis.

The pre-school offers two four-year-old and two three-year-old groups. The total license capacity of the preschool centre is 54 places. Children who attend the four-year-old program attend a total of fifteen hours per week, meeting the Federal Government's Universal Access (DET, 2017) initiative. Those children who are enrolled in the three-year-old group attend a total of seven hours per week.

Built over sixty years ago, Clearview Primary and Pre-school has experienced major changes in recent years, with a housing boom that has attracted young families to the area. According to school data for 2017, the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) (Louden, 2010) rates the school as 'high' with low enrolments of children with English as an additional language. There are fewer than ten per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at the school. This contrasts with the data for 2010, which indicated an ICSEA rating as 'middle', with nearly a quarter of students having English as an additional language and less than ten per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled (ACARA, 2018). Total enrolment for the school has more than doubled in the period from 2010 to 2017. It is most likely that these statistics are reflected in the profile of the pre-school. Nearly all families whose children attend the pre-school live in the surrounding community. Of the staff involved in this study, most lived in the surrounding area and felt they were a part of the community.

The educators at the pre-school were all women, and all came from a range of backgrounds and experiences. One member of staff had been a kindergarten teacher for approximately twenty-five years, while the director and Educational Leader both had between fifteen to twenty years of experience in teaching. An interest in sustainability and a lifelong passion for horses and horse-riding led one of the educators to make the decision at the end of the school year to resign and work full-time at a riding school; she had worked as an educator for almost three years. The other two educators had worked in early childhood settings for between fifteen and twenty years and had older children who had attended the pre-school and school.

3.2.4 Participant selection and recruitment

Once approval for the research had been sought from the school principal as the approved provider, the director was approached with an invitation for the pre-school staff to participate in the study. The total number of staff members at the preschool was eight. The director expressed interest but asked for further clarification about the interview and shadowing processes, and an indication of the timeframe for the study. She had already spoken with the Educational Leader regarding the research but briefed all members of staff before the Information for Participant forms were distributed. Upon being invited, the director, Educational Leader and four teachers and educators accepted the invitation to participate and signed consent forms. Two members of staff chose not to be part of the study; these educators worked at the pre-school as 'cover' staff. This meant that they covered staff for lunch breaks on a casual basis.

At the time of the study, all but one of the participants had worked at the pre-school for at least two years, with the director having been there the longest, at almost eight years. The director held an early childhood teaching qualification while the Educational Leader and kindergarten teacher were qualified early childhood/primary teachers. Two educators had completed early childhood diplomas and one had a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) qualification. All but one member of staff had worked in a range of early childhood settings over the course of their careers, including long day care, occasional care, school early learning centres and stand-alone kindergartens.

3.2.5 The participants

Table 2. A summary of the participants in the study, their roles and qualifications.

Emma	Qualifications
Educational Leader	• Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Teaching • Certificate IV: Training and Assessment Emma (pseudonym) was appointed to the position of Educational Leader two years prior to this study and had worked at the setting for four years. Emma had worked in both early childhood and primary school settings in Australia and abroad for almost twenty years and was experienced in teaching diploma students at TAFE (Technical and Further Education) on a sessional basis. At the time of the study, Emma was working only at the pre-school.
Melissa Preschool director	**Qualifications** • Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Melissa (pseudonym) had been director of the pre-school for eight years. Prior to this, she held the position of director at two other early childhood settings, one in long day care, and one in a council-run kindergarten. Melissa had been working in the sector for just over twenty years at the time of data collection.
Helene Preschool teacher	**Qualifications** • Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood & Primary) Helene (pseudonym) qualified as an early childhood and primary teacher thirty years ago and worked in prior to school settings for most of that time. Helene was a new member of staff, having joined the pre-school six months before the study commenced. She taught one of the four-year-old groups.
Kathy Educator	**Qualifications** • Diploma of Children's Services Kathy (pseudonym) had been working in the early childhood sector for more than twenty-five years at the time of data collection. She had spent most of that time in long day care settings in a range of roles over her career. Kathy commenced at the pre-school shortly after Emma arrived, and worked with Emma in the three-year-old room.
Maya Educator	**Qualifications** • Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood and Primary) Maya (pseudonym) identified herself as a 'teducator' – an abbreviation of 'teacher' and 'educator', as she was qualified as both. Although Maya had received her teaching qualification more than thirty years ago, she had chosen not to pursue a career in

	teaching. At Clearview, Maya was an educator and had held this role for approximately sixteen years. At times, Maya stepped into a teaching role when needed, but preferred to work as an educator supporting the teachers of the four-year-old groups at the pre-school.
Sarah Educator	**Qualifications** • Certificate lll Early Childhood Education and Care Sarah (pseudonym) had recently completed her Certificate lll in Early Childhood Education and Care and worked in the four-year-old room, usually with Helene. Sarah had worked in the early childhood sector for less than three years; prior to this, she had been employed in a range of jobs, including landscaping and gardening. Sarah was passionate about sustainability and had helped establish the school garden. Children from the school and the pre-school were welcome to play, learn and grow in the garden, guided by the Growing Green (pseudonym) garden team. Sarah spent much of her own time working on projects in the outdoor area at the pre-school. Sarah was also the occupational health and safety (OH&S) officer for the pre-school and attended regular meetings at the school, and off-site, as part of this role.

3.3 Methods of data collection

Multiple methods of data collection were used in this study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews, shadowing, and the examination of documents, artefacts and information from one social media site were chosen as methods of data gathering. Each of these methods is discussed in more detail as follows.

3.3.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

One of the methods used to gather data for this study was the semi-structured in-depth interview. This is an often-used qualitative method in the social sciences (Denzin,1989; King & Horrocks, 2018) and, as Mason (2010) notes, is similar to a conversation between two individuals where the discussion is relaxed, open and honest. However, unlike a conversation, there is far more probing by the interviewer as they seek to obtain more clarity and detail on a particular topic. Morris (2015)

argues that this is a strength of the in-depth interview, as the researcher is able to obtain an understanding of the social reality under consideration and collect rich data relatively rapidly.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants in this study (the Educational Leader, director and educators) using a series of guiding questions. Although semi-structured interviews are characterised by a level of flexibility and freedom, careful planning is also necessary so that they "do not become too casual" (Cohen et al., 2011 p. 415). The extent to which the participants trusted me, the questions I asked, the level and kind of probing I used, and the interruptions, all contributed to the final product – the interview transcript (Morris, 2015).

The length of interviews varied between participants. Appointments were made for one hour with each participant, but ultimately the time taken depended on the length of the participant's answers. Each interview began with a discussion of the interview protocol that I was following. This involved: signing and collecting the consent form; asking participants whether they had questions about any of the information provided on the form; seeking verbal permission, in addition to written permission, to audio record the interview; agreeing to email a transcript of the interview to the participant to review; and explaining how personal information would be de-identified in the write-up process.

Four of the participants spoke at length and the interviews lasted for approximately one hour. One interview with an educator lasted forty minutes and the Educational Leader completed three interviews with the lengthiest being one and a half hours. Some qualitative researchers argue that in-depth semi-structured interviewing should involve "repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informant"

(Taylor & Bogdan, 2015, p. 7). Conducting multiple interviews with the Educational Leader had advantages in that once a relationship of trust had been established between us, she was very open to providing detailed responses to the questions and giving me a range of insights and thoughts about her role.

Interviews were conducted in areas of the pre-school and school that were identified by the participants as being private and comfortable. Space at the pre-school was at a premium so I scheduled interviews for times when I knew that classes had finished for the day and at least one of the classrooms was not being used. This mitigated the risk of being interrupted or overheard by others. Both the director and the teacher with whom she worked closely chose the shared office, which was not being used at the time. The Educational Leader selected her own classroom for the first interview and the second interview began in the staff room then continued in the school principal's office. This interview was the longest at nearly an hour and a half. By mutual arrangement, the third interview with Emma was conducted over the phone. Two of the educators chose empty classrooms and Sarah elected to move away from the pre-school altogether and find a space beyond the glass doors in the school area.

Participants were asked a series of guiding questions (see Appendices A, B and C) with scope for the me as interviewer to omit, re-order or vary the wording to further probe the issues that emerged (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). The interviews took place over five months, beginning in July and finishing in December 2016.

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with consideration given to transcription conventions (Cohen et al., 2011). Note-taking was also part of the data collection process, with the aim of capturing the true richness of the conversations.

Non-verbal aspects, such as body language and intonation, were deliberately not recorded or noted during the interview, however, I wrote brief comments relating to this after each interview had finished. I felt that I needed to fully engage with the participants during the interview process.

Transcriptions of interviews were given to participants to check and verify, although not all participants chose to review their transcripts. Of those who did, only the director made a change. This was a small amendment, providing some context to clarify one of her statements.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are a highly effective method of collecting information, but they do have limitations. One limitation is that data obtained from the interviews cannot be generalised to the population. A large amount of time and effort is required to set up and conduct interviews, and transcribing is often costly and time-consuming. Although this was true in my study, I did not find that the time spent in this way impacted on the research.

In this study, shadowing, documentation collected, and social media analysis complemented semi-structured interviews. Bergman (2008) concludes that "using data of different types can help us both to determine what interpretations of phenomena are more or less likely to be valid and to provide complementary information that illuminates different aspects of what we are studying" (p. 18). Triangulating data in this way captures different dimensions of the same phenomenon and is beneficial to the research and the research process (Honorene, 2017). A more thorough consideration of the use of triangulation in this study can be found in Section 3.4.

Occasionally I have used a quote from a participant more than once in this study. Some of the participants addressed multiple aspects of a complex issue in their interviews, and in the coding process I noticed that particular quotes sat across more than one theme. This led to some interesting and unexpected findings in the research process.

3.3.2 Shadowing

Shadowing is well known in disciplines such as organisational studies and the health sciences but is not commonly used in educational settings (Bøe, Hognestad, & Waniganayake, 2017; Hognestad & Bøe, 2016). Put simply, shadowing can be described as "observation on the move" (Czarniawska, 2014, p. 43), as the researcher follows a participant as they go about their everyday work. As McDonald (2005) explains,

> Coupled with the fact that shadowing research does not rely on an individual's account of their role in an organization, but views it directly, means that shadowing can produce the sort of first-hand, detailed data that gives the researcher access to both the trivial or mundane and the difficult to articulate. (p. 457)

Within educational leadership contexts, two seminal studies using shadowing as a method stand out – Mintzberg's (1973) study of a school superintendent and Wolcott's (1973) work 'The Man in the Principal's Office'. Wolcott's (1973) study aimed to help others understand what principals do daily and provide insight into the demands to which they respond. By capturing the daily work of the principal using shadowing, interviews and document collection, Wolcott gave a rich ethnographic description, analysis and interpretation of the principal's work (Hoppey & Dana, 2006). Wolcott adopted the role of 'participant-as-observer', a role

> … in which the observer is known to all and is present in the system as a scientific observer, participating by his presence but at the same time usually allowed to do what observers do rather than expected to perform as others perform. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 8)

This method has relevance to my study as by using the same qualitative approaches to data collection, I aim to give a rich and 'thick' description of how an Educational Leader provides pedagogical leadership to educators in one early childhood setting.

Mintzberg (1970) introduced his 'structured observation' technique after questioning the diary method of observation prevalent at that time (Czarniawska, 2014). Mintzberg suggested a compromise to the difficulty of traditional techniques of observation, such as participant observation and stationary direct observation, in an increasingly complex contemporary society (Czarniawska, 2014). Other researchers have built on this, with shadowing emerging as an effective technique of observation that avoids such difficulties. While shadowing has been used in management studies since the early 1970s, it is often referred to simply as 'shadowing' in inverted commas and is not discussed as a distinct research method (Quinlan, 2008). McDonald (2005) claims to be the first researcher to explicitly explore shadowing as a qualitative research method.

Quinlan (2008) states that shadowing entails a researcher "closely following a subject over a period of time to investigate what people do in the course of their everyday lives, not what their roles dictate of them" (p. 1480). Her study explores the notion of "conspicuous invisibility" with the researcher "present, but not really present, negotiating distance within proximity to subjects and maintaining an identity as a researcher while forming relationships with participants" (p. 1491). Czarniawska (2014) notes that shadowing can be psychologically uncomfortable for some

participants, and that courage and trust are needed by both shadower and shadowee (these terms are used by Czarniawska (2014) in her study). As researcher I was continually aware and concerned about the participant I was shadowing and I tried to ensure that we were both comfortable with the shadowing process so the situation did not become difficult or awkward. As part of this method, the shadower becomes a part of the participant's daily routine as they ask questions about what they are doing, and why. The participant provides clarity for the benefit of the researcher as they go about their work. Czarniawska-Joerges, (2007, p. 54) calls this a "peculiar duo" as the shadower and shadowee interact and explore roles while co-creating knowledge and understanding.

Quinlan (2008) maintains that there is evidence of shadowing approaches to data collection across the social sciences but the precise nature of the differences between these approaches and better-known techniques is hard to articulate. She argues that what is lacking is literature to explain these in detail and examine them critically. A small number of studies have been undertaken using qualitative shadowing as a method in school studies. Despite an extensive search of the literature, I found fewer than five studies that used shadowing in early childhood research, all from Norway (Hognestad & Böe, 2016; Böe, Hognestad & Waniganayake, 2016; Böe & Hognestad, 2017a). This indicated that while shadowing studies had been undertaken in ECEC in one Scandinavian country, the method had not been tried in other parts of the world.

Shadowing differs from the more traditional forms of qualitative research in two distinct ways. Firstly, the data gathered is very detailed, often more so than that gained through other approaches and, secondly, shadowing allows the researcher to

experience the everyday events that shape the participant's days, examining opinions and behaviour concurrently. McDonald (2005) argues that shadowing is "…inimitably placed to investigate an individual's role in, and paths through, an organisation. The organisation is seen through the eyes of the person being shadowed, and that perspective is invaluable to the qualitative researcher" (p. 5).

This study adapted and extended upon Quinlan's (2008) and Bøe, Hognestad and Waniganayake (2017) approaches to shadowing by engaging with the Educational Leader in conversation and including her voice in the process of writing up this research. This suits the context of ECEC settings, where studying leadership practice involves more than simply following the participants to map their behaviour. Bøe, Hognestad and Waniganayake (2017) contend, "within early childhood centres participants continuously make sense of their socially constructed and shared meanings, that, in turn, influence how they negotiate their leadership actions" (p. 608). Following the one Educational Leader in this early childhood setting gave me insight into the focused and specific experience that is relevant to their particular expert role (McDonald, 2005).

Shadowing the Educational Leader in this research took place during five half days, across five weeks. Half days were negotiated as most suitable, as the nature of the work in the pre-school was arranged around half days, for example, teaching sessions in the morning or the afternoon, and staff or planning meetings in the afternoon. I was able to shadow the Educational Leader during a range of different activities, giving me a rich picture of her day-to-day work.

During the shadowing process, I took field notes while constantly on the move. These notes consisted of actions, answers to questions and conversations with

others at the setting. At mutually convenient times during and after the shadowing, the Educational Leader and I engaged in conversations to clarify, discuss and reflect on the leadership practices noted. Sometimes these conversations were pre-arranged and at other times they occurred spontaneously. Having these conversations gave an added dimension to this method of data collection, because, for example,

> [it] involves more than simply following the participant to map their behaviour … it includes information that might explain the meaning of the participants' behaviour … why it is the way it is and how it contributes to organisational life. (Nicolini, Carlile, Langley & Tsoukas, 2013, p. 13)

3.3.2.1 Why choose shadowing?

I chose shadowing as a method of data collection to enable me, as researcher, to gain access to complex leadership actions as they unfolded in the everyday context of a pre-school setting. I wanted to gain a richer understanding of not only what the Educational Leader did and said, but how they enacted their interactions with other people and the environment. The 'mobile' or 'nomadic' nature of shadowing allowed me to become part of the Educational Leader's daily routine. I could engage in conversations and ask questions throughout the process. In the early childhood context, the shadowing is much more dynamic, and focused on the person and their interactions and relationships with others, rather than an issue to be explored.

Traditional observation techniques, I considered, would not have been as likely to provide the same depth of contextual information or detail about purpose that is achieved through the shadowing method, nor would they have necessarily included the participant's voice in the process of shadowing. Shadowing also provides an

insight into actual events that involve the Educational Leader rather than a reconstruction of previously occurring events as found in interview collection techniques. It captures

> … the patterned messiness of organizational life and provides answers to not only the 'what' and 'how' questions but also the 'why' questions. When shadowing is used in an interpretive vein both actions and explanations for those actions are reflected in the resulting rich, thick descriptive data'. (Quinlan, 2008, p. 1483)

3.3.2.2 'Knowledgeable outsider'

As an inquiry into the role of the Educational Leader in an early childhood setting, the purpose of this research was to observe actions and behaviour as they were performed within the pre-school setting as a primary source of information to be analysed and understood. My positioning in the shadowing process was a negotiation between my position as part of the culture and 'insider', and something more dynamic than that. An important advantage I had in being accepted as an insider was that I had been a teacher and knew the 'language' of the group. I also understood classroom life. My work as a lecturer in a tertiary setting, and attachment to a university, brought with it a power imbalance, and I acknowledged that participants might have felt somewhat intimidated by my presence at the site. To mitigate this, particularly during shadowing, it was necessary for me to build a warm relationship with participants, showing respect and sensitivity, ensuring that my appearance and demeanour did not impact negatively on others (Berg, Dickhaut & McCabe, 1995). Genther and Glesner (1994) go further, arguing that:

> there are multiple kinds of relationships that might enter into qualitative research; therefore, it is important not to hide behind the mask of

> rapport or the wall of professional distancing but be fully authentic and
> genuine in our interactions with our participants. (p. 182)

At times my role was that of 'knowledgeable outsider', as, despite being part of the culture under study, I did not always understand the subculture of the setting. Adler and Adler (1987) identified the following three 'membership roles' of qualitative researchers engaged in observational methods: (a) peripheral member researchers, who do not participate in the core activities of group members; (b) active member researchers, who become involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing themselves to the group; and (c) complete member researchers, who are already members of the group or who become fully affiliated during the course of the research. My positioning in the shadowing process was more complicated than simply being 'a fly on the wall'; the act of being mobile or 'nomadic' rather than a stationary observer created a unique relationship between myself as the shadower and Emma as the person being shadowed. As a researcher taking an interpretive approach to shadowing, the conversations between Emma and I were used to clarify my understanding of activities from her point of view. This also provided opportunities for reflection on the shared experiences occurring throughout the shadowing period. As noted by Gill, Barbour and Dean (2014), "shadowing as a reflective approach enables researchers and participants to engage in conversations whilst collecting data" (p. 72). Gill et al. (2014) argue that taking an interpretive approach shapes the relationship with participants through the methodological commitments by privileging the understanding from the participants' point of view. Moreover, shadowing as an interpretive methodology can "balance the power dynamics by highlighting the process of interaction between the researchers and the participants" (Bøe, Hognestad & Waniganayake, 2017, p. 615).

Shadowing does, however, have its difficulties. It can be time-consuming, and the sheer volume of data collected can be overwhelming. In addition, in shadowing, researchers must deal with unexpected ethical issues that arise from time to time. This means being ethically responsive 'on the move' (Dewilde & Creese, 2016). At times I would need to be sensitive in choosing the right opportunity to have a contextual interview with Emma without interrupting her ongoing work. Pre-schools are busy places and the demands on the Educational Leader are great, so leadership situations would be highlighted in my field notes for later discussion.

Another problem that might be encountered by the researcher is that of managing the relationship between themselves, the participant being shadowed and the organisation. The possibility of the researcher becoming friends with a participant in a shadowing experience can occur when a study takes place over a long period of time. This can raise another set of ethical issues to which I needed to be attentive. Wolcott (1973) warns that this can jeopardise contacts with co-workers who may be wary in their interactions with the researcher and unduly careful in their statements about the person being shadowed.

My position as 'knowledgeable outsider' and how this was managed in the research is considered in more detail in Section 6.3.1.

3.3.2.3 The uniqueness of shadowing

Similarities can be found between shadowing and participant observation. However, participant observation differs from shadowing in that the researcher's worldview influences how the data are collected, interpreted and analysed (Quinlan, 2008). Howell (1972) and Spradley (1980) describe different levels of participant observation, with the researcher ultimately deciding what is relevant and important

and what is not. The researcher is in control. In shadowing, participants have some degree of control over the data collection by firstly controlling what the shadower sees and, secondly, by their interpretation and explanation of what was seen. There were times when the Educational Leader would have a private conversation with the director or the educator and would consciously move out of earshot. In addition, at times during staff meetings I was asked not to record particular items under discussion. As requested, I did not record these items.

3.3.3 Documents and artefacts

Document and artefact analysis are forms of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around a research topic (Bowen, 2009). Documents and artefacts are "social products that reflect the interest and perspectives of their authors" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 130). They carry "values and ideologies, either intended or not" (Hitchcock, Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 231). I collected documents and artefacts from the pre-school and these served as a valuable source of information for the study. They were used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2013). Table 2 provides a list of the key documents and artefacts accessed for the study.

Table 3. A summary of the documents and artefacts collected for the study

Organisation	Title	Purpose
Clearview Pre-school and School	Position description	This position description is specific to the Educational Leader role at the pre-school.
Clearview Primary and Pre-school	Website information	Information in the public domain used to inform parents, carers and the community about the school and pre-school.
Clearview Pre-school	Philosophy Statement	Document outlining the Philosophy Principles of the pre-school.
Clearview Pre-school	Curriculum Development Policy	Guidelines to ensure the quality of the educational program at the pre-school.
ACECQA	Ratings chart	Displays the pre-school's assessment and rating against the NQS to improve quality and outcomes for children.
Clearview Pre-school	Agendas (4)	Agendas for three staff meetings and one 'curriculum day' (professional development day) held at the pre-school.
Educational Leader	Validation application document	Documentary evidence that the Educational Leader has met the requirements for teacher registration and salary progression from Level 2 to Level 3.
CELA – Community Early Learning Australia	The Educational Leader: Questions, ideas and strategies	A document to guide the Educational Leader in their role.
Clearview Pre-school	Children's sign-in book	Children had asked for their own sign-in book at the entrance to the pre-school.
Clearview Pre-school	Flyers and posters	General communication for staff members (e.g. wellbeing material, birthday tea reminder).

Document analysis is often used because of the many ways it can support and strengthen research (Prior, 2004). Obtaining and analysing documents is time and cost efficient and documents bring the added benefit of being stable, 'non-reactive' data sources. This means that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or research process (Bowen, 2009). Potential concerns in using document analysis include that they may provide only a small amount of useful data or, in some cases, none at all. I chose not to use some documents as they were incomplete, inaccurate or inconsistent. The documents and artefacts collected from the pre-school setting provided a rich source of information with which to augment and triangulate data collected through interviews and shadowing.

3.3.4 Social media

In recent years we have seen huge growth and development in the use of social media sites as a source of information and communication. Social media, such as social networking sites, blogs and twitter are increasingly being used in educational research. Dawson (2014) maintains that the new mediated relationships and handling of data in social media have the potential to create ethical difficulties not previously encountered. The ethical challenges are complex, multifaceted and resist simple solutions due to a rapidly changing technological landscape. Ethics approval for this study was granted prior to the release of the updated version of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, 2007) (updated 2018). Secondary use of data or information (such as social media posts) in the public domain is now considered human data, requiring consent or a waiver for consent from a human research ethics committee to use this information.

In this study I used data gathered from one Facebook site set up for Educational Leaders in early childhood settings before the new ethics requirement had taken place. This Facebook site is not directly connected to the case site, Clearview Primary and Pre-school, however the use of data collected from the site was deemed necessary for the research to provide additional information pertaining to some of the challenges faced by other Educational Leaders in a similar position to Emma's. The data or information available on the Facebook site is fully in the public domain, however it might be argued that individuals who use the site may consider it private. The site is carefully monitored and moderated by the administrators, a small group of Educational Leaders, who are based in Australia. I examined how the Educational Leader used social media as an informal means of support, to seek information and communicate with others in similar settings. Using forums, Facebook and other online social media as a source of information, support and networking is becoming increasingly popular and is a convenient way to gain insight into the type of issues with which people are concerned. An unknown number of Educational Leaders in Victorian early childhood settings use Facebook as an informal means of support, to seek information and communicate with others in similar settings.

As part of the data collection process, I took screenshots from the Facebook site, showing twenty most recent wall posts and ten most recent discussion topics. Although this is a public site, all possible means of identification were removed from the screenshots, as was any reference to settings and organisations. To be respectful of persons using the Facebook forum, I decided that comments I considered to be disrespectful of others or containing offensive language would be removed from the data. However, all posts were found to be respectful of others. As

a researcher, making these choices is part of understanding ethical conduct within the research process.

The use of social media for analysis and research is a relatively new area of inquiry. Greene, Choudhry, Kilabuk and Shrank (2011), for instance, used online social networking as one method of data collection in their study into patients living with diabetes. Wall posts and discussion topics from ten different groups were abstracted and aggregated into a database. Two investigators evaluated the posts and topics, developed a thematic coding scheme and applied codes to the data. This study concluded:

> Facebook provides a forum for reporting personal experiences, asking questions and receiving direct feedback for people living with diabetes. Promotional activity and personal data collection are also common with no accountability or checks for authenticity. (Greene et al., 2011, p. 5)

Another study by Im, Chee, Lim and Liu (2008) examined the use of online forums as a qualitative research method. Practical issues were "viewed and analysed while considering the evaluation criteria for rigour in qualitative research including credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the study" (Im et al., 2008, p. 1).

The use of data from social media sites is just one of the methods used in this study to verify information from other sources (Yin, 2013). Table 3 summarises the data collection devices and participants involved in the research.

Table 4. Summary of data collection methods and participants

Data collection methods	Types	Participants	Count
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews (this does *not* include the 'debriefing conversations' completed after the shadowing sessions).	Educational Leader	4
		Director of pre-school	1
		Teachers Educators	4
Shadowing	Field notes Written reflections and notes from debriefing sessions. (20 hours)	Educational Leader	5
Organisational documents and artefacts	Agendas Philosophy Statement Website information	NA	15
Social media site (in the public domain)	Screenshots of recent wall posts and discussion posts	NA	30

3.4 Trustworthiness

The findings from this research study should be as trustworthy as possible and must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a series of techniques that can be used in order to meet these criteria. These have been addressed in my research process.

Firstly, prolonged engagement or spending sufficient time at the early childhood setting observing participants "leaves the inquirer open to the multiple influences – the mutual shapers and contextual factors – that impinge upon the phenomenon being studied" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 344). This prolonged engagement provides scope, whereas persistent observation at the setting provides depth. Collection of data took place over six months during which time I was able to establish relationships with the participants. As indicated earlier, one potential downside of establishing such relationships is the potential to become too close to participants. In my case, I needed to avoid establishing a friendship with the Educational Leader; I was able to be friendly without being her friend. This can raise ethical issues and I was attentive to this.

Secondly, 'thick descriptions', as used in this study, are the detailed accounts of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships that put them in context (Holloway, 1997; Creswell, 1998). This technique for establishing transferability refers to describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail so that one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Keeping in mind, however, that this study is a detailed study of one site, and transferability or generalisability is not intended in this research.

Thirdly, triangulation uses multiple sources of data to produce deeper understanding. Triangulating data collected from a variety of sources (interviews, shadowing, documents, artefacts and social media) is viewed as a strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Denzin, 1989). To add to the validity of this study, I involved a colleague as an external and

dispassionate observer in examining the product and process of the research. I was mindful of the ethical considerations around this. I considered it important to involve this colleague because the objective observations she made about my work were a stimulus for discussion and my further thinking. This involvement was included in the ethics approval. The supervision process was also influential, with different personnel asking critical questions during different phases of my research. This has added to the robustness of the study. At the outset, I was aware of my potential for bias because of my background as a teacher and lecturer in a tertiary setting. I sought to manage this by recognising any potential bias and acknowledging it. Subjectivities will be present but being open to other ways of thinking minimises any potential there might be for bias.

Lastly, an audit trail is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. The audit trail for this study includes the research design, data collection decisions and the steps taken to manage, analyse and report data. The audit trail is a technique used to establish confirmability, or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the respondents and not by researcher bias, motivation or interest.

The idea of reflexivity in qualitative research has been influential, prompting Pillow (2010) to advocate that researchers should "continue to challenge the representations we come to [as analysts]" (p. 192). Relationships of power are present in all data collection activities, regardless of efforts to reduce them (Pillow, 2010). A reflexive process is a means of uncovering the unfamiliar to engage in heightened criticality (Kilderry, 2012b). Reflexivity calls upon researchers to reflect upon their research relationships to ensure that "due consideration is given to the

issue of unequal social relations and to the risks of reproducing relations of exploitation or disempowerment in the research" (Pillow, 2010, p. 192).

3.5 Ethical research

This research was conducted according to the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee process based on the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2018). As researcher, I needed to ensure that I upheld the values and principles of ethical conduct when designing, conducting and reporting research findings. The Ethics Committee granted approval for this study on 17 August 2016. It is a requirement when conducting research in government schools and early childhood centres that approval is also sought from the Department of Education and Training Victoria, and this was granted on 20 August 2016.

Permission was then sought from the approved provider of the pre-school, to conduct the research within the setting. Once this permission was obtained, the director, Educational Leader and all potential participants were approached and provided with information about the study. Their involvement in the study and the purpose of the research was clearly communicated to them. This led to them agreeing to be part of the study.

Maintaining the confidentiality of participants and the early childhood setting was supported by the use of pseudonyms and the removal of all identifying information. All raw data gathered was rendered confidential and stored on the Victoria University secure research drive (for all electronic data), or secured in a locked storage facility at my workplace, another university, for seven years (for all hard copy data), according to Victoria University research storage procedures.

3.6 Data analysis

Consistent with an interpretivist paradigm, data analysis in this study was guided by Yin's (2013, p. 136) strategy of working with the data "from the ground up". Yin (2013) contends that working with the data this way involves

> reading and re-reading transcripts, field notes and other documents, keeping a journal to help with clarification and consideration of emerging issues, and seeing patterns, insights or concepts that might emerge. (p. 135)

I chose to use manual coding for this research rather than computer software, for three reasons. Firstly, I felt the need to enhance my understanding and familiarity with the data;. Secondly, this was a small-scale study and did not deal with large datasets. Thirdly, I had the time available to code the data manually. A search of the literature revealed one study that compared the use of both methods (Basit, 2003). This found that the choice of whether to use manual coding or software in qualitative research depends on several factors, including the size of the project, the funds and time available and the expertise of the researcher in using the software. From the outset I was clear about the steps of the analysis and felt organised in terms of recording the developing categories and themes manually.

The first step in analysing the data was to read and re-read the field notes from shadowing, which made up the bulk of the data gathered from the site. I divided the shadowing data into categories that defined pedagogical leadership actions. I drew on Heikka et al.'s (2016) model of dividing the raw data into context categories, defined as an episode presenting a pedagogical leadership act. The word 'episode' is used in this study to describe the interaction or activity that was analysed. The

episode might involve giving guidance to an educator during planning time or creating an agenda for a professional development session with staff.

When taking field notes during shadowing, it was important for the Educational Leader and I that she check my written notes. These debriefing sessions allowed the Educational Leader to clarify and reflect on what had occurred during the shadowing sessions. There were occasions when she asked me not to include specific information in my notes and I did not press her for the reasons for these requests. As requested, I did not include the information. Debriefing also provided the opportunity for us to examine the data together to answer further questions or address inconsistencies. Meeting with participants to discuss their practice and 'debrief' can

> … allow for a deeper level of analysis to occur, one which involves the participant in the process while also adding to the validity of the interpretations on the part of the researcher. (Nolan, Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2013, p. 59)

The next step in analysing the data was to read and re-read the interview transcripts while adding notes from my written observations taken immediately after the interviews. I used highlighters and post-it notes to "play with the data" (Yin, 2013 p. 135). I sorted the data into initial categories looking for similarities and differences. Within the coding process there was a search for meanings through thematic data analysis (Riessman, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Saldaña (2015), "a theme is an outcome of coding, categorisation and analytic reflection" (p. 14). Memos, mind maps and diagrams were also used to help conceptualise the data. Throughout the process it was important to keep in mind the two research questions and the literature that informed them.

Conceptually clustered matrices were established for the interview data (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). This involved the creation of spreadsheets, with the names of the participants (using pseudonyms) inserted along the *y* axis in the matrix and their responses featured in the *x* axis. By doing this I was able to investigate each individual's responses by reading along the xx axis as well as being able to see the similarities and differences in response to particular questions by reading along the yy axis.

These data were then combined with the shadowing data. At this level of analysis, I identified additional emerging themes and found that I needed to develop more themes to reflect the thoughts, beliefs and opinions of the participants (Eckersley, 1997). Within the theme 'factors that enable and/or constrain the Educational Leader' sub-themes were created and changed constantly as I checked and re-checked each piece of data.

Making categories means reading, thinking, trying out tentative categories, changing them when others do a better job, checking them until the very last piece of meaningful information is categorised and, even at that point, being open to revising the categories (Anzul, Ely, Freidman, Garner, McCormack-Steinmetz, 2003).

Patterns began to develop across the data and three main themes emerged during this data reduction process. Constant reflection and refinement of the data took many months and eventually I settled on the final two main themes. Wellington (2000) suggests exploring how themes compare and contrast with others in the literature. This defines the strengths and weaknesses of the data and methods compared to other studies, explains how and why theories have been applied to other inquiries and whether they should be applied to this study (Wellington, 2000).

As I undertook the thematic analysis I reflected on the themes and ideas that were emerging from the data. This involved spending days reading, re-reading, using diagrams, mind maps and reflective notes to help to clarify my thoughts throughout the process. Figure 1 below shows the main themes and sub-themes that I settled on in the final iteration of data analysis.
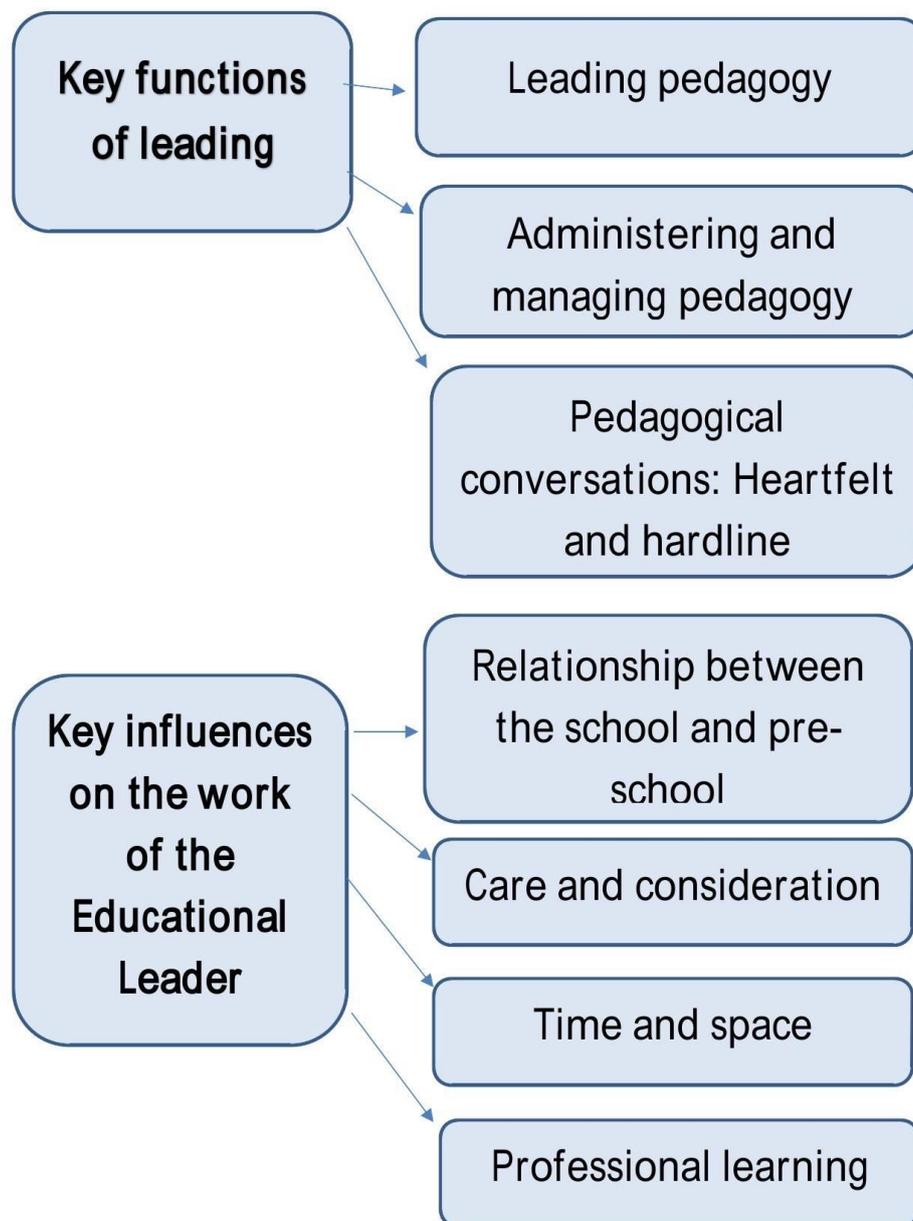
Figure 1. The final themes and sub-themes in the data analysis

3.6.1 Using an interpretive framework

I chose to use the 'Johari Window' as a device to illustrate how the Educational Leader and teachers/educators agree or differ in their understanding of professional learning in the pre-school. More detail on this is provided in Chapter 5, Section 5.4. Psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham created the Johari Window referring to it as a technique to assist people to better understand their relationship with themselves and others (Luft & Ingham, 1955). The four panes or 'arenas' of the window depict things known by both parties, things known by one party only, things known only by the other party and things neither party knows. In this study, I used Shenton's (2007) modified Johari Window, which he refers to as a device to illustrate differences in perspective. There are two additional panes included in Shenton's (2007) window: for information that is misunderstood and information that is misconstrued. I have used the Johari Window because it is an easy-to-understand device that can be used in various cultural contexts (Berland, 2017) to illustrate differences in perspective.

3.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological approach adopted in this study and the data collection devices used. Shadowing as a method of collecting data has been discussed in detail, particularly my positioning as 'knowledgeable outsider' at the pre-school. The ethics process was also explained, as was the importance of trustworthiness and reflexivity in the research. The approach taken to analyse the data collected has been described, including the use of the Johari Window as a device to analyse and group differing perceptions among participants in the study.

Chapter 4 Key functions of pedagogical leading

In this chapter, I present the first part of the research findings and a detailed discussion in response to the first research question 'How does the Educational Leader provide pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators in a particular early childhood setting?' I begin by presenting a brief overview of participants' interpretations of who the Educational Leader is and what that person does, derived from the interview data. A discussion follows to address the key theme 'Functions of leading' and sub-themes of leading pedagogy (Section 4.2), administering and managing pedagogy (Section 4.4) and pedagogical conversations – 'heartfelt' and 'hardline' (Section 4.3). I have drawn inspiration from Heikka et al.'s (2016) framework of administering, managing and leading pedagogy to categorise pedagogical leadership actions undertaken by the Educational Leader. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.
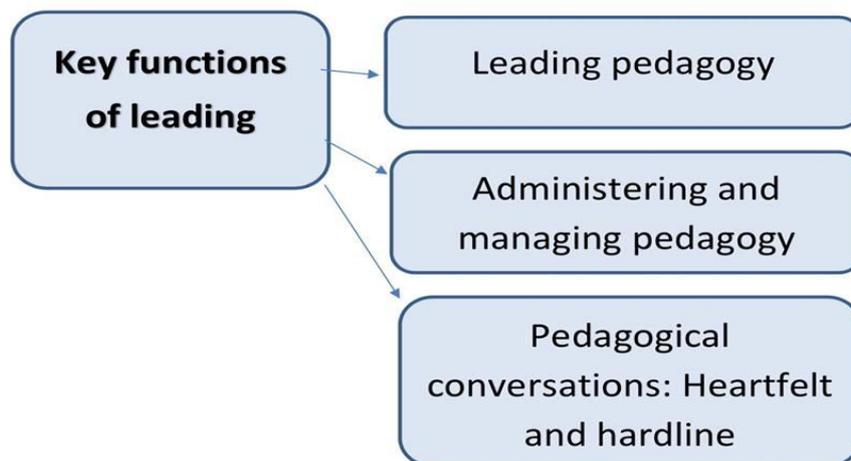
Figure 2. Main theme and sub-themes that address Research Question 1

(Adapted from Heikka et al., 2016).

4.1 Who is the Educational Leader?

Research participants unanimously acknowledged the role of the Educational Leader as important and influential at the pre-school. The position was advertised externally and interviews were conducted by the selection panel, which included the school principal. A member of the panel commented that Emma was a good teacher and potentially a good leader. Emma was offered the role of Educational Leader and accepted it. For Educational Leaders who are identified in this way, leading while teaching involves not just quality teaching and learning practices in their own classroom but the development of quality teaching practices across the classrooms of their colleagues (Grootenboer, 2018). For Emma, the new role was both familiar and different, as she explained:

> The role itself is different from what I thought it would be. It's a unique position. It does include leading pedagogy and promoting good practice but it's also that teaching component and what I've been doing in the classroom amplified for colleagues. (Emma, interview 1)

Prior to Emma's appointment as Educational Leader, Melissa had taken on this role in addition to her own role of director of the pre-school. Melissa spoke about the tensions and complexities she faced in simultaneously managing the pre-school and leading the learning. She described her sense of relief when Emma was appointed Educational Leader as she now had someone she knew and trusted who could assist with the immense workload.

Leading from "a very specific angle" is how Emma described her close working relationship with Melissa as they worked towards achieving the pre-school's vision and goals. Emma reflected that they had a similar drive and passion, which made it easier to get things done, with Emma taking responsibility for pedagogical leading

while Melissa attended to the administrative and managerial aspects of the director's role. This was evident at staff meetings, during which Melissa took responsibility for the parent committee report, community survey and information nights with the school while Emma chaired the meetings and highlighted the importance of leading professional learning for staff.

I asked two questions during the interviews related to participants' understanding of the role of the Educational Leader, and the qualifications, knowledge and skills they felt were important for someone undertaking the role (see Appendix A). Emma's understanding of the role of Educational Leader had evolved over time and her interpretation of it had changed. She initially thought it would be mostly about pedagogical learning and change "but it turns out it's much more than that" (Emma, interview 1). Emma viewed relationships as central to her role and especially important was the relationship she had with the director. She said, "Having gotten to know Melissa over the last couple of years, we have a similar vision and drive and that's made it easier. I know how she may want things done and she knows how I approach things" (Emma, interview 1).

Emma believed the relationships she had built with colleagues at the pre-school underpinned the work required to fulfil the role:

> Getting to know people, firstly on a superficial level, then when you work closely with them and there's the daily interactions which builds that relationship. But then the Educational Leader role allows you to come back and think about that person in more depth and think about where they might want to go in the future. It's really putting your detective hat on and having conversations. (Emma, interview 1)

Emma reflected that the Educational Leader role was a complex one that could not readily be defined by a job description. She acknowledged the positional nature of the role, saying, "whatever I might have been doing incidentally through my teaching and through my interactions with people, having the title makes it more formal" (Emma, Interview 1).

The teachers and educators at Clearview identified a lack of clarity about the role in response to the concept of Educational Leader in early childhood settings. The newness of the role was identified as a key factor in this lack of clarity, as was the diversity of settings in the early childhood sector. For most of the participants, responses reflected discourses of management and administration which were familiar to them. This included:

> Keeping us up-to-date with current educational practices. (Kathy)
>
> Supporting and facilitating professional development for the staff. (Maya)
>
> Giving a bit of direction with regards to planning. (Helene)

Others saw the role as also interpreting legislative policy:

> When new regulations or policy the department wants us to implement comes in I've noticed that the Educational Leader tends to step up and explain things carefully. (Kathy)

One participant saw benefits in having a very experienced person in the role who did not necessarily have a teaching qualification. She articulated that relating well to young children was important as was working with colleagues. Being proficient in IT and having good computer skills was valued as was developing agendas, sending out notices and organising professional development. This focus on either the

development and learning of children or on management tasks reflects traditional approaches to leadership in ECEC in which directors generally carry the majority of management responsibilities and teachers and educators work with children (Nuttall et al., 2014). The Educational Leader, however, is expected to lead pedagogy and learning amongst their colleagues, generally without the professional learning or support systems in place to help them do this. Nuttall et al. (2014) call for rethinking, including a shift to a focus on the development and learning of children *and* adults.

For the director, having a teaching qualification was essential for the Educational Leader role, as was a solid understanding of the NQS and child development. Knowledge of early childhood theories and theorists was also considered important. A key factor for the director was the ability of the Educational Leader to work closely and collaboratively with her to achieve the vision and goals of the pre-school.

4.2 Leading pedagogy

Leading pedagogy took place most often in three aspects of Emma's work: during daily interactions in and out of the classroom, at staff meetings and during curriculum days. In practice, the process of leading pedagogy involved actions of guiding and instructing educators, planning and implementing curriculum, reflecting on practice and facilitating the thinking of others about long-term outcomes for children's learning (Heikka et al., 2016). Episodes of leading pedagogy also extended more broadly to parents and the community, including the school community. These episodes included informal interactions with parents when they dropped off or picked up their child and formal meetings with parents and carers regarding their child's learning. The See Saw (2018) app (discussed later in this chapter) is an effective communication device used to inform parents and carers about their children's

learning. Information shared via the school newsletter, display boards and email contact were other ways of sharing pedagogical learning with parents, carers and the community.

4.2.1 Leading and teaching in the classroom

Emma was engaged in the simultaneous educational practices of leading and teaching. In itself, this is a unique and particular form of practice (Grootenboer, 2018). 'Leading-teaching' is the term Grootenboer (2018) uses to describe this kind of engagement. At the time of data collection, Emma taught two three-year-old groups of children on three days of the week with her colleague, Kathy, who worked part-time as an educator. Emma was aware of the challenges of leading colleagues' knowledge development in a busy pre-school. She felt that it was important to take advantage of situations that occurred in the classroom over the course of the day as opportunities for Kathy to deepen and extend her learning. These opportunities, or episodes, were sometimes intentional and at other times occurred 'on the run' (Emma, interview 2). They generally involved a brief exchange between Emma and Kathy. An example of this happened before the children arrived for the day, when Kathy and Emma were discussing the learning experiences that had been set up in the room. One of these was a maths experience and Emma explicitly instructed Kathy in using targeted questions to extend children's learning. When the teaching session had finished for the day, Emma and Kathy spent half an hour reflecting not only on the children's learning, but on their own. Emma considered reflection time as playing a key role in increasing her own and Kathy's professional understanding of their work:

I think our deepest connection is actually when we have our reflection time. We're really lucky to have it across the pre-school, it was negotiated into our contracts to have dedicated reflection time. That's how much we value what we're doing. Kathy and I have some amazing conversations because we're talking about our shared passion – children's learning. We get quite excited which is kind of nerdy, about showing the links in what we're doing because Kathy is someone that thoroughly understands the observation process. So it's building on that and sharing the teaching and as you saw today it's time with the children and having that dedicated intentional teaching in there. (Emma, Interview 2)

Emma and Kathy's process of reflection was positive and provided opportunities for Kathy to extend her professional learning. Emma used phrases such as 'amazing conversations' and 'shared passion', which indicates that she and Kathy do more than look back on the day's events. They engage in deep conversations, assisting one another to clarify ideas, thoughts and evidence. Kathy understands the observation process, and Emma supports her in building on that understanding; 'sharing the links' between practice, beliefs and assumptions about children's learning. In the two excerpts below, Kathy reflects on the professional trust that exists between them:

I think there's a lot of trust there as well. Emma and I've worked together for a year and a half now and we've built up that professional trust with each other. We approach things very similarly and so no matter whether it's Emma or whether it's me, the child's getting the same structure. And guidance and consistency. I think that's important. I've worked with people before where I'm not on the same page and it's extremely difficult. (Kathy, educator)

We touch base quite regularly throughout the day, not just briefly during the sessions but right through the day, you know, at the end of the day

and the start of the day. Emma said to me this morning, "Oh I've got a couple of things I need to catch up with you about", so it's constant. It's a constant stream of feedback. (Kathy, educator)

Emma and Kathy had a positive relationship, allowing them to reflect openly on their practice.

A large-scale study conducted by Twigg, Pendergast, Flückiger, Garvis, Johnson and Robertson (2013) examined the efficacy of a coaching program trialled across 93 early years services throughout Australia. The study identified the establishment and maintenance of relational trust and respect between educators and the coach as one of the vital elements of the coaching program. In the excerpt above and in the shadowing process, relational trust and respect was evident between Emma and Kathy. I observed elements of coaching in the interactions between Emma and Kathy, however, this appeared to be an informal process as neither participant referred to a coaching program.

Leading pedagogy in the classroom also included specific guidelines, provided by Emma, for Kathy to use in her interactions with the children during daily activities. When Emma guided Kathy directly in the classroom, this included advice on how to support a child with special needs, not just during learning activities but at transition times, and how to use pedagogical skills in guiding children's play. The term 'transition' in ECEC encompasses regular transitions across the day, such as moving from inside to outside spaces or from play-based experiences to a routine activity or group time. The term is also used to describe significant times in children's lives, such as starting kindergarten or full-time school (ECA, 2016). When challenging behaviours occurred, Emma instructed Kathy in techniques to calm the child, again, very briefly but explicitly. When these techniques were unsuccessful, Emma and

Kathy effortlessly swapped places so that Emma was sitting with the child and Kathy read a story to the children. Reflection time at the end of the session was used as an opportunity to unpack the episodes or as interactions for further teacher/educator learning.

Emma recognised that children's learning occurs throughout the day, not just in the planned learning experiences. Emma used transition times and routines as opportunities to capitalise on these 'learning moments' and link this learning to children's dispositions, such as their wellbeing and the ability to work with others. This was demonstrated in the use of 'snack' time as an opportunity for Kathy to sit with a child who needed support to manage their emotions during mealtimes. Emma articulated that the 'snack time strategy' was one she had used at a previous early childhood setting. It proved to be effective in helping children who had difficulty with self-regulation. Emma had instructed Kathy in implementation of the strategy and during reflection time they discussed and planned how to move forward with this child.

Elements and features of coaching were present in the interactions between Emma and Kathy although, as indicated earlier, the term 'coaching' was not used by either participant. A review of empirical research literature on the critical features of effective coaching for early childhood educators, conducted by Elek and Page (2018), confirmed that observation, feedback, goal-setting and reflection are common elements of successful coaching programs undertaken in a collaborative and non-judgemental manner. Giving feedback on teaching practices is an important element in developing educators' capacity (Rush & Shelden, 2011). Emma's feedback to Kathy could be characterised as 'directive' and/or 'reflective', depending

on the situation. Directive feedback is defined as coach-led feedback that includes specific instructions or suggestions. Reflective feedback is defined as collaborative and includes discussion or questioning to foster educators' reflection on their practice (Elek & Page, 2018). Emma's feedback to Kathy was reflective on most occasions and occurred after each teaching session during reflection time. Another distinctive feature of coaching is that all or part of the learning takes place in teaching contexts, often 'on the run', as seen in Emma's interactions with Kathy during the course of the day. In an earlier excerpt, Kathy identified a 'constant stream of feedback' that occurred naturally during these leading-teaching moments.

Information from some Australian websites (such as ACECQA, 2018b; First Door Early Childhood Professional Learning, 2019) and social media posts collected as data, recommend the use of Fleming's (2001) Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic (VAK) model of learning styles to strengthen adult learning. Over the years, useful insights have been gained from the notion of learning styles. However, there are limitations to some of this discourse and how Educational Leaders view adult learning. Much of the thinking about the way adults learn has shifted in recent years. Dinham (2016) and Hattie (2012) argue that providing timely and specific feedback, just as Emma has done in the examples provided, has a positive impact on an individual's learning. My own view about adult learning has moved on from the notion of using learning styles as a basis for teaching and coaching. One reason for this is the limited evidence showing that it is an effective teaching and learning approach. However, the scope of this study does not allow for a more detailed discussion on this particular aspect.

Emma emphasised the importance of involving Kathy in pedagogical documentation and decision-making during planning time. She used reflection time to deepen Kathy's understanding of children's learning as more than observing and documenting experiences. The use of digital technology in documenting children's learning is becoming more widespread throughout the prior to school and school sectors. I have observed this first-hand in my role as a teacher in schools, and more recently in my work in initial teacher education. As they sat side by side in their reflection and planning time, Emma and Kathy used iPads to access apps such as See Saw (2018), an online portal for parents and the community, as well as a photo editor app. Emma reflected on her leadership practices with Kathy as a way of building shared knowledge and understanding:

> We look at different markers in the year, so we're approaching term four and I'm pretty clear in what my expectations are. Kathy needs a bit of guidance on some of these expectations so often it's an exchange between the two of us on reading the needs of the group and developing things a little further. So it might be with children learning to resolve conflict or having extra time to do things. Often, I'll hear my words in her interactions with the children. (Emma, interview 2)

A respectful relationship between Emma and Kathy is vital if they are to work collaboratively. Nolan and Molla (2017) contend that "collegiality makes it possible for participants involved to establish a learning environment where they can safely and collaboratively explore their assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning" (p. 263).

Sarah had worked part-time as an educator in Emma's classroom prior to Kathy's arrival and had then moved to the four-year-old group. At the time Sarah was working with Emma she was also completing her Certificate III in Early Childhood

Education and Care. Emma supported Sarah over the two years it took her to complete the course:

> At first I just wanted to bounce some ideas off Emma for some of the coursework and she helped me with that. Then they updated the qualification and there were extra modules I had to complete. So I just needed some help with that and Emma was really good with her leadership background. We did a lot of one on one discussions, and I'd bring in work that I'd written out so far, or the topics, and just say "Is this on the right track?" Or "Where could I improve on this?" I'd complete the modules online and they would assess them but sometimes they'd come back and say "You'll need to further expand on this". So I put what I thought was the right answer then come and bounce it off Emma. She gave me lots of feedback (both verbal and written) and met with me most weeks so I didn't give up on the course. Emma let me try out some of the strategies I learnt through the course and that was good for my practice. When the [TAFE] assessor came out to observe me Emma met with her. It was really helpful because I don't think I would have continued otherwise. (Sarah)

Emma's Validation Application Document identifies and names the relationship between herself and Sarah as one of mentor and mentee. (A Validation Application Document provides evidence to the DET that the Educational Leader has met the requirements for teacher registration and salary progression from Level 2 to Level 3). Differences exist between 'mentoring' and 'coaching' in educational contexts. As previously explained, coaching involves "explicitly or directly instructing how to learn a new skill or knowledge" (Waniganayake et al., 2017, p. 110). 'Mentoring' is a learning relationship in which a "more-knowledgeable-other" acts as a critical friend to assist the growth and career development of a less experienced person (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018, p. 77). There might be formal structures present,

such as the Certificate III award (as was the case in this study), or informal structures, such as the development of learning communities. Mentoring in early childhood is often perceived as a peer relationship in which a more experienced practitioner provides professional guidance to one or more novice educators (Nolan & Molla, 2017). Emma supported Sarah's learning during teaching sessions and at the end of the day. Notably, there was no requirement for Emma to take on this mentoring role; she chose to take it on. Rodd (2013) states that mentoring in early childhood is often "not a supervisory relationship: It is an opportunity for colleagues to engage in reflective dialogue that can enhance feelings of empowerment and success and promote dispositions towards lifelong learning" (p. 73). Accordingly, mentoring must not be confused with staff supervision or performance management, state Wong and Waniganayake (2013). They argue that "care is needed therefore when centre directors for instance, act as mentors to staff in the same organisation as positional power can be misused" (Wong & Waniganayake, 2013, p. 166).

Emma was able to influence the pedagogical development of the educators in her room. However, this did not extend to other rooms at the pre-school. The teachers of the four-year-old groups at the pre-school planned and assessed together. Emma was not part of this process. Helene explained:

> It's difficult. Our planning time doesn't coincide time-wise with Emma, so at times when she is available, in the office, we're not available because we're teaching. And I work part-time which throws another thing into the mix. It's a real challenge just not having coinciding sessions. (Helene)

While Emma could directly impact the educational practices taking place in her own classroom, she could only indirectly impact practice in the rooms of her colleagues.

Helene described how she was able to have a connection with Emma's teaching practices:

> In regards to pedagogical leadership, I think it's important to have a similar philosophical viewpoint as well. I'm pleased that when I do see Emma working with the children, when I see how she sets up her learning environment, it is aligned with the way I do things or even the way I aspire to do things. (Helene)

Emma met occasionally with one of the teachers of the four-year-old group who had a query about planning. This evolved into regular informal meetings where Emma …

> … encouraged and challenged the teacher's practices and beliefs around curriculum. Together we implemented an indoor-outdoor program which promotes optimal opportunity for children to play and learn freely, promoting their sense of autonomy and self-regulation in their everyday interactions. (Validation Application Document)

In this excerpt, Emma described how she developed the skills of the team member and supported them as they engaged in a range of pedagogical practices.

4.2.2 A work in progress

Emma's role in leading pedagogy was less evident during monthly staff meetings, which she chaired. Grootenboer (2018) asserts that staff meetings are one of the fundamental things that educational leaders can use to create communicative spaces for knowledge development among team members. At times Emma took the lead in facilitating teacher learning but most episodes of leading during staff meetings involved administrative and management functions.

When Emma first took on the role of Educational Leader she found that the meetings were "very, very heavy with housekeeping items" (Emma, interview 2). One of her

first tasks was to liaise with the principal and director to create a weekly bulletin so that the meeting agenda was not "bursting at the seams". This allowed Emma to develop and facilitate staff meetings that had a greater focus on professional and curriculum development. However, she stated that this was "a work in progress". Meeting agendas showed that professional and curriculum development were featured. However, there remained an emphasis on housekeeping matters, OH&S reports, program updates and reports and feedback from parent and school committees. Episodes of leading pedagogy during staff meetings included instances where Emma followed up on a specific topic from the previous curriculum day, unpacked the NQS (Area 5) and instructed staff on how to engage with a new program that was being introduced to the pre-school. Emma stated that she used "bite-sized" chunks of information when following up on the learning that took place during the curriculum day. This involved dissemination of new strategies or approaches that arose from the new program being trialled. Emma articulated that learning conversations continued after the sharing of information at staff meetings:

> … even afterwards there will continue to be opportunities to delve deep
> into our beliefs about children, curriculum and the need to insist that we
> bring out the best in each other professionally and personally.
> (Validation Application Document)

As indicated above, leading a reflective practice discussion about implementing the NQS occurred at one of the staff meetings. This was very brief and involved unpacking NQS Standard 5.1: Quality Area 5, Relationships with children. Emma opened the discussion by asking staff to think about how they encouraged and supported language development in children with communication difficulties. She led

the discussion and presented material from a workshop that she had recently attended. This episode lasted for around fifteen minutes.

Working on policy documents took up a large part of the last meeting I attended at the pre-school. Emma had asked all staff members to bring their policy folders to the meeting so that policies could be renewed, updated or amended. This was mostly an administrative exercise. However, there were small episodes (I understood them as 'little leadership moments') where Emma led staff members in reflective thinking about the particular policies and documents they were working on. One instance of this occurred in discussions about a new wellbeing policy created by Emma and Melissa, which included the wellbeing of children and staff. Emma encouraged staff to think about how they might provide experiences that explicitly targeted the development of children's wellbeing skills and dispositions in line with the vision of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), (DET, 2016). She suggested that supporting professional wellbeing for staff become a regular item on the monthly staff meeting agenda.

4.2.3 A rare and valued day

Clearview Pre-school was fortunate to have three days of the year as designated curriculum days. These were days that were set aside, usually once a term, for staff professional learning. Children did not attend the pre-school or the school on these days. Depending on the focus, the pre-school staff would join the school staff for part of the day or conduct their own professional learning at the pre-school. Curriculum days with the school are discussed in more detail in Section 5.1.1: 'It's a privilege, not a right'. During my visit, preparations were underway for the imminent curriculum day at the pre-school, during which Emma was expected to lead pedagogical

learning for the staff. I did not attend the curriculum day, so episodes of leading pedagogy were not observed. However, using the field notes collected during shadowing sessions prior to, and after the curriculum day, interview transcripts, the agenda and the Validation Application Document, I was able to identify and describe accounts of pedagogical leading on the day.

The term 'professional learning community' was not articulated by any of the staff when discussing the curriculum day, however I use the term to describe how the staff at Clearview Pre-school approached the shared learning opportunities that took place on the day and afterwards. There is no universal or agreed definition of a professional learning community, but there is a consensus that one exists when a group of teachers share and critically interrogate their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way (DuFour, 2004; Mitchell & Sackney, 2006; Stoll & Seashore-Louis, 2007). The hallmark of a professional learning community in ECEC is: "when educators, educational leaders and management help, inspire and learn from each other to continually improve quality programs and practices in the service" (Livingstone, 2016). According to Livingstone (2016), the Educational Leader plays a key role in "a structured process led by an Educational Leader or leader who has developed or is developing leadership skills in this area".

Emma spent weeks preparing for curriculum day. How she did this is explored further in Section 4.3: Administering and managing pedagogy. She planned to address the professional learning needs of several staff members who required more time, knowledge and resources in relation to supporting children's self-regulation skills (Validation Application Document). Emma met with staff individually over the

course of the year to set specific goals linked to their learning needs. These goals informed planning for curriculum days, individual professional learning and daily reflective practice. Further discussion about professional learning at Clearview Pre-school can be found in Section 5.4: Professional learning: Looking through a Johari window.

Emma planned to teach staff a specific technique (known as 'OWL' - Observe, Wait, Listen) on the curriculum day to assist in their communication with children. This built on learning that took place during the previous curriculum day, focusing on children's language development skills:

> I use the session as an opportunity for staff to think about children in their care and to consider their own styles of communication and the way they engage. Consistently encouraging staff to reflect and evaluate through communication skills is a key part of my role as a leader - and being an effective leader. This includes monitoring my own communication skills also, noting how people prefer to be interacted with. (Validation Application Document)

Emma prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the day, which she made available for staff to download later. Emma stated that several times she stopped the presentation to stress points or ask questions:

> A couple of times I made sure I stopped the presentation and, well … say if I had a point that I wanted to stress or I'd take the opportunity to ask a question. And so you don't get continuously interrupted if people aren't sure. But take it and unpack it. Because I'm the only one that has actually done the early ABLES [Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (DET, 2018)] training, I did it in June. (Emma, interview 3)

ABLES (DET, 2018) is a curriculum assessment and reporting instrument that allows teachers to assess the readiness of students with disabilities to learn. Emma recognised the major impact that completing Certificate IV, Training and Assessment (TAA) has had on her role as Educational Leader in leading pedagogical learning. This qualification, or the skill set derived from units of competency within it, is a suitable preparation for those engaged in the delivery of training and assessment of competence in a structured Vocational Education and Training (VET) program or in a workplace context (ASQA, 2015). It is used specifically for those who will lead adult learning. Emma reflected that:

> I've found that I use those skills [Certificate IV, TAA] all the time so planning for learning with adult learners plus they're my colleagues as well. So, yeah, I'm always drawing on those skills, it's just something that never leaves you and I think it makes you a better teacher. At the time I wasn't keen about it but it ended up paying for itself many times over. (Emma, interview 3)

Emma stated that the Certificate IV and her work as a sessional teacher at TAFE (early childhood) gave her the skills and knowledge required when leading adult learning. An analysis of data from the social media site suggests that an unknown number of Educational Leaders struggle with this aspect of their work, as they feel unprepared to lead learning in their settings. Members of the group provide helpful advice, but it is evident that many Educational Leaders underestimate what the job entails. Among those using the social media site, lack of preparation and low confidence in leading adult learning are the key issues troubling those new to the role of Educational Leader.

4.2.4 Highlighting children's learning to parents and the community

Emma's pedagogical leadership extended to the wider pre-school and school community. She spoke about her name and title being displayed on the board in the pre-school foyer for everyone to see; "It's there, right at the front, you can see it when you walk in. And it hasn't moved all year!" (Emma, interview 1).

Emma articulated that this visible statement of her position was evidence of the role being valued highly. It is commonplace for parents, teachers and educators in ECEC to communicate on a regular basis regarding everyday essentials. The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and the NQS (ACECQA, 2018a) however, highlight good quality practice as extending beyond these interactions as families, teachers and educators support children's learning. The NQF and NQS make it clear that communicating with families about children's learning is not simply 'educating' parents or dispensing 'expert' advice. Building a solid relationship with parents and carers enables two-way conversations to take place that support children's learning. Emma recognised that these collaborative conversations communicate more than simply what the child 'did' but what the child appears to be learning (DEEWR, 2010). To demonstrate this, Emma had a visible presence both in the classroom and in the foyer area, conversing with parents and carers as they dropped off or picked up their children. Although these conversations were not recorded, Emma related that communicating about children's learning was a "top of mind priority".

Perhaps the most effective method of communicating with parents about children's learning was the use of the See Saw (2018) app. This is a secure online 'learning journal' used to record photos, observations and comments in line with the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). Use of the app in ECEC allows teachers and parents to share what

is happening in the classroom in real time. Parents are notified about their own child's learning, which is not visible to others. All data is safe and secure, according to information on the See Saw website. At Clearview Pre-school, one family out of 43 elected not to use the app and received communication either in person or by hard copy. The school used a version of See Saw (2018) that linked to the Victorian Curriculum and this had also been well-accepted by parents, carers and families. Throughout the day, Emma and Kathy uploaded photos of children's play and samples of their learning experiences to See Saw and parents or carers immediately received a notification on their device. If they chose to, parents or carers could make a voice recording and send it back to Emma's iPad. She would then share this with the child. Emma stated that she and Kathy used the app sparingly throughout the day so as not to overload either themselves or parents and carers. She stated that feedback from parents and carers was very good and many of them shared the photos and videos with family members and friends.

Emma communicated about children's learning with the pre-school community in other ways too – display boards in the foyer and classroom, newsletters and emails. In the excerpt below, Emma described how she shared one example of pedagogical learning at the pre-school with parents and carers:

> A child I had previously taught but who is now in the four-year-old group was observed writing in the sign-in book in the foyer. After a discussion with the child's teacher we considered how best to utilise the situation for a learning opportunity. I suggested creating a sign-in book for the children to write in each day just as their parents and family members do. The children were very excited and the parents loved it. I put a short article in the newsletter discussing how we can be responsive to

supporting children's sense of belonging, community and wellbeing.

(Emma, interview 3)

Sharing examples such as this in the newsletter is one way that Emma highlights the positive aspects of children's learning, behaviour and experiences to parents, carers and the pre-school community.

4.3 Administering and managing pedagogy

'Administrative' and 'management' roles are often clustered together in research as 'managerial work' (De Nobile, 2018; Hoy & Miskel, 2012; Samson & Daft, 2012). De Nobile (2018) however, argues that they serve different purposes. He describes the administrative role as mainly concerned with 'things' while the management, or organisational role, primarily deals with 'people' (p. 404). Episodes of administering pedagogy occurred in situations where Emma established and maintained systems concerned with curriculum and pedagogy at the pre-school. Examples of administering pedagogy included writing agendas for meetings, sourcing professional development, completing reports for the school and developing grant applications. Managing pedagogy, on the other hand, involved episodes where Emma dealt directly with staff at the setting. This included tasks such as organising and guiding teachers and educators in their daily work routines and transitions. Episodes of administering and managing pedagogy occurred most frequently during staff meetings and curriculum days, during daily teaching sessions and occasions when Emma worked alone both at the setting and at home. Heikka et al. (2016) categorised episodes that included reflection and conceptualisation as leading pedagogy, as is the case in this research (see Section 4.2).

4.3.1 Making sure it all runs smoothly

Emma's position description, which had been created by the school principal along with the director of the pre-school, detailed the pedagogical administrative tasks expected of the Educational Leader. These tasks included the development of documentation necessary for planning, learning and assessment at the pre-school and provision of the supporting resources teachers and educators might need in their daily work. All members of staff needed to know and understand what was happening in relation to pedagogy and practice, so a key task for Emma was to create rosters and meeting agendas. Writing a monthly report about her role was one of the ways Emma aimed to strengthen the links between the school and pre-school, and this was shared with the school board. Budgeting for and purchasing resources that supported pedagogical practice at the pre-school was another important task that was detailed in Emma's position description. Allocation of time to complete these administrative tasks was very limited and Emma reported that she spent much of her own time at night and on weekends completing them.

Emma was most likely to engage in the administrative side of pedagogy as part of her work in staff meetings. One of her first tasks as Educational Leader was to restructure and refocus staff meetings. Below is Emma's account of this process.

> One of my first responsibilities as Educational Leader was to create a weekly bulletin. We were finding that staff meetings were very, very heavy with housekeeping items. So we'd go in and meet once a month for an hour and a half in a team of seven or eight and it was difficult to have everything addressed. The agendas were bursting at the seams. Then with a little bit of liaison between the principal, the director and myself, I created a weekly bulletin going out in paper copies. (Emma, interview 1)

Emma stated that she gradually introduced electronic copies of both the meeting agendas and weekly bulletins to staff members. These documents were circulated during the week prior to the staff meetings. (For a detailed account of the introduction of technology to the staff members at Clearview Pre-school, refer to Section 4.4.3). She continued:

> That in itself was another way of building on my role as Educational Leader, which is to take some professional accountability for being prepared for meetings. I try to keep them (the agenda and weekly bulletin) fairly brief, fairly direct. (Emma, interview 1)

During her interview, Helene pointed out that Emma consulted team members before writing the agenda.

> Our regular monthly staff meetings are always a good forum for everyone to have input. Emma always asks for input as to who wants to speak on certain things, you know, before she does the agenda. (Helene)

Hujala, Eskelinen, Keskinen, Chen, Inoe, Matsumoto, & Kawase, (2016) maintain that pedagogical leadership consists of three elements: developing educational practices, taking care of human relations, and administrative management from the point of view of educational goals. Emma understood that an important part of her role was to develop procedures and systems that not only ensured the smooth running of the pre-school but aligned with its vision and goals. These goals can be achieved, maintain Hujala et al. (2016), by creating a vision of future directions and developing procedures. Examples of these types of procedures include organising pedagogical meetings and documenting and keeping statistics on pedagogical work (Nivala, 1998; Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011).

Grootenboer (2018) reflects that pedagogical administrative tasks may appear rather routine, but "it is in the ordinary and *every day* that middle leading practices are constituted, and understanding these practices means understanding the routine and mundane" (p. 94). One example of administering pedagogy took place at a staff meeting during which policy and curriculum folders were to be updated. Emma had requested that all staff members bring their folders to the meeting in preparation for the document update. Emma had spent time working on new documents that needed to be added to the folders and making decisions about which documents needed to be removed. Staff were not particularly enthusiastic about sorting through the folders, however they worked together to get the job done. Illustrating her leadership skills, Emma used the opportunity to start a conversation about non-work-related matters and soon all members of the team were laughing and talking with one another. This ability is highlighted by Grootenboer (2018, p. 94): "Through relatively mundane (and frustrating at times), administrative tasks, middle leaders seek to promote a greater sense of collegiality and a culture of openness". The above episode indicates that Emma understood how routine tasks such as updating documentation folders can be used as opportunities to build collegiality within the team at Clearview Pre-school.

4.3.1.1 Writing reports

Writing an Educational Leader report for the school was an administrative task aimed at improving communication between the pre-school and the school. In the excerpt below, Emma described how she wrote a monthly report aimed at raising the profile of the pre-school and communicating aspects of her role as Educational Leader:

One of my specific tasks, and possibly unique to our context, is that I write a report for our school committee, the executive committee, to sort of translate what's happening in the pre-school and make it more visible to the primary school. One of the overall goals and part of our quality improvement plan is to bring the school and pre-school together more collaboratively. So, an Educational Leader report that goes out once a month, that can help raise our profile and help communicate what's happening with my role in the pre-school. I think I've done about four reports now. (Emma, interview 3)

It was important that Emma maintained links with the school community and was clear in communicating the professional and curriculum development and learning undertaken at the pre-school. Negotiating with the principal and the school leadership team to secure resources and opportunities for projects is easier if the lines of communication are kept open. These types of administrative tasks, according to Ho (2011, p. 54), must be taken care of to "keep the wheels turning" in early childhood settings. Although these sorts of tasks can be very time consuming, Hujala et al. (2016) maintain that they must be carried out on a regular basis.

4.3.1.2 Curriculum day: Coping with the glitches and changes

As part of her role as Educational Leader, Emma was required to plan and implement aspects of the upcoming curriculum day. This day was held in conjunction with the school. However, there were times when the focus for the day was not suitable for the pre-school, and this was the case during my research. The focus was spelling, and the pre-school director had negotiated with the principal for the pre-school staff not to join with the school staff for most of the day. The pre-school staff would have their own separate sessions, covering topics more relevant to them. Considerable planning was required by Emma to ensure that everything ran

smoothly on the day. Weeks before curriculum day, Emma spent time on the agenda, working out which items would be included and when. The evening before curriculum day, Emma finalised the agenda and gathered the resources she would need:

> I organised the whiteboard the night before. I'd organised the content and the presentation and things like that, but because we were relying on someone to come up from the school [the IT specialist was speaking to the staff], it was still a little bit last-minute, as to just what time they'd be able to come in. So it felt a little bit wobbly at the start just because when there's a small change to the time you don't know how much it's going to throw out the whole schedule. And you also have to be able to cope with the change. Even if there's a tiny glitch, it's all in the way that you handle it, don't let it disrupt you or throw you off. (Emma, interview 3)

Much of this preparation was done in her own time. Helene pointed this out:

> We get staff meeting agendas and weekly bulletins and information from Emma. And I recognise Emma having to do a lot in her own time. It's a lot in her own time which isn't great. (Helene)

When drawing on Sergiovanni's (2015) notion of leadership forces, it was evident that Emma spent most of her time organising the technical dimension of planning the pre-school's program for the day. Sergiovanni (2015) saw leadership as consisting of five forces: technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural dimensions. Emma was mostly concerned with administrative tasks associated with curriculum and professional development for staff. In his study, Saarukka (2014) found that approximately two-thirds of a school principal's time was spent on management and administration, whereas only one-third was spent on leading people. This reflects the fragmented nature of principals' work, a finding that is evident in Heikka et al.'s

(2016) study of centre directors and leaders in Finland, who felt burdened by a constant "feeling of hurry" and insufficient time allocation for important leadership tasks (p. 229).

4.3.1.3 Funding applications: Chasing the golden ticket

Emma led the team at Clearview in writing an application for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Short Term Assistance (KIS STA) (DET, 2016) funding for a child at the pre-school. KIS STA is a program created by the Victorian State Government to "assist State funded kindergartens to plan and provide for the inclusion of children with a diagnosed disability or developmental delay" (DET, 2016). Information on the Department of Education Training (Victoria) website states that:

> KIS STA is available when a kindergarten has demonstrated, through
> the completion of a KIS STA Plan that the resources required to build
> the capacity of early childhood educators are in addition to the existing
> resources available to the kindergarten. (DET, 2016)

Emma reflected that receiving KIS funding was rare and "a bit of a golden ticket". She stated that everyone on the team found it challenging to write an application that focused on deficit thinking about a child's learning and development. However, Emma acknowledged that the purpose was to get help for that child. In leading the application process, Emma delegated tasks to team members but managed the administrative details herself. This required hours of work and effort and Emma spoke about the disappointment of possibly not being successful in the application. Previous applications made by the pre-school had been unsuccessful. She said:

> There's the disappointment in knowing when you've given something
> your all, it doesn't necessarily guarantee the results you want. (Emma,
> interview 3)

If funding was secured for the program Emma would need to facilitate the material arrangements and resources necessary for its implementation. Emma used a collegial approach in getting staff at the pre-school 'on board' with funding applications. At the time of my last visit to Clearview Pre-school, there had been no notification from the DET as to the success or otherwise of the application.

4.3.2 Organising what needs to be done

Episodes of 'managing pedagogy' mostly occurred in the classroom when Emma guided Kathy in their daily work with the children. Other episodes were observed when Emma interacted with parents and carers in relation to their children's learning. Emma was observed organising and managing teaching tasks in her own classroom, however, as mentioned in Section 4.2.1, she had limited influence on what happened in other classrooms and was not observed managing pedagogy in other rooms at the setting. Heikka et al. (2016) identified 'division of labour' as one of the most frequently observed managing pedagogy activities in their study investigating the enactment of pedagogical leadership in ECEC centres in Finland. The term 'division of labour' is used by Heikka et al. (2016) to describe the tasks to be undertaken and the staff members who would take responsibility for each task. In some episodes described in Heikka et al.'s (2016) study, the division of labour was presented as an implicit presupposition in which the teacher did not directly request the educator to take responsibility for a task yet the division of labour was clear for both. The implicit presupposition was sometimes replaced by an explicit or direct request. In the excerpt below, Emma and Kathy discussed the learning examples they intended to upload onto the See Saw app for parents and carers:

Emma: Let's put this one up …

Kathy: I'll get the photos (from the iPad) straight away so I can load everything at once. Is there anything else for (Child A)?

Emma: No, just that.

Kathy: I'll get on to it now. (Shadowing, session1)

In this excerpt, Emma did not directly instruct Kathy regarding the process for documentation on the See Saw app, but it was clear to both of them that Kathy would undertake the task. In the next excerpt, Emma made a specific request of Kathy:

Emma: With this maths activity, can you sit with them [the children] and just get them started on it, ask some questions like 'how many cards?' 'how many children can play here?'

Kathy: Sure, then do you want me to do show and tell after that?

Emma: Yes. If you do that, I can sit with [Child B] and help him with his snack. (Shadowing, session 2)

In this example, Emma used explicit requests to manage the learning tasks that were to take place during the day and during transitions from one activity to another. Episodes in which Emma explicitly guided Kathy took place before the children arrived at the pre-school, while they were there and after they had left for the day. An example of this occurred when Emma asked Kathy to take a group of children outside for outdoor activities and was specific about how the activities should be managed. Kathy made some decisions during the day regarding learning groups and activities but she was observed checking with Emma or asking for advice on several occasions. Heikka et al.'s (2016) study found that the pedagogical leader made the decisions related to children's learning and also guided the pedagogical functions of others at the setting. However, direct instructions or orders given to educators by the

pedagogical leader rarely took place in their study. They found that leadership was usually enacted in indirect ways, which indicates the nature of ECEC practice as collegial work (Heikka et al., 2016, p. 305). In the excerpts above, Emma used both approaches in her interactions with Kathy. Surprisingly, on one occasion I observed Kathy giving Emma directions regarding an outdoor activity that needed to be packed away due to inclement weather. Emma took advice from Kathy with the result that the children were brought inside the pre-school and the activity was put aside for another time.

Ronnerman et al.'s (2017) study of the practices of middle leaders in early childhood education settings in Sweden used Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon's (2014) theory of practice architectures to explore and understand teachers' professional work. Ronnerman et al. (2017) argue that middle leaders (such as the Educational Leader) are "central in the development of substantive and sustainable quality education because they exercise leading practices close to and in classrooms" (p. 4).

As mentioned earlier, Emma used the See Saw app as one method of managing pedagogy with parents and carers at the setting:

> Sharing of children's learning with parents and carers includes regularly engaging with them through channels such as the See Saw app, the newsletter and informally meeting with them when they pick up their children at the end of the day. (Validation Application Document)

The families at Clearview Pre-school appeared to have a trusting and comfortable relationship with Emma. Each time I visited, Emma welcomed parents and carers when they dropped their children off and when they picked them up. She used these occasions not only to share children's learning at the pre-school but, importantly, to ask families about children's learning at home.

4.4 Pedagogical conversations: Heartfelt and hardline

Pedagogical conversations were identified as a key leadership component in my analysis of the data. This section of the chapter focuses on the kinds of pedagogical conversations that took place between the Educational Leader, director and staff at Clearview Pre-school. Two sub-themes emerged: firstly, pedagogical conversations that were 'heartfelt', that is, authentic, sincere and built on trust. Secondly, pedagogical conversations that were 'hardline' or uncompromising and adhering to policies, regulations and guidelines. Heartfelt and hardline were words Emma used to describe the conversations that took place between participants at the pre-school. To conclude this section of the chapter, other conversations that had a heartfelt approach to a hardline conversation are analysed and discussed.

4.4.1 'Having a heartfelt conversation'

Emma recognised that having heartfelt pedagogical conversations was an important strategy in opening up dialogue on the sharing of problems and co-construction of a solution. Emma was skilled in connecting and communicating with others and this was evident in her ability to engage in heartfelt pedagogical conversations with colleagues. She spoke about the professional development of an educator (who no longer worked at the pre-school) and four heartfelt conversations they shared. Emma had noticed that the educator lacked confidence in documenting developmental and learning observations of children but that "It's not that she couldn't do it, but she was *telling* us how she couldn't do it" (Emma, interview 2). She explains:

> She said, "I don't know what a good observation is", and then we got to
> talk about it and say "So what is it that you need?" And in my mind I
> was making an assessment of what I thought she might need, and her

tendency was to go to more training. And then it was helping her to see, through three more conversations, it's not about more training. But we looked at more training just so she knew I was listening and hearing her. When we didn't actually come up with anything from any of our catalogues or training providers, it was kind of a gentle way to say "You actually do know [how to take observations] because you have just got your diploma", but not banging her over the head with it. Through conversations we actually established that it was confidence, then we met with the director and we set some targets for her. (Emma, interview 2)

Emma valued a collaborative approach to communication and decision-making and preferred not to 'tell people what to do'. Having worked closely on a day-to-day basis with the educator in the example above, Emma made a professional judgement of the educator's knowledge and skills. Emma's preference was to talk things through and 'sow the seed' of an idea that could be collectively owned by the educator and herself. This process took time and involved four heartfelt conversations, which ultimately included the educator, Educational Leader and director. Goals were set collaboratively so that the educator could move forward with follow-up from Emma and Melissa. Emma articulated that she was 'listening and hearing' what the educator was saying, and 'not banging her about the head' or telling her what to do. According to Rodd (2013, p. 72), the most common criticism of early childhood leaders and educators levelled against those in positions of formal leadership is that they do not listen. Waniganayake et al. (2017) argue that while effective communication requires a strong skill set, there is little provision for such professional learning for practising Educational Leaders or in pre-service teacher education courses. One small-scale study conducted by McNaughton and Vostal (2010) found that parents rated the listening skills of pre-service teachers who had

undertaken training in active listening higher than pre-service teachers who had received no instruction. 'Active listening' is hearing and understanding what another person is saying, according to Waniganayake et al. (2017, p. 163), and communicating this understanding back (a form of paraphrasing) so that the receiver of the communication believes they have been heard. Emma was aware that she needed to listen actively to teachers and educators and this also meant attending to verbal and non-verbal communication. Waniganayake et al. (2017) point out that active listening and understanding the perspectives of others "can provide a leader with opportunities for new ways of thinking about how to move an EC centre forward and improve its provision of EC programs" (p. 163).

4.4.1.1 Shifting sands

Emma identified that many of the conversations she and Melissa shared were heartfelt.

> Having a heartfelt conversation [involved] even deciding what to put on the agenda for our curriculum day. There are lots of things drawing at your attention where you think "what can I offer that gives the best of me but also leaves me intact?" Melissa's role continues to increase so it's knowing when to say or ask, "How can I help?". Sometimes the help is "leave me in the office so I can do stuff" and sometimes it's just shifting sands and things you have to address daily. (Emma, interview 3)

This example reflects the nature of communication rather than the leadership functions and the division of labour between Emma and Melissa. Emma had a close working relationship with Melissa and they met with one another regularly outside designated staff meeting times. However, early childhood settings can be 'seething hotbeds' of power relationships and conflict (Rodd, 2013). In this conversation,

Emma referred to herself and the director as 'us', and the other members of staff as 'them':

> There are longer-term conversations, so I think without wanting to create any 'us and them' mentality, having extremely strong, experienced, mature teachers and educators we've got a lot between us that we can draw on. There's a lot you need to say and you can hone in on having a healthy dialogue about what's going on, so again I'll draw back to the KIS funding. It's knowing that you're giving it your all, knowing that you might not get the result that you want and actually pointing out to one another what's the expectation, what's the probability and what will we do about it. (Emma, interview 1)

In this excerpt, Emma demonstrated an awareness of the dynamics of power and used the term 'healthy dialogue' to describe a positive approach to power-related problems that might emerge. All leadership positions involve elements of power within an organisation. Emma was keen to ensure that power at the pre-school existed as a reciprocal relationship between Melissa, herself as Educational Leader, and members of the team. Scrivens (2002) and Waniganayake et al. (2017) argue that effective communication by leaders in early childhood settings involves a *power with* approach, rather than control or *power over* others. Early childhood services in Australia operate within an intensely political environment (Waniganayake et al., 2017, p. 22) in which policy and funding such as KIS require a focus on the 'bigger picture' of EC provision. Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) maintain that effective leaders make thoughtful decisions about what, how and why they use particular methods of communication to connect with others and, as demonstrated by Emma in the example above, ensure they do not exclude some colleagues from the communication process. Emma further highlighted this point:

It's easy for feelings to get hurt or there are misunderstandings. In a small team, you know, a largely female environment, best women in the world, it happens. There are strong personalities, there are passive personalities, there are days that you want the group of people to feel motivated to speak up and others to perhaps quieten down a little bit. (Emma, interview 1).

Subtle power plays can be identified in some of the messages conveyed in early childhood environments, states Rodd (2013), where hurtful gossip, unkind humour and covert pecking orders might exist. Hard (2006a) describes 'horizontal violence' occurring in predominantly female-dominated workplaces such as early childhood settings, leading to the establishment of hostile and toxic environments. Emma and Melissa worked together to promote an inclusive workplace where communication between team members was clear, respectful and unambiguous. No instances of horizontal violence were discussed or observed by me at Clearview Pre-school.

Emma was aware that building team cohesiveness can be a 'fraught process' as teachers and educators have different qualifications, beliefs, interests and values (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). A distributed approach to leadership helps in sustaining and building team capacity, particularly when Emma's role switched between being team leader and being a team member. At both staff meetings I attended, Emma facilitated the meeting, led pedagogical discussions and then handed power over to Melissa who reported on mostly administrative and housekeeping matters.

Importantly, trust is a key factor in the relationship between Emma and her colleagues. Heartfelt conversations occur when the Educational Leader creates space and time for team members to communicate effectively and when the

Educational Leader gives them the feedback needed so that they know they have been heard (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). No-one wants to "dive into a heartfelt exchange with someone who seems to have a hidden agenda or a hostile manner and any discussion that unfolds between team members relies on an element of trust to be rewarding and substantive" (Groysberg & Slind, 2012, p. 2).

4.4.1.2 Addressing the emotions that are there

The research findings emphasised the need for staff to feel supported by the Educational Leader and know that she would listen and offer support when required. Emma spoke about the emotional side of making decisions about children's futures and how she used deep questions to support and challenge thinking:

> We ended up having a detailed and heartfelt conversation about being so used to writing strengths-based observations it actually was pulling on all of us emotionally to have to write negative ones for KIS funding. To understand that everything that goes with that and make decisions about children years beyond their time here and the responsibilities that fall upon you with that. It's about helping each other and a lot of it is taking the emotion out of decisions. Leadership is about making the best decision at the time. It's being willing to address the emotions that are there. And it's actually about your level of questioning, it's the level of questions that help you get down to where you want to be with staff. (Emma, interview 3)

Emma identified the 'level of questions' she asked as important in unpacking the issues surrounding the KIS funding application and the emotions that were present. Having heartfelt pedagogical conversations and framing questions that provoked deeper forms of discussion is a skill Emma had developed over time. Davitt and Ryder (2018) use the term 'push-back' in their study investigating effective ECEC

leadership in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Push-back is used to describe questions leaders ask that encourage team members to look from a different angle or 'unpack' an idea. They concluded that "with the support and critical friendship of the leader, the teaching team were guided to analyse issues and develop their own solutions" (Davitt & Ryder, 2018, p. 29). Push-back is also used to describe acts of resistance to an idea.

Emma understood that in order for the application for KIS funding to be successful, the whole team needed to be involved in all aspects of the process. For Emma and her colleagues, completing the KIS application raised issues that challenged their beliefs about children:

> There are some challenges in writing a very negative document about a child, however its purpose is to get funding for that child. And that's the issue, you have to write it or you don't get the funding. It's a bit of a golden ticket, it's rare to get KIS funding. But it's also the disappointment in knowing when you've given something your all it doesn't necessarily guarantee the results. Again, understanding that there are things well beyond your control that you can't do anything about. So as a team we were having a chat about KIS funding, having a heartfelt conversation and coming back to children, and seeing how they cope with the disappointments which helps you change your outlook and attitude. (Emma, interview 3)

Emma's work with the team was relational and informed by her reflection and experience as an Educational Leader. Sometimes the heartfelt conversations were uncomfortable and there was a push and pull of ideas between team members. In the example above, Emma encouraged dialogue and questioning about the KIS funding application. This resulted in intense discussion that spanned weeks. When trust and respect have been established within a team, "hierarchies become

flattened" as team members recognise that dialogue, experimentation and dissensus are not only accepted but welcomed (Atkinson & Biegun, 2017, p. 67).

The concept of emotional intelligence was developed by psychologist Daniel Goleman (2006) and encapsulates the belief that effective decision-making, relationships and leadership require emotional, and not just rational, intelligence (cited in Waniganayake et al., 2017). Emma brought strong emotional intelligence to her role, which benefitted the wellbeing of staff and the organisation overall. Rodd (2013) maintains that emotionally intelligent leaders have the power to "raise standards, encourage personal and professional growth, and foster organisational sustainability" (p. 66). Emma acknowledged that she was 'solutions focused' in pedagogical discussions with staff. She said, "When you go chasing solutions to problems it changes how you feel about things" (Emma, interview 3). Emma articulated that she encouraged members of the team to come to the table with solutions, not just questions or problems. The influence of the school principal, who encouraged an environment of independent thinkers, was evident in Emma's comment:

> And there's encouragement from our school principal. He sets the tone
> for a great feeling of solution-based problem solving. Not to be difficult
> but to be supportive he'll say "I need some solutions to come with that,
> some possible solutions". (Emma, interview 3)

Emma was skilled at framing statements that avoided playing the 'blame game' in her communication with colleagues. She provided a framework for solving problems openly and constructively in her interactions with staff. When Emma needed to raise an issue about pedagogical documentation or implementation with a team member, she did so in a calm and non-threatening manner. Emma's strategy was to invite her

colleagues to explore solutions with her to solve the problem openly and constructively. She provided an example of this:

> There might be aspects there that need addressing, because they're not where they should be. Because I knew her well as a person and a colleague, I guess it was taking a deeper look at some of the personal plus the professional aspects and thinking how do I support her? We got to talking, and she identified that there were one or two things she wasn't clear about, and we came up with some solutions. There were personal things there too, pressing and pulling on her capacity to work. (Emma, interview 2)

Developing positive attitudes to relationships through heartfelt conversations with others is essential for leaders in early childhood because, as Rodd (2013) maintains, "children's optimum development and learning are dependent upon quality interpersonal relationships" (p. 67).

4.4.2 'Sometimes I do have to stand firm'

Emma's preference was to use a collaborative approach with staff, however there were occasions when she used hardline conversations to communicate with the team at Clearview Pre-school. Sometimes, Emma needed to be assertive:

> Sometimes I do have to stand firm and say "No, this is what's happening". Not to say I'm not willing to listen but again it comes back to that decisive action. (Emma, interview 1)

Rodd (2013) maintains that effective leadership entails approaching and holding courageous and courteous conversations about difficult issues. Emma was aware of the repercussions of 'standing firm' and acknowledged that staff did not like being told what to do. Despite this, she was prepared to make the tough decisions when

necessary. Being assertive – by clearly and confidently expressing herself – enabled Emma to "open up dialogue that allows issues of concern to be raised and heard" (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018, p. 166). I see this as another aspect of trust; after much conversation and debate about a topic, the leader is trusted, and expected to make a final decision about something. In the example below, Emma was clear and concise in asking Kathy not to continue to interfere in an issue with a child and family, the details of which were confidential. Emma had previously mentioned to Kathy that there were issues around this particular case and that any matters should be referred back to either herself or Melissa:

> It's letting her know the expectations. So sometimes it might be helping her get the read of a situation if there's been some personal matters. But also sometimes having to draw a line and clearly say "Please don't step in, please don't ask or please just let things roll". It's difficult sometimes because you don't want people to feel unappreciated but it's also respecting the privacy and confidentiality of families. Some things I can't possibly tell her but in some ways would like to because it would make things easier. (Emma, interview 2)

Davis and Ryder (2016) claim that assertiveness does not sit well with the relational nature of the early childhood workforce. They maintain, however, that a truly caring leader must speak up and advocate when required, whether this be in their interactions with colleagues or parents, families and carers. On the other hand, Rodd (2013) maintains that assertiveness

> supports and enhances professional relationships through the use of emotional honesty, confrontation of issues and problems and respect for others' responsibility for managing their own feelings and responses. (p. 82).

In the example of her interaction with Kathy above, Emma's first priority was to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the child and the family in relation to sensitive matters.

Melissa recognised that there were times, as director of the pre-school, when she needed to have hardline conversations about pedagogical matters with Emma. Melissa used an example of a scenario where she might need to step in and act assertively:

> There's a lot of communication between director and Educational Leader. Also, because I'm responsible for the whole pre-school really, and if the pre-school was heading down a wrong path – and when I say that, for example, it might be with the National Quality Framework, say 'Quality Area 1; Education program and practice' wasn't being followed the way that it needs to be then I need to step in there and talk to the Educational Leader about why. Let's take for example, a planning cycle is not being completed for individual children. That's part of our program and practice, we need to have this evidence. So you can see there's a lot of interaction back and forth between the director and the Educational Leader. (Melissa)

As director, Melissa was responsible for providing the best outcomes for the children at the pre-school. In the above scenario, Melissa described a situation in which she might need to offer clear guidelines and expectations to the Educational Leader if the pre-school was 'heading down a wrong path'. She articulated that a 'lot of interaction' would take place between the director and Educational Leader to resolve the situation in a respectful and positive way. However, Melissa did not elaborate on what these interactions might be.

4.4.3 'Heartfelt' and 'hardline'

Pedagogical conversations occurred between Emma and her colleagues at the pre-school that could be described as both heartfelt and hardline. Emma acknowledged that her strategy was to 'sow the seed' of an idea that could then be collectively owned by the team. An example of this was the process Emma used to extend the use of technology among staff and families at the pre-school. She had noticed that use of technology at the pre-school was ad hoc at best. The first small step was to make DET Gmail accounts the primary means of electronic communication at the pre-school. Emma saw this as an opportunity:

> We're rolling out Gmail accounts now as the main means of communication [electronically]. So here was an opportunity for me to create electronic agendas. I just gave the staff a bit of notice and said that it would be coming electronically. Then each week, I might provide reminders via email to staff, about things they need to bring to meetings. I'm really pleased to say that the staff were all positive about it, maybe in part because there is not so much paper in their trays. (Emma, interview 1)

After some weeks, Emma posed questions to staff regarding ways the pre-school could streamline documentation and communication with families. Over the course of several meetings, Emma revisited the conversation, although she was very clear that her intention was not to instruct teachers on the 'best' way to do things. When Emma felt the time was right, she introduced the idea of using the See Saw app as a means of streamlining documentation and communication:

> Ben [IT leader from the school] came in to talk to us about See Saw and we all got the iPads out and had a practical three quarters of an hour

using it. We were all able to go through it and use it together. (Emma, interview 3)

At the time of my visits to Clearview Pre-school, the See Saw program had been adopted and used for some months as a means of documentation and communication between staff and families. Emma stated that there was resistance or push-back from one or two members of the team and difficult conversations spanned weeks. Atkinson and Biegun (2017) state that the process of changing tightly-held traditions and practices, and having the difficult or hardline conversations "is not linear or prescriptive. Rather it is one thread in ongoing conversations about possibilities for thinking differently" (p. 67).

Emma was clear and concise in communicating roles and responsibilities with Kathy, as she stated:

> Sometimes it has been challenging to have to remind her that there are certain jobs as an assistant she needs to do, I mean I don't ever ask her to do anything that I wouldn't do myself. However there are days when she's cleaning up after the possums and my attention has to be on emails. So we've got a really good understanding. I do let her know, and show her too, that I'm prepared to do the hard graft as well. It's much harder to respect someone who is just telling you stuff and you know that they probably wouldn't do it. (Emma, interview 2)

Emma indicated that she and Kathy now have a good understanding of their roles as co-workers at the pre-school. Emma implied that this has been a process, and a challenging one at that. Delegation is a skill, according to Rodd (2013), and is not simply a case of directing a colleague to complete a task:

> It is important that the tasks considered appropriate to assign to others include some of the pleasant, rewarding jobs as well as some of the

more mundane, tiresome and unpleasant jobs. Delegation is not simply getting rid of all the tasks that are unpleasant, unpopular or boring! (p. 86)

As Educational Leader, Emma must deal with the operational and administrative tasks demanded of her as well as the day-to-day mundane jobs. Heartfelt and hardline conversations have taken place between Emma and Kathy in negotiating roles and responsibilities. Emma made it clear that she would not ask Kathy to do any task that she, Emma, would not do, and she spoke about doing 'the hard graft' herself. However, key pedagogical leadership functions (including answering emails) must always be completed by the Educational Leader as part of their role. Heartfelt conversation took place between Emma and Kathy about the nature of the tasks to be completed and the reasons why Kathy was the best person for the job. As Rodd (2013) states, "The best leaders … always delegate duties to people who will be able to perform them the best. This is because they know the team, the service and the children" (p. 89).

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings that address the first research question, showing the main features of the day-to-day functions that Emma undertook as part of her role as Educational Leader. These functions included leading the learning of teachers and educators at the setting, undertaking administrative and management tasks associated with leading pedagogy and engaging in heartfelt and hardline conversations with others.

Chapter 5 Key influences on the work of the Educational Leader

In this chapter I present the findings and a detailed discussion to address the second research question: 'What are the influences that determine how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to educators in a particular early childhood setting'? The data show there are a number of factors that influence the work of the Educational Leader. These factors could be considered positive and encourage success in Educational Leaders' work, or negative and constrain their success. Sometimes both positive and negative factors are present. The main themes that emerged from the data analysis regarding factors that enabled and/or constrained practice were: the relationship between the school and pre-school (Section 5.1); care and consideration (Section 5.2); time and space (Section 5.3); and professional learning (Section 5.4). Each is discussed in order.

5.1 Relationship between the school and pre-school

In this section I examine the themes and issues that emerged from my interpretation of the data pertaining to the relationship between the pre-school and the school. Clearview Pre-school is unusual in the Victorian context in that it is co-located and integrated with a K–6 government school, Clearview Primary. This is relatively uncommon in Victoria where most children attend pre-schools or kindergartens that come under the direction of local councils, community groups or exist in long day care settings. Clearview Pre-school is physically housed on the same site as the school and uses a range of shared resources. The pre-school and school have their own classrooms and outdoor areas and share facilities such as the hall and the

children's garden. An OSHC unit also operates at the site. The pre-school is managed by the Clearview Primary School Council and staff members are employed by the DET. Governance of the pre-school is overseen by the school council. In their philosophy statement, it is noted that Clearview Primary and Pre-school values a 'seamless approach' to children's transition between the pre-school and the school, and they work hard to foster strong links between the two. However, according to study participants, seamlessness is not always achieved; while the intention is for children to experience a seamless transition, the same does not always apply to the staff.

5.1.1 'It's a privilege, not a right'

The staff at the pre-school felt they benefited from their co-location with the school, but they were also aware of a separation or divide between the school and the pre-school. For example, the combined curriculum days were viewed by the pre-school staff as an important and valuable link with the school. These were held three times a year. Staff from the pre-school and school came together for at least half the day and sometimes for the whole day, depending on the focus. Emma considered this to be 'a very precious day' and elaborated:

> We're fortunate enough to have two days out of the school allocation.
> The idea is that we join them for at least half a day and usually we have
> lunch and a sort of social occasion too. If there is a topic that's relevant
> across the board then we'll attend for the whole day. There's a lot to get
> through, but it's a rare day, a very precious day and we want to use the
> time accordingly. We take it very seriously. (Emma, interview 2)

The school set the dates and focus for curriculum days in advance. The pre-school was not involved in these decisions. Melissa had to work out whether the topic was relevant for the pre-school staff or not and what they would do if it was unsuitable.

> Whatever else you have to do, you basically have to clear your diary for curriculum day. For us it is a privilege and not a right. We get something that other people usually don't get. This is an opportunity and you have to take it. (Melissa)

For Melissa and Emma, it was a privilege to attend curriculum days with the school staff as it enabled them, and all staff at the pre-school, to access professional development opportunities they would not otherwise have had. When Melissa refers to 'others' who do not get this type of opportunity she is most likely referring to educators working in stand-alone pre-schools and those in long day care settings who have limited professional development opportunities. Sometimes these 'others' access professional learning out of working hours and at times pay for the seminars themselves.

However, at the same time, the pre-school staff was constrained by the demands of the school with regards to timetabling and subject matter. At the time of my visits to the pre-school, the focus for the upcoming combined curriculum day was spelling. Both Melissa and Emma spoke of how they negotiated with the school principal for the pre-school to have its own program for the day and join the school staff for lunch, as the focus on student spelling was not relevant for pre-school staff members. Emma explains:

> Sometimes the topic is unsuitable for us and this one was. We settled on doing some work on Quality Area 5 [of the NQS: Relationships with

children] which emerged from the challenges some of the staff were facing with one of the four-year-old groups. (Emma, interview 2)

The NQS Quality Area 5 relates to relationships with children, which is far removed from spelling but reflects the practices of the pre-school. In her action research project set in an early learning centre in a private school in Australia, Henderson (2012) identifies pedagogical differences as a major tension within the early childhood-school relationship. The positioning of school as a place of learning and early childhood as a place of play is one of the points of difference that can determine this relationship. Moss (2008) claims that this simplified view leads to the relationship becoming troubled. The school's choice of spelling as the focus for the curriculum day did not take into account the practices and learning of the pre-school. Melissa and Emma recognised that they had limited decision-making input about the day, but they were also aware that having regular curriculum days throughout the year was a privilege that was not available to staff from other early years settings. In the next section I use the glass doors that separated the school and the pre-school as a symbol of the divide between the two spaces.

5.1.2 The glass doors

As noted in Chapter 3, the pre-school is located at the end of the main school building, separated from the school by glass doors that are locked from the school side but accessible from the pre-school side. Adjoining the pre-school are two Foundation classrooms. ('Foundation' has replaced previous terms such as 'preparatory' and 'reception' and describes the first year of formal schooling. The term is now used throughout all states of Australia). Two more classrooms for Years One and Two children sit next to the Foundation rooms. This section of the school is

known as the 'junior school' and beyond these rooms are the staff room and office area. Staff at the pre-school spoke about the divide between the pre-school and the school as not just physical. For some the school was viewed as a space where they felt they did not fit in; others saw it as a place that presented opportunities.

Separation has long been a defining factor between early childhood education and school (Sawyer, 2000). They are two different systems in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and images of children and learners (Peters, 2014). Britt and Sumsion (2003) argue that separation operates to position schools as being in direct opposition to early childhood education. Moss (2013b) notes that within this binary, early childhood education is positioned as a space of play in contrast to school as a place of learning. Henderson (2012, p. 21) uses the term 'invisible barrier' to describe this separation. This barrier prevents the creation of space in which early childhood and junior primary teachers can meet for the purpose of creating agreed practices that will better facilitate the transition process.

Henderson et al. (2016) argue that genuine opportunities for sharing information and pedagogical approaches between early childhood and school are highly possible in integrated settings. Emma and Melissa saw opportunities to raise the profile of early childhood among their colleagues at the school, but they were also aware of the presence of the glass doors - the 'invisible barrier' between the pre-school and the school. Data collected from shadowing showed that all staff at the pre-school (seven staff members) agreed that there needed to be more effective communication between the Foundation teachers and the pre-school teachers. Pre-school staff meetings were a time when staff at the pre-school came together to discuss this ongoing issue. Emma suggested that Book Week (a week where Australian

children's literature is celebrated in libraries and educational settings) presented an ideal opportunity to strengthen the partnership between the school and pre-school with the Year 4 'buddies' coming to the pre-school to share literacy experiences with the kindergarten children. Helene suggested that dedicated time be found for the Foundation teachers to sit with the pre-school teachers to discuss children's transition to school. For staff at both the school and the pre-school, this collaboration was valued highly, however there were constraints around finding time for everyone to be involved. Figure 3 below shows an excerpt from my field notes showing part of the discussion about how the partnership with the school could be strengthened.
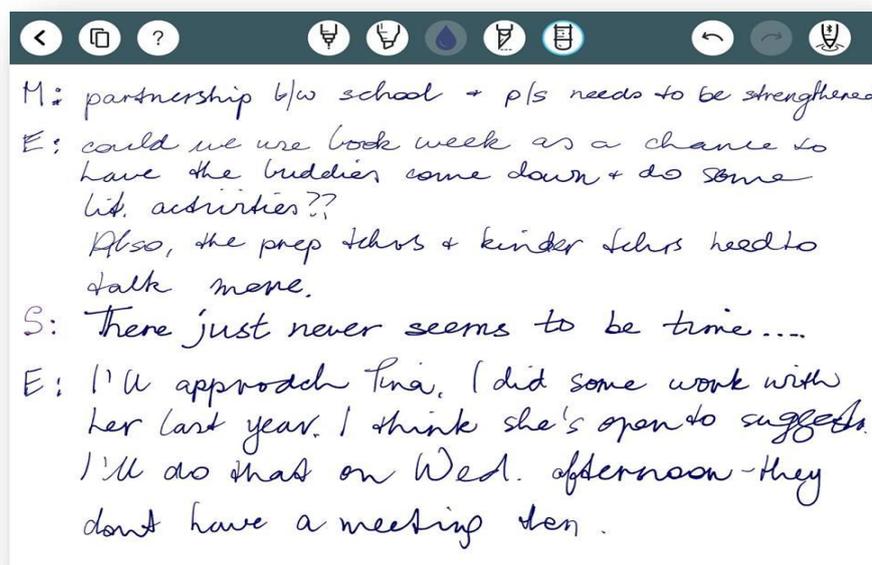
Figure 4. Field notes (Shadowing – Staff meeting 2)

During one of her interviews, Emma mentioned that she had worked in the school sector early in her career and articulated that she felt comfortable in approaching the Foundation teachers at the school. She had asked if they were interested in understanding more about play-based learning and emotional development in early childhood. This led to informal conversations about curriculum, child development

and other topics. The Foundation teachers visited the pre-school during their release time to observe the learning and practices both in classrooms and in the outdoor area. This was mainly due to Emma's encouraging and welcoming manner (as observed during the shadowing) and her efforts to strengthen the partnership between the school and pre-school. Emma shared her knowledge about play-based learning with the Foundation teachers on her non-work day, illustrating her enthusiasm and commitment. She reflected that:

> At the end of the day we're here for the children. Sometimes I think we get them ready for school and send them off, then we don't see them again. But they're just in the next room. If we as teachers can talk a bit more, have those conversations and share, you know, things like curriculum and ideas, it's better all round. We need to build much stronger relationships between us and the school and it's a two-way thing. (Emma, interview 1)

Emma had started to open the glass doors between the pre-school and school, enabling possibilities for change and development of a closer relationship between the pre-school and the junior school. The junior school teachers arranged to collaborate with the pre-school staff in transition to school experiences, with a view to learning more about what went on in the pre-school with regards to transition. Emma spoke about preparing the children for school the next year:

> This term we have the four-year-olds being a bit more structured like school. Routines give them strategies to do things for themselves. We essentially 'take the handbrake off' so they can get used to being a bit more independent. (Emma, interview 1)

In a sense, this collaboration indicated that a 'push down' effect already existed where children's adaptation to the school environment was valued through the

implementation of 'school' practices in the later stages of pre-school. Perry, Dockett and Petriwskyj (2013) call for further research to examine how early childhood teachers and junior primary teachers are positioned within the transition-to-school process and how this positioning shapes the inter-relational space where they meet within that process. This is made even more important when the pre-school and school are co-located.

In contrast to the school teaching staff, Emma was not able to undertake this collaboration during working hours. Her time allocation for the Educational Leader role was limited and she received half an hour each day for reflection time, which I noted was barely sufficient for everything that needed to be covered. Consequently, as indicated above, she came in on her day off to work with the junior school teachers. Emma demonstrated a huge commitment to her Educational Leader role, much of it in her own time. In her capacity as Educational Leader, Emma may choose to raise this constraint with school leadership, advocating for funding and time to be made available for this important work.

5.1.3 Bridging the divide

Sarah chose to conduct her interview with me in a section of the school beyond the glass doors. As the pre-school's OH&S officer, Sarah attended regular meetings at the school. Sarah reported back to the pre-school on these meetings. She also acted as co-ordinator of the drills organised by the school, which included the pre-school. Sarah described her role as 'important and significant, particularly with compliance the way it is in ECEC'. Sarah was also the sustainability officer for the pre-school and spent considerable time working in the school's vegetable garden (part of the Green Gardening Program). Much of this was done in her own time, before and after

school. Children from the school and the pre-school were welcome in the garden, as were members of the community. Sarah had built connections with the school and the wider community. Perhaps this was why she appeared to feel comfortable in her choice to be interviewed within the school section of the building. Not all the pre-school staff felt as connected to the school as Sarah. For some of the staff at Clearview Pre-school, this notion of a separation or divide – the glass doors - was real and palpable. Melissa voiced her frustration:

> … and the thing is, we're known as Clearview Primary and Pre-school, so kindergarten to grade six, but we're treated differently. On paper to the rest of the world, "Oh wow, this looks great!" But in reality, it's us and them. (Melissa)

As Melissa saw it, the staff at the school held a much more privileged position than that held by the staff at the pre-school. Although the settings are co-located and staff at both the school and pre-school are employed by the DET, personnel work under different sets of working conditions and industrial agreements. Melissa spoke about the stark differences between the two sectors.

> Because here is the strange thing – our situation with the school is so close but the teachers there are given time release, they have the children go to specialist subjects and they get a couple of hours for planning. We have fought to get half an hour reflection time each week. And it's not long enough. (Melissa)

Sarah expressed the view that the shared curriculum days were tokenistic: "I feel like it's just sweeping up little crumbs from everybody". Melissa articulated a feeling of disconnect from the school: "We're a bit of an add-on really. We're treated differently. Yet we're a feeder for the school, they need us!"

The staff room in the school area was intended to be used by both school and pre-school staff. However, the pre-school staff did not use the space, preferring to have lunch and enjoy their breaks in the shared office area within the pre-school (discussed in detail in Section 5.3.5). My second interview with Emma began in the school staff room, as all space in the pre-school was being used. Emma offered to get me a cup of coffee but stated "I think the teachers have their own cups so I'll get one out of the other cupboard" (Emma, interview 2). Henderson et al. (2016) maintain that chairs, cups and other objects within a staffroom are invested with power that serves to separate and divide. They maintain that as a space of separation, the staffroom becomes a political domain, with some people allowed to occupy the space and others not, despite the desired benefits of co-location. Henderson et al.'s (2016) study of the early childhood-school relational space, theorised space as a product of interrelationships, moving beyond an understanding of space as fixed and horizontal. They describe "rigid lines that serve to cut and divide bodies, thereby producing binaries and hierarchies in which school is positioned above early childhood" (Henderson et al., 2016, p. 723).

One of Emma's specific responsibilities as Educational Leader was to write a report for the school council. She saw this as a way to make stronger links between the pre-school and the school:

> I write a report for the school council and that's a way of translating what's happening in the pre-school and making it more available to the primary school. One of the overall goals and part of our quality improvement plan is to bring the school and pre-school together more collaboratively. An Educational Leader report goes out once a month to help raise our profile and help communicate what's happening. (Emma, interview 2)

Emma stated that she did not go to any of the school council meetings, but that the report was read out. She said this was …

> …a little strange, because it's different if you are there and you can
> have the conversation and people say "So tell us" or ask questions. But
> apparently I don't actually need to be there because there's a lot that's
> private or not pertinent to us. So it's just a matter of reporting the facts.
> (Emma, interview 2)

These comments suggest that structures and systems are in place that "produce and maintain divisions" between the early childhood setting and the school (Henderson et al., 2016, p. 720). Emma articulated that it is "a little strange" that she is not required to attend the meeting. This might be interpreted as a lack of recognition from the school of the importance of the report to Emma and the staff at the pre-school, or, if others are not invited to be there when the reports are discussed then this might suggest it is something of a compliance issue.

Henderson et al. (2016) argue that experiencing "unrecognizability" provokes a sense of "impossibility of passivity", where spaces can be opened up and made possible (p. 721). Emma provides a rationale for not attending the meeting, but it is unclear exactly why she is not invited to attend. Her presence and interaction with members of the council would help them gain a deeper understanding of her role as Educational Leader. Henderson et al. (2016) assert that:

> … professional practices and cultures in early childhood and school
> have been handed down from one generation of teachers to the next
> generation like a string of DNA. Only when this tightly held string is
> allowed to break free will spaces for uncertainly be made possible …
> where this space becomes a middle ground, where differences are

celebrated rather than separated or blended beyond recognition. (p. 726)

Henderson et. al. (2016) call for further research, taking up Moss' (2013a) challenge to celebrate the *differences* early childhood and school teachers bring to the middle ground in this divided space.

5.1.4 'Push me – pull you'

In their study of early childhood leadership in the implementation of Queensland's early years curriculum, Hard and O'Gorman (2007) use the image of the 'Pushmi – pullyu' character from the Dr Dolittle stories by Lofting (1920) (and recent movie adaptions of the books) to represent the potentially conflicting views and agendas of early childhood teachers and educators. In the same way as this mythical creature grapples with its own constantly conflicting agendas (Hard & O'Gorman, 2007) the Educational Leader at Clearview Pre-school identified that she was often being pushed and pulled in different directions. Emma was employed by the DET and was answerable to the principal and school leadership team. The pre-school director was her immediate supervisor. Emma had to work between the leadership of the school/pre-school and the classroom practices of teachers and educators. She related *upwards* to the leadership team and *down* and *across* to her teaching colleagues. Di Nobile (2018) calls this the "relational and structural sandwich" (p. 7). In addition to this, Emma had teaching duties for both of the three-year-old groups at the pre-school.

Performance appraisals or staff reviews must be conducted on a regular basis in all early childhood settings. Quality Area 7 of the NQF (Leadership and Governance) requires that educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly

evaluated, and individual plans are in place to support learning and development (ACECQA, 2018a). Emma described her position as a 'conduit' between staff and the director when reflecting on her role in the staff annual performance reviews. She observed that she was privy to some information about teachers and educators that was pertinent in the performance review meetings, but not all, due to privacy. In terms of information she was not privy to, Emma reflected that it was not her position to comment unless asked. I did not question Emma any further about the 'information' being shared as I sensed that she may not have been willing to discuss it further.

Cardno, Bassett and Wood (2017) maintain that staff appraisal is used broadly for two purposes: formative appraisal for professional growth and summative appraisal for management and judgement. On the one hand, the summative bureaucratic conception of appraisal is driven by management functions and the purpose is to evaluate teachers against required, externally set, performance standards. Professional conceptions of appraisal, on the other hand, are characterised as non-hierarchical and collegial. Emma had an awareness and understanding of the professional process but was also caught in the relational bind, as she was simultaneously seen as part of management and as a teaching colleague (Grootenboer, 2018). She explained:

> I'm looking at their performance, so it's actually looking at it with Melissa and making recommendations or decisions, thinking about the performance goals of staff and what they need. (Emma, interview 2)

There was no evidence in the findings that Emma's colleagues felt the same way, however this may or may not be the case.

A small number of studies into middle leadership in schools has been conducted (Di Nobile, 2018; Grootenboer, 2018). One recent study by Ronnerman et al. (2017) examines the practice architectures of middle leading in early childhood education in Sweden. The findings from this study have relevance to the early childhood education sector in Australia, where the position of Educational Leader is wedged between senior management and teaching staff. Emma gave a clear example of this when reflecting on her position in the staff performance review meetings: "I'm being asked to comment on staff performance with two hats on. One hat is as a colleague and the other is as the Educational Leader" (Emma, interview 2). She saw her role in these meetings as complex. Branson, Franken and Penney (2015) assert that "middle leadership … needs to be understood as a highly complex relational endeavor, characterized by compromises that are negotiated amidst leadership structures, hierarchies and relations" (p. 128).

In their relational context, Educational Leaders must:

> deal with issues of legitimacy as a colleague and peer, a leader and overseer, and as a developer and appraiser, particularly as they seek to maintain and develop quality learning and teaching in classrooms where they do not have direct input. (Grootenboer, 2018, p. 8)

5.1.5 Position description

The role of the Educational Leader is relatively new (since 2012) and early childhood settings are free to create their own role descriptions. When Emma applied for the position of Educational Leader at Clearview Pre-school there was a brief role description, created by Melissa and the school principal. For Emma, not being constrained by a clearly defined role and responsibilities allowed her to "use my initiative and experience and have the autonomy to make it as flexible as I want it to

be" (Emma, interview 1). After some time "with a little bit of liaison between the principal, the director and myself" (Emma, interview 1), a more formal job description was created with the final draft issued by the principal and approved by the school leadership team and Melissa. A list of 'key responsibilities and duties' was created, mostly focusing on day-to-day tasks and communication with staff, parents and the community. For Emma, the latest job description was "a bit more prescriptive" (Emma, interview 1) and she pondered on whether it would continue to enable innovative practice or give her the flexibility to use her own initiative. Data collected from the social media site indicated that this issue is one that perplexes many in the field, adding to uncertainty around the role of Educational Leader. The excerpt below was taken from the social media site and describes one Educational Leader's observation of her colleagues' perceptions of the role:

> I have considered how I talk about myself and my role to the director, educators and the assessor. What I have learned is that most people feel that they know what an Educational Leader does and should do. That is, until I speak up and talk about what my role *really* is. (Wall post from social media site, 2017)

Helene described what she saw as a 'lack of clarity' around the role:

> I think an induction with the Educational Leader would be good because it's not really clear what the role is. To clearly see what areas the person is responsible for and to be able to refer to those in my own role as teacher. (Helene)

Emma did not see herself as being 'second in charge' (often referred to in abbreviated form as 2IC) at the pre-school. In the two excerpts below she reflects on this:

There isn't a 2IC role. I thought the Educational Leader might be a 2IC role but when you read the role description it's definitely not. Because Melissa's not in charge. The principal ultimately is. (Emma, interview 1)

It's a bit clearer when you've got a principal and a deputy. But somehow the terminology and the roles seem different in pre-school but we've had all those conversations in our efforts to raise our profile. It seems more fitting because it actually says what that person is doing, [the Educational Leader] not just a second person who thinks they're the boss when the real boss isn't there. (Emma, interview 1)

Emma reflected on her role at the pre-school when Melissa was absent. She articulated that the team at the pre-school had the knowledge and skills to run things effectively in Melissa's absence. However, in her role as Educational Leader, Emma felt that she was the 'nominated person' who could brief Melissa on her return. Data from shadowing indicated that although staff were solutions-focused if there were problems, they sought assistance from Emma if necessary, as she explained:

… everybody knows exactly what they're doing. And you all have your roles and can tick along if the leader is not there. And then there is one nominated person so if Melissa is away, she will be kept across what's happening when she wasn't there. (Emma, interview 1)

Interestingly, there was no indication when examining the data that anyone else in the team thought of themselves as a leader, or that everyone in the team should be considered a leader. The idea that all organisational members can lead inspired Heikka (2014) to investigate the enactment of leadership as distributed within ECEC organisational contexts. Her findings, along with those from Aubrey (2011), Ho (2011) and Waniganayake (2014), indicate that this is a complex issue and deeper investigation is needed to enhance further understanding of the local and universal dynamics of teacher leadership in everyday practice (Heikka et al., 2016).

5.2 Care and consideration

The analysis of data collected during shadowing and interviews strongly suggested the importance of the emotional aspects of Emma's leadership. Research into the area of 'care' in organisational settings is sparse, although the word is used broadly in contexts and disciplines such as nursing, business and education (Von Krogh, 1998; Vie, 2012; Tholin, 2013). Care and consideration in the workplace are noted in Mintzberg's (1973) shadowing study, however, it was not until further work in 2009 that he paid more attention to the emotional aspects of leadership. He found that leaders' interactions with staff are often characterised by respect, trust, inspiration, listening and care (Mintzberg, 1973).

It was evident that Emma demonstrated these characteristics in her interactions with her colleagues at Clearview Pre-school. She placed importance on the wellbeing of staff at Clearview Pre-school, and used episodes throughout the working day to promote a sense of wellbeing amongst staff members. This extended to meetings that were held at the end of the day, and in the excerpt below Emma describes how she helped staff members feel comfortable and ready to participate in the meeting:

> Before the meeting I asked everybody to bring food and drinks that they wanted. Because I think having food and drinks is always one of those things that make you feel like you've got everything you need to settle down for work. And if you've got a cup of tea or something you like you're kind of making it feel like you're at home. (Emma, interview 3)

In this example, Emma acknowledged that members of staff had spent the day working in their classrooms, and she demonstrated care and consideration in making them comfortable at the meeting.

Despite increased attention on wellbeing in the workplace in the literature (Pescud, Teal, Shilton, Slevin, Ledger, Waterworth, & Rosenberg, 2015; Rivers, Thompson & Jeske, 2018), little attention has been paid to "the significant emotional dimension to managerial work" (Watson, 2001, p. 180). Von Krogh, Geilinger & Rechsteiner (2018) emphasise care as an important enabling factor for learning and innovation. This is grounded in their view that human skills that drive knowledge creation are based on relationships and community building (p. 27). The notion of care in the workplace can be understood in different ways depending on the context in which it is used. 'Care' can refer to aspects of OH&S and a 'duty of care' within a workplace setting, or it may refer to 'caring' for patients in a medical setting. In early childhood, the term 'care' is most often used to describe supervision and care of a child or children in an ECEC setting. It is also a risk management and compliance strategy. Bøe and Hognestad's (2016) study of care as everyday leadership combined the concepts of care and intentional leadership (Waniganayake et al., 2017). This highlighted everyday leadership practices of care in their shadowing study on pedagogical leaders in ECEC settings in Norway.

In this study, in addition to using an adapted form of the Johari Window, I also use Bøe and Hognestad's (2016) three sub-categories of care to analyse the findings: humour exchange, social chitchat and a supportive leadership style.

5.2.1 Humour exchange

Humour exchanges occurred regularly between Emma and Kathy as they worked together in the three-year-old room. In one situation, they were in the outdoor play area when it began to rain heavily. They quickly brought the children indoors, however Kathy returned to the playground to retrieve some equipment. The hood on

Kathy's raincoat came off and when she returned to the classroom her head was soaking wet. As she dried her hair, Emma made a humorous comment and Kathy laughed; they joked amongst themselves for a minute or two as they put the equipment away.

Laughing and joking are often overlooked as being part of everyday interactions in social settings, however showing care and using humour in this way can build a positive relationship between positional leaders (such as Educational Leaders) and colleagues. Kathy spoke about this in her interview as "being on the same page as Emma and having a trusting and respectful relationship". Bøe and Hognestad (2016) state that using humour can reduce power relationships and develop collegiality between leaders and co-workers in ECEC. Vie (2012) suggests that humour could reduce tension in relationships. This could well apply to Emma and Kathy, as they worked side by side in the classroom each day, although instances of tension between them were not observed. Conversely, care and humour can be used in a manipulative way. This was observed by Bøe and Hognestad (2016) when Educational Leaders employ humour and social chitchat as part of their leadership agency, developing strong relationships for the purpose of getting co-workers 'on side'. Humour can be used in positive ways where it is inclusive and uplifting or negatively where it is used to exclude and marginalise others. No instances of humour used in a negative manner were observed or described in this study.

Studies by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), and Bøe and Hognestad (2016), emphasise the role of the leader or leaders of the group in facilitating and supporting staff to achieve successful learning. When care is framed as leadership, it is likely that leaders give care a distinctive value beyond their trivial and everyday

importance (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). In her role as Educational Leader, Emma took the initiative to engage in a humorous activity when using an 'icebreaker' to begin the curriculum day. Everyone was asked to write something down on a piece of paper describing a fact about themselves that no-one else was likely to know. Emma stated that the staff had fun with this: "I was really chuffed [pleased] that it generated this kind of buzz already" (Emma, interview 3). On the day, the icebreaker had staff engaged in laughter, as Emma added:

> We were rolling with laughter! And it was lovely to hear people laughing and enjoying it because it does get … it can be a very serious workplace. And then they said to me, "Are you playing?" I said, "Well I can't, because then I can't be impartial if I'm going to read out everyone's paper". But they all said, "Go on", so I did share something with them and we were all just laughing because it was so silly but so fun. (Emma, interview 3)

Emma stated that they could have spent more time on the social element of the day but she had sent out an email saying that "we want to have fun but we also need to cover a lot and it is going to be quite intensive" (Emma, interview 3). Emma was aware of her position in the group when she expressed the need to be 'impartial'. Bøe and Hognestad (2016) state that the core issue when pedagogical leaders engage in care is leading by building strong collegiality from within the group, while also being a fellow group member. They "must balance control, authority and power with adequate influence, trust, support and participation to achieve successful knowledge-sharing communities" (p. 339). As Bøe and Hognestad's (2016) study shows, pedagogical leaders engage in caring acts as a strategy to build their position as hierarchical leaders.

Humour or fun in the workplace can have a positive impact on morale, creativity and job satisfaction (Yerkes, 2007), although Critchley (2002) warns against a top-down imposition of fun activities where staff members feel obliged to join in. The inference, states Critchley (2002), is that for organisational fun and humour to be productive, it should be naturally occurring (organic) and positive. As director of the pre-school, Melissa's role is critical in fostering these humorous and light exchanges between colleagues. The importance of supportiveness from leaders is recognised as key to establishing a positive climate in the workplace, maintains Vie (2012), although it can also be a burden.

5.2.2 Social chit-chat

Situations involving 'small talk' or 'chit-chat' occurred frequently during the day between Emma and other members of staff. Small talk or chit chat refers to informal day-to-day conversations that have no functional purpose. Sometimes the small talk was simply a greeting and an exchange; sometimes it was more than that. Several instances were recorded in which Emma shared short personal conversations with Kathy while continuing to focus on the work at hand:

> Just to say "how are you?" and be really sincere about it, that can be
> enough sometimes and that's actually all that's required. (Emma,
> interview 2)

Staff meetings generated significant social chit chat, particularly prior to the meeting. Pre-meeting talk is defined as the verbal and behavioural interactions that occur before a meeting begins (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005). Emma chaired staff meetings at the pre-school as part of her Educational Leader role and she used small talk or chit chat to connect to colleagues as they arrived for the meeting. Conversation then drifted

between work matters and small talk for close to five minutes. Yoerger, Francis and Allen (2015) identify the 'ripple effect' of this type of pre-meeting chit chat, which, although lasting seconds, can have a significant impact on the outcomes of the meeting. Clifton (2009) argues that pre-meeting talk can 'set the tone' of the meeting to follow, with the tone, style and patterns of interactions being set very quickly. On occasions when conversation drifted off into social and personal matters during the meeting, Emma was proactive in ensuring that the meeting did not derail.

As director, Melissa supported and encouraged the use of social chit chat and fleeting conversational moments to strengthen relationships between members of staff, including the Educational Leader. Examples of this occurred during my shadowing visits, although my focus at the time was on Emma, the Educational Leader. Bøe and Hognestad (2016) found that when there is a strong relationship between co-workers and the leader, it becomes easier for leaders to step forward and demonstrate their vision. Melissa enabled Emma to engage in these everyday interactions in which she used humour and social chit chat to help create a professionally caring and learning community. It was evident during my visits that staff did not engage in excessive chit-chat or lengthy gossip sessions that detracted from their work.

5.2.3 Supportive and caring leadership

From the shadowing data, supportive and caring actions by the Educational Leader occurred in a range of situations throughout the day. Data from the interviews also revealed that Emma's positive attention to colleagues occurred not just spontaneously but in planned episodes during interactions in the classroom and outside of it. The curriculum day was a good example of this, as Emma explained:

Before everybody got there, I put the diffuser on and I had some essential oils which they all liked, and I put out hand cream too. Then I got the mugs out so we could grab a cup and go. There was some petty cash available so I organised food and I asked Sarah, she's one of the educators, and I said "can I please leave the responsibility with you? Could you go and heat up the savoury stuff for us so it's ready for lunch?" It's just a little detail but one I think makes a difference and it's also knowing the right person to ask, that you can trust with this. She's very sensible and practical and she'll just do it with no fuss. (Emma, interview 3)

In this event, care was expressed through the activities of organising food for the group and providing items such as essential oils and hand cream. These actions have the potential to influence members of the group either intentionally or unintentionally, according to Vie (2010), who calls for the need for further studies to examine the impact of these types of leadership actions. According to Von Krogh (1998), the relational nature of care and acknowledging other people's strengths and perspectives are essential in creating and sharing knowledge within a practice community. Emma provided an example of this:

I found something online, it was one of those little memes you sometimes see. 'Are you being kind to yourself?' or something like that. It had little infographics on it, things like 'Make sure you leave work on time'. I think there were five or six steps for good workplace wellbeing. I just spread them out around the office, just quietly and sort of hoped they would be a good provocation but it didn't matter if they weren't. They were there as much for me as anyone because they spoke to me and if other people got something out of them fantastic. But actually, a staff member came to me with one and said "Look at that there, I like that!" It was something small but it then generated a lot of conversation with everyone. (Emma, interview 3)

When the Educational Leader engages in caring actions, such as the ones described above, this is more than simply being 'nice' and 'friendly'. Either intentionally or unintentionally, Emma tried to find a balance between her position as Educational Leader and her role as 'one of the group'.

Due to the strongly collaborative, shared and distributed style of working in ECEC, the category of care and consideration reflects the types of caring relationships among colleagues that create the conditions for collaborative work and collegiality (Heikka, 2014). This is particularly so in a field where leaders and staff undertake much of the same work. Emma reflected on this aspect of her interactions with staff members.

> This role kind of builds in more experiences that I can share with the group, and sometimes it is the 'hello' or a smile or whatever else, sometimes it's getting a good read on a situation and just asking people if they're ok. (Emma, interview 1)

Waniganayake (2014) argues that the connection between ECEC leadership and care illuminates how these values can strengthen pedagogical leadership in contexts in which collaboration and interdependence are required. Others claim that because these tasks are done by managers, they are given a special, emotional value beyond their everyday significance (Hard & Jónsdóttir, 2013; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003).

5.3 Time and space

Two themes to emerge from the analysis of the data were the elements of time and space. In this section of the chapter I consider how these features of the workplace environment enable and constrain the work of the Educational Leader. The element

of time was identified by participants in the study and those who used the social media site as having an impact on the Educational Leader's enactment of the role. How participants talked about time (Section 5.3.1); how they used their time (Section 5.3.2); varying time scales (duration) of time in their careers (5.3.3): and how they perceived time in their work (Section 5.3.4) are discussed in this section of the study.

Creating an environment where there are suitable spaces for the Educational Leader to work alone or with others enables relationship building, learning and professional development to occur within the setting (Waniganayake et al., 2017). The type of physical space available at the pre-school and how it is used is discussed in Section 5.3.5.

5.3.1 'Jiggle your time around'

Participants in the study emphasised time as a major element that enabled and constrained the practice possibilities for the Educational Leader. Butcher (2015, p. 48) argued that: "Different conceptualisations of time influence practice in the field of early childhood, having the power to either restrict and constrain or enrich and provide opportunities for experimentation and creative expression". Overall, there was consensus among participants that there was insufficient time for the Educational Leader to fully develop pedagogical practices and professional learning at the pre-school. Data from the social media site also identified time as the most worrying topic for Educational Leaders who use the site. Rather than discuss the broader issue of the time-poor nature of life and work at the setting, I will draw on recent research in the area (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Rose & Whitty, 2010) to discuss: how participants talked about time; how they used their

time; varying time scales (duration) of time in their careers; and how they perceived time in their work.

The participants spoke about time in different ways. Some staff focused on lack of time ('clock time'): "The challenge? Hands down, it's time. There's never enough" (Melissa). Others spoke about how time was organised at the setting ('use of time'): "We're on different time frames so when she (Emma) is available, in the office, I'm teaching. Then I'm finished and she's teaching" (Helene). The Educational Leader articulated how she 'perceived time' in her work:

> It's having those engaging conversations and that's actually what you don't have time for. We find that conversations take flight towards the end of meetings and then there's a pull on people's time … it takes a while to get the group going and then it's difficult to stop once it gets started. Time is so very precious. (Emma, interview 3)

A small number of studies exploring the notion of time, temporality and clock practices in early childhood education settings have been undertaken in Australia and Canada in recent years. Two studies conducted by Nuttall and Thomas (2015) and Nuttall, Thomas and Henderson (2018) explored the concept of pedagogical leadership in early childhood settings and identified persistent and significant notions of time and temporality in interviews with early childhood educators in Victoria and Queensland, Australia. They suggest that in order to move forward, further empirical and theoretical explorations are needed in this area to understand time and temporality from the perspective of the (gendered) body. Rose and Whitty's (2010) study of staff in early childhood settings in New Brunswick, Canada, asks the question 'Where do we find time to do this?' (p. 257). Their report critically examines

experimentations and interpretations, provoked through three communally produced texts, to uncover how educators both slide into and disrupt the tyranny of clock time.

Precise ways of signifying time through observable natural phenomena, such as the moon's orbit around the earth, is based on the mathematics and physics of 'clock' time (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015), or what Klein (2006) calls 'cosmic time'. Time-motion studies in industrial plants during the early years of the twentieth century focused on the concept of time use in addressing the concern of increasing efficiency in the workplace. In contrast to scientific studies of time, scholars such as Hoy (2009) and Husserl (1964) strove to understand the unstable nature of human time perception, a phenomenon Hoy labels as 'temporality' (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015). Klein (2006) refers to the 'inner clock' that allows time to apparently expand or contract, depending on how we feel about what we are experiencing, a phenomenon known as perceived time. Klein (2006) describes this as the feeling that enjoyable moments are "fundamentally too brief, and unpleasant occasions never seem to end" (p. 59). This is illustrated in the way Emma used her leadership skills to make mundane and frustrating tasks more pleasant, as discussed in Section 4.3.1. Excerpts from Emma's interview data also show how day-to-day conversation and humour can make the time pass more quickly. Time and temporality, although distinct from one another, are intertwined and cannot be separated (Nuttall & Thomas, 2015).

5.3.2 Clock time

Early childhood services operate in constant reference to units of time: session times, staff rosters, and routines carried out at regular times, all dominated by reference to clocks (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012). Melissa felt that lack of time constrained the role of the Educational Leader:

You're asking someone to take on more duties in a role. So they've been employed as a teacher but you're asking them to take on more duties, yet they're not being given the time to complete those duties. And I firmly believe that the Educational Leader role should be funded … or people won't put their hands up. Because, let's face it, this is extra work and it does add to your hours of the day. Particularly when you have most of the roles in pre-school being part-time. (Melissa)

Emma worked part-time and saw the flexibility of the time allocation for her role as enabling her to be responsive:

There isn't a specific time fraction which means I've got the autonomy to make it as flexible as I want it to be. (Emma, interview 2)

Flexibility (of time allocation) in this role is really important. You don't know what the week's going to bring so you go with the flow in a way. If something comes up you can be there and jiggle your time around as such. (Emma, interview 2)

In contrast, Kathy found this constraining. In this excerpt she refers to Leah (pseudonym), who was the Educational Leader at her previous place of employment:

It's not very time-specific. So with Melissa, the director, we all know she's in the office on certain days of the week so if I had a question or an issue relating to her in that role, in that capacity, I know that I could have that time to speak with her because that would be an appropriate time, when she's not teaching to then come in and speak to her. Whereas in my two experiences with Leah and Emma, there isn't really a specific time where you can go – "Well I really need to talk to you about this or that or the other thing or I'm really unclear on something". (Kathy).

How time was organised (or not) for the Educational Leader to do their work was expressed by participants in several ways. Melissa stated:

> I would love it if there was a designated time every … fortnight where the director and Educational Leader sat down but it doesn't happen. You're trying to co-ordinate staff who work at different times so she's teaching when I'm not and vice versa … and then you're asking someone to stay back after their working hours. (Melissa)

Kathy spoke about her previous experience when Leah, the Educational Leader, was allocated two hours for the role:

> Leah had two hours a week outside of her room duties to basically wander about the six rooms we had. This was in long day care, so wandering about, having a chat with all of the room leaders to find out how they were going with their planning, documentation, and did we need any support. And that was pretty much it. Two hours to speak to six different staff. (Kathy)

Nuttall and Thomas (2015) note that tensions exist in relation to the different ways time is used in different services, and this has consequences not only for current practice but for future workforce planning (p. 516). Further complexity arises from the impact of privatisation on ECEC (Klevering & McNae, 2018), with centres developed and run as businesses and managed as such, while also providing educational experiences founded on an ethic of care. In Kathy's comment above, she referred to the Educational Leader who was employed at a privately-owned long day care setting, where employment conditions differ from those in pre-schools attached to schools or sessional kindergarten-only services.

Nuttall and Thomas (2015) found clock-time dilemmas in regard to staffing and shifts can arise for directors in long day care settings where teachers expect similar hours and conditions to those enjoyed by their colleagues in sessional kindergartens.

However, they work side-by-side with educators who might be expected to work early and late shifts on either side of the kindergarten program.

The organisation of time at Clearview Pre-school was quite rigid with regard to days and hours worked. This was organised by the school and linked to the pre-school budget. Only the director was employed full-time, the Educational Leader worked four days per week, teachers worked three or four days per week, and educators were employed on an hourly basis. The specific concern some participants raised was the way the timetable and rosters constrained opportunities for the Educational Leader and teachers and educators to engage in both planned and unplanned collegial conversations about practice. As Maya stated, "Being able to talk to Emma about PD or whatever is hard to do because we're on different time frames. Just not having enough time to sit down and have a chat – it's difficult".

The capacity for any sort of peer observation or group planning was heavily constrained by timetables and rosters, with some staff having to come in on their day off for monthly staff meetings. They were paid an hourly rate, but only for the time allocated for the meeting. Despite the meetings regularly going over time, staff were not paid for this. Some aspects of material-economic arrangements can be open to negotiation, states Grootenboer (2018), however, the timetable is seen as sacrosanct and difficult to change. In relation to his study of middle leaders in a school setting, this meant that the middle leading practices related to professional development needed to be constructed within the restrictions of the rigid timetable of the school. This was certainly the case at Clearview Pre-school where the timetable and work arrangements were ultimately decided by the school as approved provider.

5.3.3 Career time scales

Participants in Nuttall and Thomas' (2015) study spoke of career time scales both in relation to themselves and to others. In my study, participants also made reference to their working lives and their experience in early childhood education. For example, Helene said, "I'm finding I'm at the stage now, where I feel these interesting terms come and go. They go round and if you wait long enough they come back round again". All participants in the study stated that the position of Educational Leader should be filled by someone "who's had a few years in the field, someone with a bit of experience" (Maya). Melissa felt that the role needed someone with several years of teaching experience and the confidence to be able to communicate with peers as well as families and the community. This has implications for the Educational Leader as they must engage with a variety of individuals with many different career time scales. Nuttall and Thomas (2015) identify one benefit of being able to employ a career time scale in talking about one's work. This is being able to relate this to policy time scales, such as the introduction of the EYLF by the Department of Education, Employment and Work Relations (2009) or the Educational Leader role (2018a). Participants in their study were positive about the regulatory changes pertinent to the introduction of the role of Educational Leader but circumspect about the relationship between policy and time. It was recognised by experienced leaders who took part in their study that changing established practice will demand long developmental time scales.

5.3.4 Clocking on and clocking off

During analysis of the data I was surprised and rather perplexed by the different ways teachers and educators perceived time. On reflection, I might attribute this

surprise to my lifetime experience as a teacher in schools and tertiary settings where, as a professional, the working day might not end until midnight. Staff in school settings are paid a salary and outnumber support and administrative staff who are paid for allocated hours of work. At Clearview Pre-school, educators outnumbered teachers and were paid an hourly rate. This was reflected in how they perceived the time they worked. As Maya stated:

> The only way we can have meetings is that someone is put out and they have to come in when they don't work. You come out of hours, but you get paid. However, they [the meetings] go much longer than what you are allocated pay for. Much longer. And that adds up. (Maya)

Staff meetings were a good example of this. Teachers (including the director) were not concerned if a meeting ran over time by half an hour or forty minutes as they were more focused on ensuring that agenda items were addressed. Educators, on the other hand, were bounded by clock time as a sign that the meeting was finished. Helene was aware of this and commented:

> It comes back to clock-watching. That childcare mindset of working to times and shifts and so on. Towards the end of a meeting there's always someone that wants to clean up and pack up … but I suppose that's fair enough when you're paid by the hour. (Helene)

There are industrial and financial issues here that are beyond the scope of this study. However, it must be acknowledged that wages and working arrangements for educators in early childhood settings need urgent attention. If it is asked that educators take on more and more of the professional demands of the job, particularly under the guidance of an Educational Leader, they are entitled to expect fair wages and conditions for their work.

The NQS Quality Area 7.2.2 states that the Educational Leader "is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment cycle". Yet there is no legislative provision for minimum hours assigned to the role or recognition of the different contexts and settings in which Educational Leaders work. Data from the social media site indicated that a number of Educational Leaders who were allocated time for the role were often required to give up the allocation at short notice due to staff shortages. One leader wrote: "All I can think about at the moment is coping. We've had lots of staff on sick leave, changes to staff and I've had to step in to replace people. I'm exhausted" (social media post). Findings from this study indicate that this issue needs to be addressed so that all Educational Leaders across the country are allocated a minimum number of hours for the role. Size and type of setting also needs to be considered. Hours allocated to the role need to be guaranteed unless there is an emergency or mutual agreement reached for making up the time within the same week, as is the case in schools. Other comparisons can be made with the school sector where there are specific requirements for release from face-to-face teaching for staff in leadership positions. Melissa made reference to this in her comment below.

> What I would say is different about the school though, you have got those people in the co-ordinator roles, so they have got those leadership roles which are recognised in schools and they get a higher pay or supplement so that it is rewarded. The situation here is that we work the closest with the foundation teachers but the prep co-ordinator has time release and is paid more. We don't. (Melissa)

Grootenboer (2018) notes that the significance of time as an important enabling and constraining factor in the practice architectures of middle leaders is not a surprising or revolutionary new finding. "Indeed, lack of time is almost always a confounding

factor in educational reforms", he states (p. 117). The findings of this study concur with Grootenboer's (2018) findings and illustrate the crucial enabling and constraining factor of time in the practices of leading undertaken by the Educational Leader.

5.3.5 Places and spaces

The physical environment influences, for better or for worse, the working conditions of staff and has an impact on job satisfaction (Waniganayake et al., 2017). Much is written on the need to pay attention to the environment on behalf of children, state Waniganayake et al. (2017), and less is written about the comfort of the adults who work in educational spaces. This is particularly true in early childhood settings, where designated spaces for adults for different purposes, including administrative tasks, engaging with colleagues and confidential meetings with parents and carers, are often cramped and uncomfortable.

Analysis of the data collected shows that the physical space for staff to meet and work at Clearview Pre-school was of concern to participants. This was particularly so in relation to meeting with Emma:

> And talking about space, we need somewhere where we can sit and
> talk confidentially, without anybody else coming in, and that is really
> hard to find. We have an office where a lot of people think it's a
> walkway. (Maya)

In fact, the office/staffroom area was originally a walkway before the building was re-purposed as a pre-school. Waniganayake et al. (2017) note that in ECEC settings, carrying out the basic, everyday functions of the organisation, including developing relationships, is particularly difficult in re-purposed buildings.

Originally built as two school classrooms with a corridor down the middle, Clearview has been modified to comply with legal and legislative requirements. The corridor has been converted into a staff area with desk space and two computers down the side. Lack of adequate storage for files, documents and teacher resources is evident in the space. The glass doors are at one end, and doors lead off into classrooms at the other end. There is barely enough room for three people to be in the space at one time, and I found it very difficult conducting one of the interviews there due to noise and interruptions. Inclusion of designated places or spaces for staff and families to meet in comfort, with adult-sized seating is not part of the *Australian National Law and Regulations* (ACECQA, 2011a) covering ECEC settings (Waniganayake et al. (2017). This contrasts with the school sector where there are specific requirements regarding size and resourcing of staff rooms. Sarah commented on the lack of space that made it difficult to work in the shared office:

> And a bit of space would be good too, as you know, the office is very cluttered and until this year we only had the one computer, so that makes things a lot harder if you're sharing computers amongst multiple people. So she (Emma) can now work on her Educational Leader stuff on one of the computers, while one of the other staff is doing something else (on the other computer). (Sarah)

Kline (2009, p. 27) describes a "thinking environment" where people get together to support each other to "think for themselves and think well together". Helene spoke about the importance of the work environment and having the space to think and learn both when the Educational Leader is present and when she is busy. Helene made some suggestions about improving the work area:

> Having space, I think. I feel as though I need a space that I can go to … which is important for the environment we work in. Perhaps an 'Emma

wall' where information or questions we have are posted there and then

it's not so confusing when you have to go to a million places just to find

the information that you want or need. (Helene)

At the staff meetings I attended, children's chairs were set up in a circle in the middle

of one of the classrooms. On both occasions, Emma and Melissa apologised for

having tiny chairs and hoped I would not feel too uncomfortable. Waniganayake et

al. (2017) assert that:

> … after a long day, it is unreasonable to expect staff to be able to focus
> and contribute in a meaningful way while sitting for an hour or more on
> children's chairs or on the floor. The quality of discussion can be
> improved if seating arrangements in staff meetings are more
> comfortable. (p. 272)

This has ramifications for the Educational Leader who must conduct professional

development sessions and meet with colleagues after teaching hours in

uncomfortable environments. Meeting with families or associated professionals who

visit the setting requires some privacy and this was not possible at the pre-school.

These meetings were usually held in empty classrooms, which was not altogether

satisfactory. Waniganayake et al. (2017) note that very little has been written or

researched about the organisational culture or aesthetics of an ECEC setting, except

those in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Giamminuti, 2013). Waniganayake et al. (2017) call for

"spaces for discussions, collaboration, documenting and recording all need to be

available, along with meeting and retreat spaces, to afford privacy and comfort" (p.

273). They call for ECEC leaders to flex their influence with developers, designers

and architects to support the establishment of attractive and effective thinking and

learning spaces for the adults involved.

5.4 Professional learning: Looking through a Johari Window

One of the themes to emerge from the data was the professional learning needs of staff (including the Educational Leader) at Clearview Pre-school. Participants articulated a range of perspectives about what constitutes professional learning, what they felt they needed in order to improve practice, and how they viewed Emma's role in supporting this. The allocation of a number of days throughout the year in conjunction with the school enabled staff at the pre-school to gain access to a wider range of opportunities for professional learning than they would otherwise have had. However, there were sometimes constraints around the decisions made by school leadership regarding the focus and types of professional learning provided, which did not always align with the needs of the pre-school.

Perspective is important when discussing professional learning in early childhood education because it is fundamental in providing person-centred learning and essential for shared decision-making (Berland, 2017). One device which has been used as a framework in disciplines such as healthcare and nursing (Berland, 2017; Halpern, 2009), library and information science (LIS) (Shenton, 2007), and education (Eason & Shenton, 1988), is the Johari Window. In this section of the chapter, I use a modified version of the Johari Window (Shenton, 2007) to gain greater insight into, and understanding of, participants' perspectives of professional learning needs at Clearview Pre-school.

The Johari Window originated in the field of cognitive psychology and derived its name from its developers, Joe Luft and Harry Ingham (1955, as cited in Shenton, 2007). It has long been accepted as a useful device for understanding intra and interpersonal communication. The Johari Window is described by Rao (2004, p. 170)

as a "simple model for self-awareness" in which different areas of knowledge about a person are represented. As discussed in Section 3.6.1, the original form of the Johari Window consists of four panes or arenas: the open or public arena, where subject matter is known to both the person and another party; the hidden or private arena, where subject matter is known only to one party; the blind spot, where subject matter is known only to the other party; and the arena of unknown or undiscovered potential, where subject matter is unknown to both parties (Halpern, 2009). The Johari window can be regarded as a dynamic device in the sense that different arenas open or change as people interact with one another (Halpern, 2009). This helps both parties understand where they are in relation to the knowledge or ideas shared between them, and how they can move ahead.

Shenton's (2007) modified version of the Johari Window has two additional panes: subject matter that is misunderstood or misconstrued by one party, and subject matter that is misunderstood or misconstrued by the other party. For the purposes of my study, I draw inspiration from Shenton's (2007) model of the Johari Window and identify the 'parties' as 'the Educational Leader' and 'educators/teachers' at Clearview Pre-school. The modified version is shown below in Figure 4.

Things that teachers/educators know

Things that both teachers/educators and the Educational Leader know (5.2.1)	Things that only teachers/educators know (5.2.3)
Things that only the Educational Leader knows (5.2.2)	Things that neither the Educational Leader or the teachers/educators know (5.2.4)
Things that are misunderstood by the Educational Leader (5.2.5)	Things that are misunderstood by the teachers/educators (5.2.5)

Things that the Educational Leader knows

Figure 4. The Johari Window

(Adapted from Luft & Ingham, 1955; Shenton, 2007)

5.4.1 Known by the Educational Leader and teachers/educators

The upper-left arena of the model comprises the shared understandings of professional learning needs known by the Educational Leader and teachers/educators. These shared understandings came about through scheduled personal interviews and direct conversations between Emma and the staff, which, according to Halpern (2009), "can help both parties discover common ground and build a sense of trust" (p. 11). Staff Performance Reviews provided the opportunity for Emma to work with teachers and educators to clarify professional learning needs and goals. Once learning needs and goals were set, they were formalised in a

document that Emma sometimes referred to as a 'training plan' and at other times as a 'professional development plan'. She said:

> Being involved in real time where you're setting goals for staff, with staff, and looking at it with the director too, thinking about their professional goals and making recommendations or decisions. Then putting what they need into the training plan. (Emma, interview 2)

> One of my roles which Melissa asked me to undertake was the planning of professional development and to co-ordinate that, even the ringing up and organising training for staff, (Emma, interview 2)

In these examples, Emma consulted with teachers and educators to set goals relevant to the learning needs of staff at the pre-school. However, it was not evident from the data exactly what sort of professional learning was discussed or what was included in the plans. Emma made reference to professional development and training plans as outcomes of the meetings she had with colleagues. This might indicate that professional learning was conceptualised by educators at the pre-school as a "time-honoured, one-day, one-stop approach to professional development" (Edwards & Nuttall, 2009, p. 4) rather than an approach in which early childhood professionals are active inquirers into their own professional learning (Goodfellow & Hedges, 2007; MacNaughton & Williams, 2008; Moss, 2008; Fleet and Patterson, 2009). Fleet and Patterson (2009) urge a rethinking of professional learning that is beyond transmission-oriented professional development programs that are top-down in nature. For the staff at Clearview Pre-school, this may mean a move away from such a model to an understanding of professional learning that is locally situated and honours the voices of educators, teachers and leaders.

5.4.2 What the Educational Leader knows

The middle-left arena of the Johari Window includes things the Educational Leader knows but that are unknown to the teachers/educators. Emma used her professional experience and insight to uncover some of the professional learning needs that might not be known to team members but of which she is aware. She is aware of these things through observation of colleagues and through formal and informal conversations. Shenton (2007, p. 490) states that this arena deals very specifically with needs of which the individual is unaware. The professional is unable to discover from the team member directly what those needs are, but uncovers them through the use of reflection on past experience and knowledge.

In the two examples below, Emma articulated how she used her insight and professional knowledge and experience to understand the professional learning needs of staff:

> With Maya, there are learning opportunities there for her, but she always sets her target to professional development around behaviour guidance management. And when you really drill down it's not what she needs at all. On a superficial level she thought she needed that sort of training, but when you drill down – and I'm not saying she's wrong – but actually you can only do so much professional development then you have to actually go out there and practice. I felt it was more about confidence. She was losing confidence. (Emma, interview 2)

> She said "I don't know what a good observation is", and then we got to talk about it and say "So what is it that you need?" And in my mind I was making an assessment of what I thought she might need, and her tendency was to go to more training. And then it was helping her to see, through three more conversations, it's not about more training. But we looked at more training just so she knew I was listening and hearing

her. When we didn't actually come up with anything from any of our catalogues or training providers, it was kind of a gentle way to say "You actually do know [how to take observations] because you have just got your diploma", but not banging her over the head with it. Through conversations, we actually established that it was confidence, then we met with the director and we set some targets for her. (Emma, interview 2)

Emma's professional experience and deep knowledge of the person was invaluable in making decisions about teachers' and educators' professional learning needs. However, Shenton (2007) asserts that a significant caveat must be acknowledged. He maintains that, as Green (1990, p. 69) writes, "there are grounds for viewing with suspicion the view that the professional or expert should be the only identifier and arbiter of needs". Green (1990, p. 69) goes on to cite several problems, including "the risk of fallibility, paternalism and distortions arising from the biases and inclinations of the person" making the decisions. Emma articulated that she worked closely with the director in setting professional learning goals and targets for staff. She referred to the collaborative process in the excerpt above. Goals were set and strategies put in place by the director and Educational Leader in collaboration with the educator to support them in improving the writing of observations. This three-way process allowed 'fresh eyes' (in the form of the director) to look at the issue and help to moderate any bias Emma might have. After a period of time, the educator approached Emma:

She came in one day, very excited and she said, "Oh, I'm feeling much better about it" (taking observations). "I was a bit worried". And she was very excited to say, "I'm actually going to bring a clipboard and post-it notes outside for anyone to use". Then what was an unexpected bonus is that there's an opportunity that has presented itself there for other

teachers or educators to pick up a pen and start writing. But yeah, that's what I hoped to do, to build her confidence. (Emma, interview 2)

It was not clear exactly what strategies were put in place to build the educator's confidence, however it can be assumed that much of the learning took place in the context of practice itself. Nolan and Molla (2018) state that:

> as professional learning is primarily learning about and for practice, it needs to be embedded within teachers' work thereby enabling them to investigate, evaluate and draw conclusions about their existing pedagogic practice. (p. 259)

In Section 4.2.1. of this study I described a mentoring process that Emma undertook with an educator at the setting. Fleet and Patterson (2009) maintain that a philosophical shift towards practitioner inquiry in early childhood education recognises the professional educator as a powerful, competent learner. They describe a 'capable and resourceful' adult learner who engages in a cycle of investigation in their local context. It is likely that elements of this process may have been implemented in the example above.

5.4.3 What the teachers/educators know

The upper-right arena of the model refers to professional learning needs known to the teachers and educators but not known to the Educational Leader. There are two main categories in this arena, states Shenton (2007). Firstly, professional learning needs are still in the formative stage in the mind of the teacher/educator, who has not yet approached the Educational Leader for assistance in identifying them. Secondly, a teacher/educator is clear about their professional learning needs and accesses them independently, either through the internet, by asking colleagues outside of the setting or by other means.

Helene's working hours and days did not always coincide with Emma's timetable. She articulated that she felt constrained by timetabling in her ability to access Emma when she had questions or issues she wanted to raise about aspects of practice or professional learning opportunities. She said:

> At times when Emma is available or in the office, I'm not available because I'm teaching … it's a challenge, for me, just not having those coinciding sessions. Because I see Melissa more regularly and she coincides with my sessions and the time that we're out of session, I have her available to me. When I've got questions or issues or need something, I ask her, so perhaps I'm not utilising Emma to her full capacity in her Educational Leadership role. (Helene)

Helene was constrained by timetabling in her ability to access Emma when she had questions or issues she wanted to raise about aspects of practice and/or professional learning. She was comfortable in approaching the director, as Melissa was much more likely to have the time to engage in conversations when they were both free from teaching commitments. Helene and Melissa had a close working relationship, making it more likely that Helene would approach Melissa first. This meant that Emma was not only unaware of Helene's professional learning needs but also of any professional development she may have engaged in either online or outside of the setting. Halpern (2009) suggests that opening up conversations between parties can ensure the flow of information from one party to another. Halpern (2009) goes further, stating that when the Educational Leader asks questions within the 'hidden' arena in order to understand the teacher's context, the open or shared arena enlarges while the 'hidden' arena diminishes. Rodd (2013) states that "… effective communication in the early childhood context is dependent on the leader's sensitivity to other people's need to feel understood" (p. 71). It is

important that Emma is open to and interested in what colleagues such as Helene 'bring to the table'. Fleet and Patterson (2009) observe that such leaders must "not only be knowledge-sharers but people-supporters, with an expectation of learning through participation" (p. 21).

5.4.4 Unknown and undiscovered potential

The middle-right arena of the Johari Window focuses on things that are unknown to both the Educational Leader and the teachers/educators, where the status quo is frequently taken for granted (Berland, 2017). In this category, according to Shenton (2007), lie dormant needs that go unrecognised until circumstances change and the need for information arises. Shenton (2007) also maintains that this arena may reveal surprises (good or bad).

The nature and purpose of professional learning for teachers and educators in early childhood education has been a topic of debate for some years (Dalli & Cherrington, 2009; Edwards & Nuttall, 2009; Nolan & Molla, 2018; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Participants in this study viewed professional learning as professional development or training generally delivered off-site (or online) by outside experts. Maya commented that "Emma helps us with our PD [professional development] selections and any training we want to do and she keeps it in line with our professional goals".

Thinking about professional learning in more complex and situated ways was as yet unknown and undiscovered by the Educational Leader and the teachers at the pre-school. One of Emma's responsibilities as Educational Leader was to organise the professional learning (development) for curriculum day, which was to take place just after my second visit to the pre-school. On this occasion, the pre-school was not

joining the school for curriculum day and Emma was tasked with organising the professional learning just for the pre-school. Emma reflected that:

> I've spent more time this week working on it [curriculum day] and I don't want people to feel like, "well I just got spoken to all day" so part of what I'm trying to achieve is that everyone participates in different ways as learners, just like children do. It's carrying the learning across into the staff meetings too. I feel a bit nervous actually about the flow of the day. (Emma, interview 2)

Emma demonstrated an awareness of involving all staff members. However, she seemed hesitant about moving to an unfamiliar but more collaborative, collegial model of professional learning. Emma was shifting a little in her thinking about professional learning as contextual and targeted, rather than training and one-off external sessions. Emma had a wealth of experience in early childhood education, working with both children and adults, and had the capacity and the knowledge to support colleagues. She appeared to be slowly recognising that she already had the skills and attributes needed to build a learning community within the context of the pre-school. In reference to the professional learning provided by the school on curriculum days, and its relevance to the pre-school, Emma (interview 3) said: "I'm thinking in time that there may be implications for how and where we look at professional development and what kind of initiatives there might be with that".

Emma may have been influenced by the school model of on-site, collegial professional development that took place on curriculum days and was reflecting on the changes that might need to be made within the pre-school. Thornton and Cherrington's (2014) New Zealand study of professional learning communities (PLCs) in early childhood education found that a range of factors was important in

establishing and sustaining successful such communities. One important factor involves the support of outside facilitators who can "help PLC [professional learning community] members engage with external knowledge so that it stimulates dialogue that make their presuppositions, ideas, beliefs and feelings explicit and available for exploration" (Stoll, 2011, cited in Thornton & Cherrington, 2014 p. 13). Fleet and Patterson (2009) state that "having dispensed with the concepts of The Developers and The Developed … leaders must not only be knowledge-sharers but people-supporters, with an expectation of learning through participation" (p. 21).

Support for Emma was a critical factor in sustaining a culture of professional learning among staff at the pre-school. Melissa spoke about the need for further professional development for the Educational Leader, but again, this was viewed as a one-off, external offering:

> There needs to be professional development for the role (of Educational Leader). That can be a challenge because you have to release the person and pay for that PD. And it needs to be run by people who know what they're actually talking about. It's not just so you can have a wonderful lunch at a great venue in the city! (Melissa)

Prior to the curriculum day, Maya commented that she found curriculum days with the school "tokenistic" and that it was like "sweeping up little crumbs from everybody". At the end of the curriculum day at the pre-school, Maya approached Emma to say: "I really enjoyed today. It was interesting just sharing in our group and talking. We should do it more often, you can learn such a lot from one another".

Along with most of the staff at the pre-school, Maya found that working collaboratively and collegially with one another on-site was a new way of doing things, and a different way of viewing professional learning. Fleet and Patterson

(2009) maintain that an element of ownership is a key principle for professional growth and educational change, and that the 'group' not only "contributes to its own learning through synergies of circumstance and collective energy but has the potential of evolving into a critical mass of people who can create a local culture and effect sustainable inquiry" (p. 21).

5.4.5 Misconstrued or misunderstood

The last arena of the Johari Window involves a situation where there are "gaps, or lacks, uncertainty or incoherence" in the acquisition of information by one or other party (Shenton, 2007, p. 491). Much of the professional development that occurred at staff meetings involved unpacking the NQS. Staff who did not work on the day the meetings were held were sometimes paid to come in, although it often happened that staff had other commitments on that particular day and were unable to participate. Kathy had missed several staff meetings as well as a curriculum day and Emma reflected that Kathy had "missed out on opportunities to connect and share with other colleagues, and contribute to discussions and decision-making" (Emma, interview 3). At times, Emma felt that Kathy sometimes misunderstood and/or misconstrued some of the information as it was relayed to her by others. This led, in Emma's view, to confusion and gaps or uncertainty in Kathy's knowledge and understanding of some areas of the NQS under discussion. To mitigate this, Emma set systems in place so that Kathy could be kept up-to-date with what was happening. She said:

> I created an online 'check-in' for all staff to be able to follow up with
> myself or other staff members to support them to catch up on any
> information-sharing that they needed from me if they required it. This

was also to encourage staff to feel that they could carry out their work more easily and productively. (Validation Application Document)

During shadowing it was noted that Kathy did not attend a staff meeting in which part of the session was dedicated to unpacking the NQS documents. Emma put aside a folder for Kathy with notes and documentation, a strategy aimed at filling in the gaps and minimising any misunderstandings that Kathy may have. Although there may have been instances where other members of staff misunderstood or misconstrued information discussed during meetings, these were not observed during the research.

The Johari window can be thought of "as a dynamic relational device" (Halpern, 2009, p. 13) in which the concept of arenas can help the Educational Leader and teachers/educators understand where they are in relation to the knowledge or ideas shared between them (Halpern, 2009). Trust and respect between the parties are crucial so that conversations can move forward effectively.

5.5. Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings to address the second research question, highlighting the factors that influenced the work of the Educational Leader. I have considered some of these factors as being positive and encouraging success in their work, or negative and constraining their success. Context is important, as is the relational nature of Emma's interactions with others in both the school and pre-school.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This research provides detailed insights into the role of one Educational Leader in an early childhood setting and paves the way for broader investigation into the role. Nuttall et al. (2014) call for a greater understanding of:

> … who is taking on the role of Educational Leader in Australian services, what they already know about educational leadership, the ways in which they currently enact educational leadership, how they might be supported to fulfil shifting or new expectations of leadership and what might be learned from previous investigation of the EYPS in England and Wales. (p. 14)

To date, there seems to be no other studies that have explored the role of the Educational Leader in as much depth as this one. The intricacies of the role, the expectations of it, how it is enacted and the challenges faced by one individual who took on the role, is captured in this study in a unique way. The role of Educational Leader has come a long way from the original NQF statement and this research fills in some of the gaps about what was not known about those who take on the position and their enactment of it.

In the first section of this chapter I address the purpose of the research (Section 6.1) followed by a summary of the key findings (Section 6.2). The significance and contributions of the study to policy, practice and research in the field is examined (Section 6.3) and I reflect on the limitations of the research (Section 6.4). In the final section of this chapter (Section 6.5), I provide options for further inquiry.

6.1 The research

The aim of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of, and insight into, the role of the Educational Leader in one early childhood education setting. The study was undertaken during a time of change for the early childhood sector, with the NQF (ACECQA, 2018a) requiring the appointment of an Educational Leader in all early childhood settings in Australia. The role of Educational Leader in ECEC is relatively new and, until now, limited research has been undertaken to examine the role. Two research questions guided this study:

1. 'How does the Educational Leader provide pedagogical leadership to early childhood educators in a particular early childhood setting?'
2. 'What are the influences that determine how the Educational Leader provides pedagogical guidance to educators in a particular early childhood setting?'

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative single-case study design (Yin, 2013) was implemented. Semi-structured interviews, shadowing, and the analysis of documents, artefacts and social media posts were the methods of data collection used. The use of shadowing as an under-utilised method in early childhood research provided a deep insight into the lived experience of the Educational Leader. I utilised a thematic approach in analysing the data, with two main themes emerging, addressing the research questions. These themes are 'key functions of leading' and 'key influences' on the work of the Educational Leader.

6.2 Summarising the research findings

The role of Educational Leader was unanimously acknowledged by participants as important and influential at the pre-school. For the director, working closely and collaboratively with the Educational Leader to achieve the vision and goals of the pre-school was important. Educators agreed that having someone in the role who was experienced and could lead pedagogy at the pre-school was essential. However, a lack of clarity around the role and how it was understood by those at the setting remained.

In Chapter 4 of this study I presented the findings to address the first research question, documenting the main features of the day-to-day functions that Emma undertook as part of the Educational Leader role. These functions included leading the learning of teachers and educators at the setting; undertaking administrative and management tasks associated with leading pedagogy; and engaging in heartfelt and hardline conversations with others.

Leading adult learning is a key function undertaken by the Education Leader. In this study, the Educational Leader had completed a Certificate IV qualification in adult learning, which gave her many of the skills and strategies needed to lead the educators at the pre-school. Instances of informal coaching and mentoring took place when Emma worked with teachers and educators at the setting. However, there was no evidence that Emma herself was being mentored in her role.

Pedagogical administrative and management tasks were time-consuming. The small allocation of time given to Emma to carry out these responsibilities was a challenge and she undertook a lot of this work at home.

Emma's work with the team was relational. This meant that pedagogical conversations took place that were heartfelt, authentic, sincere and built on trust. At times conversations took place between participants that were hardline, uncompromising and adhering to policies, regulations and guidelines. At other times participants took a heartfelt approach to a hardline conversation.

In Chapter 5 I presented the findings to address the second research question, highlighting some of the factors that influenced the work of the Educational Leader. These factors could be considered positive and encourage success in an Educational Leader's work, or negative and constrain their success. Sometimes both positive and negative factors were present. Of significance was the interplay between the pre-school and the school. Findings from the research revealed that there were great benefits to the pre-school that came with co-location, such as combined curriculum days, extra-curricular programs such as the Green Gardens project, and support for material-economic resources. However, there were constraints around the relationship between the pre-school and school staff, symbolised by the glass doors that separated the two spaces. The doors represented a divide between the pre-school and the school, one that was not just physical. Through this research I discovered that Emma's enthusiasm and commitment to breaking down these barriers enabled possibilities for change and development of a closer relationship between the school and pre-school.

For the participants in this study, professional learning involved training or development generally delivered off-site or online by outside experts. Findings from the study showed that working collaboratively and collegially with one another on-site

was a new way of doing things for participants and a different way of viewing professional learning.

How the Educational Leader demonstrated care and consideration for others emerged as an important theme in the research and the findings showed that Emma used humour exchange, social chit-chat and supportive strategies to build positive relationships at the setting. The elements of time and space mostly constrained the work of the Educational Leader. Lack of dedicated time for the Educational Leader to fully develop pedagogical practices and support professional learning was clearly evident from the data. Timetabling was linked to the school and proved difficult to change. While it could be argued that rosters and hours of work could be altered, in practice this was not an easy task and limited Emma's capacity to organise peer observation, group planning and meetings. The physical environment has an influence on conditions in any workplace. Findings from this study showed that the spaces available to the Educational Leader were often cramped and uncomfortable. This was of concern to all participants. Working in uncomfortable spaces has an impact on job satisfaction, as voiced by participants.

6.3 Significance and contributions of the study

This study contributes knowledge to ECEC by providing insight into factors that influence how leadership practice is shaped and how the role of the Educational Leader is enacted in an ECEC setting. The findings from the study are of significance and have important implications for policy, practice and research in the ECEC field. For policy-makers, the findings from the research offer the opportunity to examine how this role can play out – how it works and what aspects may not work. This study helps to further define the role, the expectations and the challenges so

that policy can be more future-focused. The more information policy-makers have about the role of the Educational Leader, the greater the potential to help empower those who wish to undertake the position.

Implications for practice include the implementation and maintenance of professional learning communities in early childhood settings. It is essential that support is given to Educational Leaders from outside facilitators who can assist with establishing and sustaining successful professional learning communities. Context is important, and this has implications for centre directors and leadership in all settings, including pre-schools that are co-located in schools.

The research adds to the literature relating to the role of Educational Leaders in day-to-day leadership enactments and decision-making, and the factors that influence how the role is carried out. This study offers two matters of scholarly significance: the first is the contribution of the shadowing method as a research methodology, as it is particularly useful in small-scale studies such as this; the second is the manner in which I have used the Johari Window to interpret the data. In the following three sections of this chapter I reflect on the shadowing process I used in the study.

6.3.1 My reflections on the use of shadowing as a method

In Chapter 3 I outlined the methodology for the study, described the methods undertaken to collect the research data and discussed how it would be analysed. I emphasised the use of shadowing (Quinlan, 2008) as a particularly suitable method of data collection and discussed its under-utilisation in early childhood research in Australia. Internationally, however, it should be noted that Norwegian early childhood scholars Marit Böe and Karin Hognestad were the pioneers who used shadowing in their research (Böe & Hognestad, 2016; Hognestad & Böe, 2016).

This section of Chapter 6 contains my thoughts and reflections on shadowing as part of the data collection process. Throughout the data collection phase of the study I kept a daily journal, recording my thoughts on the research process as it progressed. My reflections and this discussion informed my understanding and are important to the learning that took place during the entire research process.

6.3.1.1 'Little leadership moments'

In the beginning, I knew little about shadowing as a method and had not used it previously. Shadowing was of particular interest to me, not only in my positioning as a knowledgeable outsider, but because of the notion of conspicuous invisibility and how that played out in the setting. Shadowing is a powerful resource (Bøe et al., 2017) that can enrich leadership learning and development in ECEC. Having used shadowing in this study and letting the protocol evolve, I know there are some things I would do differently. Knowing that the dialogue between Emma and others in the setting often involved what I refer to as 'little leadership moments', I would strive to record as much detail as I could between participants. For example, at one stage Emma was using a mindfulness strategy with the children and the director interrupted as unobtrusively as possible to ask a question about the upcoming curriculum day that was being organised. I was so focused on the mindfulness activity that I completely missed this little leadership action despite the fact that it occurred right in front of me. On another occasion, one of the educators informed the Educational Leader, very quickly, about a strategy she had used to solve a problem. I was so busy taking notes that I almost missed this brief but important exchange. Next time, I would home in on those leadership moments and record every detail that I see and hear while shadowing, and then analyse and reflect on it afterwards. On

reflection, the aim of the task is to get the balance right between taking detailed notes on the dialogue and the leadership actions, and noting things like body language and facial expression. If you have your head down writing you can easily miss these. I needed to get the detail but also the bigger picture of what was happening.

6.3.2 Shadowing as reflective practice

The EYLF (2009) states that teachers and educators engage in reflective practice in all early childhood settings. This deconstructing and 'pulling apart' of experiences and examining each aspect to gather information and guide decision-making for children's learning is now embedded in everyday practice. I took this one step further with the shadowing strategy; the debriefing sessions allowed Emma to reflect on her 'sayings' 'doings' and 'relatings' (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) and provided the occasion for us to examine the data, clarify and explore further questions or inconsistencies. This process has the potential to strengthen my reflective practice because it enables shared reflections based on real actions. Shadowing can be acknowledged as a reflexive approach, with benefits not just for researchers but the potential to contribute to the professionalisation of the sector.

Looking back and reflecting on the shadowing process was important for me to learn more about my role as researcher. There were some challenges, and as Quinlan (2008) notes, one of the drawbacks of shadowing is that it creates a huge amount of data, requiring a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of the researcher. This was certainly true in my case. Additionally, managing my relationship with the Educational Leader took careful negotiating but, once shadowing was underway, we both became quite comfortable with the process.

It was necessary at times for me to make ethical decisions about when not to make notes or listen to conversations, particularly, for example, when these involved Emma speaking to parents about their children. As part of the shadowing process, I attended two staff meetings, and this presented some challenges and tensions. Although my role was as observer, there were times when I was asked to give my opinion on general matters under discussion. On occasions I was asked not to record particular issues that were of a confidential nature and I did as requested. I am still unsure of how freely the participants spoke to one another while I was present at the staff meetings.

Further, shadowing can make people feel judged, exposed or critically evaluated so at times they might act in ways they would not normally act when no-one is watching them closely. As mentioned earlier, I could not always be sure that the behaviour I was seeing was not regulated for my benefit. Debriefing sessions helped with this. The Educational Leader was very generous with her time and ensured that we could arrange debriefing sessions either during, or at the end of, the morning or afternoon sessions. During these times she would explain and interpret the day's events. This could not always happen and two of these debriefing conversations took place a day or two later over the phone.

In future shadowing work I would ensure that exit strategies are in place. Scheduling a final discussion with participants in which they reflect on the shadowing process could provide an opportunity for further refinement of this method of data collection.

6.3.3 Conspicuous invisibility

There were times during the shadowing process when I wanted to be invisible and other times when I chose to be conspicuous. The longer I was with the group, the

more comfortable we were with one another. Staff meetings were a good example of this. During the first staff meeting I attended, I tried not to take too many notes. I felt that if I sat and listened quietly (and became an invisible part of the local culture) the group would be less apprehensive and would talk more openly. I was not expecting one reaction I got from a staff member who arrived late to the initial meeting. She had missed my introduction and as I began to explain my research she let out a sigh of relief. She had thought I was an advisor from the Education Department and was there to work on accreditation of the service. Perhaps an advisor would not have been welcomed as cordially as I was, and it is likely that they would be seen as an outsider.

Quinlan (2008) suggests a preliminary meeting as an important step in balancing the power dynamics between the researcher and participants. The researcher then makes it very clear about the purpose of shadowing, emphasising that it is not aiming to assess and examine practice and highlight weaknesses.

Part way through the first staff meeting I was asked my opinion on transition practices between pre-schools and schools. I was trying to be invisible, but I think they were trying to establish my position on the subject. I gave a short, non-committal answer, which they accepted. The meeting continued and I returned to my invisible role. On reflecting about being asked my opinion, I felt that I did not want to be seen as a consultant who could answer tricky questions, or as an expert in all things early childhood. This to me was a critical moment in which I more or less established my role as researcher, and I think they saw me as just that. I also saw myself as researcher rather than a teacher, or in my usual role as academic, or as

an assessor for pre-service teachers on a professional placement in a range of early childhood settings.

This first staff meeting was one in which I seemed to step in and step out – sometimes I was conspicuous and sometimes I was invisible. Being unobtrusive meant different things on different days. For example, when Emma was teaching I was able to blend into the background as it was a very busy environment with young children and parent helpers in the room. When she was in the outside play area I needed to be very mobile as it was a large space. I found it more difficult to be inconspicuous outside.

While Emma was working in the office, it was difficult for me to be invisible as a shadower because the space was small and used by up to three people at a time. I had to respect the fact that when other people were in the office it was often their 'break' time. The office was also a space where I was more aware of the Hawthorne or 'observer effect' (Landsberger, 1958). I could not be sure that Emma was not altering the nature of the work she did. Many shadowing researchers acknowledge that the presence of the researcher changes the behaviour of the person being shadowed (Gill, 2011; Gilliat-Ray, 2011). I was never quite sure that when she noticed me taking notes of some of her behaviours that she interpreted this as an affirmation of what she was doing and then repeated these behaviours. Some ways to mitigate this might be to ask in the debriefing sessions at the end of each day's shadowing, if this is a typical or normal day (Gill, 2011; Gilliat-Ray, 2011) and if and how it varied from others. Mintzberg (1970) discusses possible observer effects but does not believe they are significant. It is generally considered (Mintzberg, 1970; Gill,

2011; Gilliat-Ray, 2011) that the observer effect is not an insurmountable problem for this type of research.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The role of Educational Leader was examined in one pre-school setting in Victoria, Australia, therefore research findings cannot be generalised to a wide range of ECEC settings. Due to limitations such as time and the scope of the research, the context is quite specific. Most examples in this study were drawn from Emma's work with Kathy in her own room, making it difficult to assess the application of these practices across the centre involving other staff. This feature, though an accurate portrayal of this case study centre, could be perceived as a limitation of this research.

Even within a case study design, some matters are 'out of bounds' in terms of data collection due to issues of privacy and confidentiality. But this is an important area of study. Despite these limitations the methodological approach to this study provided highly detailed, rich descriptions and valuable insights into the role of Educational Leader.

6.5 Moving forward: Options for further inquiry

Further research might focus on exploring the benefits of mentoring and leadership programs for Educational Leaders to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support teachers and educators in ECEC settings. In addition, further investigation could be considered into the establishment of, and support for, communities of practice in ECEC settings that provide more contextually-relevant professional learning rather than externally-provided training opportunities.

Communities of practice in ECEC settings occur when educators, Educational Leaders and managers learn and support one another to improve programs and practice.

Of significance in this study was the relationship between the pre-school and the school, which both enabled and constrained the work of the Educational Leader. The findings from this study showed that if there was a willingness from those on both sides of the 'glass doors' (pre-school and primary school) to engage in meaningful pedagogical conversations, then long-held beliefs and barriers might be broken down. Further inquiry might involve investigation into the way the differences between the two sectors can be acknowledged and understood by those on both sides. Context is important, and how the Educational Leader negotiates their role in settings that might not be aligned with the expectations of the role are worthy topics of further inquiry. Staff wellbeing matters are an important component of leadership responsibility. This is an area for further investigation as emerging research indicates that wellbeing of staff is becoming a troubled space in Australian early childhood settings.

I would encourage future researchers to consider the use of shadowing as a useful method in ECEC contexts. The use of shadowing as a method was particularly appropriate in this research and others might find it useful in small-scale studies such as this one.

It is an exciting time for Emma, and for all Educational Leaders in Australia, a time of great change, challenge and opportunity. My aim for this research is that it will contribute to a future where Educational Leaders throughout the country are

recognised as highly skilled professionals who are valued, supported in the important work they do, and rewarded for their effort.

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Appendix A: Guiding questions for the director

Guiding questions for the director

1. Tell me about your role in this centre.

2. The National Regulations (2012) require the appointment of an Educational Leader in every early childhood education and care setting. Can you describe how the Educational Leader was appointed at this centre?

3. What qualifications, knowledge and skills are important for someone undertaking this role?

4. Which key roles are important in your interactions with the Educational Leader at this setting?

5. How important is the relationship you have with the Educational Leader in working to improve pedagogical practice within this setting? Can you give some examples?

6. What do you see as the challenges and constraints of the role? How do you imagine the Educational Leader could be more effective without these challenges and constraints?

7. How does the Educational Leader engage with you and other teachers / educators to bring about change? How do you support the Educational Leader in implementing change? Could you provide examples?

Appendix B: Guiding questions for the Educational Leader

Guiding questions for the Educational Leader

1. How were you appointed to the role of Educational Leader? When were you appointed? What is your time fraction?

2. Tell me about your role as Educational Leader.

3. The National Regulations (2012) require the appointment of an Educational Leader in every early childhood education and care setting. How did you understand what your role entailed when you first took it on? Has that changed over time?

4. What sort of formal training in leadership, change management, mentoring others or supporting colleagues in the workplace have you had?

5. What knowledge and skills have been important in undertaking this role?

6. Which key roles are important in your interactions with educators at the setting?

7. How important is the relationship you have with the centre director in enacting your role as pedagogical leader? Could you give me some examples?

8. Describe how you manage the role of Educational Leader with other responsibilities you have at the centre. How do you imagine you could be even more effective in your role?

9. How do you engage with educators to bring about change? In what ways do you feel supported in bringing about these changes? Could you provide examples?

10. Networking and professional collaborations outside the centre build supportive relationships with others in similar roles. Might these be considered a 'community of practice'? How do you engage with these communities of practice?

Appendix C: Guiding questions for the teachers and educators

Guiding questions for the teachers / educators

1. Tell me about your role in this centre.

2. The National Regulations (2012) require the appointment of an Educational Leader in every early childhood education and care setting. Can you describe your understanding of this role?

3. What qualifications, knowledge and skills are important for someone undertaking this role?

4. How important is the relationship you have with the Educational Leader in working together to improve children's learning within this setting? Can you give some examples?

5. What do you see as the positives and negatives (or challenges) of the role?

6. How does the Educational Leader engage with you and other teachers / educators to bring about change to children's learning?