COURAGE, COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION:
NOTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE
NEW ZEALAND ECE 'CENTRES OF INNOVATION'

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Abstract

Historically there has been a lack of recognition for, and research into, leadership in the New Zealand early childhood education sector. The Centres of Innovation (COI) programme provides a unique opportunity for research into effective leadership in quality services that can contribute to our knowledge and understanding of leadership in the sector as a whole. This study, exploring how leadership is defined and enacted in the COI, was characterised by the leaders, individuals and groups, working together to develop and operate leadership in ways that fitted their services. Each COI was characterised by courage to be due in no small part to the collaborative centre model, which innovation is encouraged, education and professional learning and a commitment to continuous improvement. Leadership roles in the COI have been promoted from the ranks of teaching assistant to teacher leadership has been encouraged. The COI not only provide case studies of effective leadership (Mead, 2003a) but also case studies of learning communities. These learning communities include researchers and members of the wider community as well as the educators. Leadership and the collaborative COI model of working collaboratively and working collectively towards a shared vision is one that the rest of the sector can learn from.

KATHRYN RUTH THORNTON

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2005
Historically there has been a lack of recognition for, and research into, leadership in the New Zealand early childhood education sector. The Centres of Innovation (COI) programme provides a unique opportunity for research into effective leadership in quality services that can contribute to our knowledge and understanding of leadership in the sector as a whole. This study, exploring how leadership is defined and enacted in the COI, found that although not all educators were comfortable with being identified as leaders, individuals and the centres as a whole were demonstrating leadership in ways that fitted their service contexts. Leadership across the COI was characterised by courage, commitment and collaboration. The innovative approaches of the COI appear to be due in no small part to the collaborative centre cultures in which innovation is encouraged, educators feel valued and supported, and there is regular reflection and a commitment to continuous improvement. Those in leadership positions in the COI have promoted these collaborative cultures and through their example teacher leadership has been encouraged. The COI not only provide case studies of educative leadership (Meade, 2003a) but also case studies of learning communities. These learning communities include researchers and members of the wider community as well as the educators. Leadership as defined and enacted in the COI is a shared endeavour and this model of working collaboratively in a learning community towards a shared vision is one that the rest of the sector can learn from.
Terminology

The terms *teacher* and *educator* will both be used in this study as both are used by the Ministry of Education when describing the COI programme. In general, the term *teacher* will be used to describe the staff at New Beginnings Preschool and Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten, and *educators* when describing the parents at Wilton Playcentre. As an *educator* is a broader term, this will be used when collectively discussing the participants.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>COI</td>
<td>Centres of Innovation (The singular, Centre of Innovation, will be used in full to avoid confusion)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
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<td>MI</td>
<td>Meade interview</td>
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<td>NB</td>
<td>New Beginnings Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Research proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>WNTK</td>
<td>Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten</td>
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<td>WP</td>
<td>Wilton Playcentre</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction

There is currently a paucity of research into leadership in quality early childhood education (ECE) services in New Zealand. A study of leadership in the New Zealand ECE Centres of Innovation (COI) programme provides a unique opportunity to inform our understanding of leadership in the sector. This research will explore notions of leadership within these centres as well as their leadership role in the wider early childhood sector. What is learnt from leadership in the COI programme may help inform future directions in leadership development, training and support.

This chapter sets the scene by providing a context for this research study. An overview of the ECE sector leading up to the release of *Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki*, the ECE strategic plan (Ministry of Education, 2002a) is provided. The two initiatives from the plan of significance to this research study, the COI programme and leadership development are introduced and my position and interest in this field explained. The research questions and an overview of the organisation of the thesis will conclude the chapter.

1.2 Policy context

The New Zealand ECE sector prior to the late 1980s has been described as uncoordinated and diverse (Dalli and Te One, 2003). A Working Group on Early Childhood Care and Education was convened in 1988 as part of the Labour Government’s programme of educational reform. The report of this group, *Education to be More* (Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, 1988, p.vi), noted that “availability, accessibility and affordability varies from community to community and between services”. The policy direction of *Education to be More*, also known as the Meade report, was intended to produce high quality services that had equitable funding and access and that were staffed with trained teachers (Dalli, 1992). The Government white paper *Before Five* (Department of Education, 1988), developed in response to the Meade report, provided a blueprint for the delivery of quality services to children and their families. The promise was made in...
Before Five that “at all levels of education, the early childhood sector will have equal status with other education sectors” (p.2). A change of Government in 1990, from Labour to National, resulted in a review of several of the core policy areas in Before Five. Subsequent reductions in funding meant that not all the reforms were implemented, a source of frustration for those in the field (May, 2002).

Dissatisfaction with the Government’s policy direction and their lack of consultation with the sector led representatives from various interest groups and organisations with common concerns to form an ECE project group in the mid 1990s. The report produced by this group, Future Directions (Early Childhood Education Project, 1996), focused on the funding and structures needed to improve quality in the sector. One of the goals in the report was the development of a strategic plan for ECE. This recommendation was picked up by the Labour Alliance Government who came to power in 1999. In announcing details of the ECE Strategic Planning Working Group, including the selection of Anne Meade as head of the Working Group, the Minister of Education declared that the plan would introduce coherence to the sector and provide a policy framework (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The Final Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group to the Minister of Education (Strategic Plan Working Group, 2001a) was produced in October 2001 after extensive consultation with the ECE sector. According to May (2002), much of the vision of the Meade report was restated in this document. Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki, a ten year strategic plan for ECE (Ministry of Education, 2002a) was launched by Trevor Mallard, the Minister of Education, in September 2002. In the foreword to the document, the Minister stated “if we are to build a strong future for this country, I believe we must firmly establish early childhood education at the cornerstone of our education system” (p.1). The plan set out how the Government’s vision of “lifting the educational achievement of all New Zealand children” (p.2) would be met through three key goals: increasing participation, improving quality and promoting collaborative relationships.

Within the goal of improving quality, two actions of significance to this research study were signalled. These were the establishment of six COI for a three-year term and the provision of leadership development programmes to strengthen leadership in ECE services. The establishment of COI was intended to showcase “excellence and innovation in ECE” (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p.15). The establishment of six COI
was signalled at step two of the strategic plan. Licensed and chartered early childhood centres that met certain criteria laid down by the Ministry of Education were invited to apply to become COI in late 2002. In order to be among the twelve short-listed centres they needed to be using innovative approaches, providing a quality programme and able to engage in research (Meade, 2003a). The final selection was made by the Minister of Education on the recommendation of a reference group made up of Ministry of Education personnel and respected sector representatives and the names of the first COI were announced in May 2003.

The stated objective of the COI programme was “to help improve quality in early childhood education services by demonstrating competent practice and innovation in early childhood education, and by reflecting – in public – on quality practices in action research” (Meade, 2003a, p.1). The centres’ role over the three-year period was described in the following extract from the COI package letter:

- Develop and document innovative learning and teaching practices
- Work with researchers to find out what children gain from these innovative learning and teaching processes
- Share information with others about their innovative learning and teaching practices (Ministry of Education, 2002b).

The six inaugural COI selected represented a variety of different services. Two state kindergartens, a Kohanga Reo, a Pasifika immersion early childhood centre, a Playcentre and an education and care (childcare) centre were chosen. Three of the centres were in the Auckland region, and one each in Napier, Wellington and Christchurch. Innovations to be researched in partnership with external researchers included the use of information and communication technologies in ECE, nga kaupapa Maori and ‘communities of learning’ approaches. The partnership between the COI and their research associates has been described as a hallmark of the COI programme (Meade, Ryder & Henriod, 2004). The research associates, who were chosen by the centres, “knew from the outset that the partnership requires them to work with the participants who are also teacher-researchers” (Meade, 2003b, p.6). This contrasts with the more common distinction between the roles of researcher and participant and calls for a “new type of collaborative relationship” (Meade, 2003b, p.6).
The success of the inaugural programme led the Minister of Education to announce that three new COI would be selected at the end of 2004 rather than waiting until the completion of the term of the first COI as was originally planned (Ministry of Education, 2004a). Four more COI were actually selected in December 2004 for the second round rather than the three originally suggested (Ministry of Education, 2004b).

According to Anne Meade, the programme coordinator for the first round of COI, the centre responsibilities signalled a leadership role. She has suggested “COIs provide case studies of educative leadership through the curriculum they offer, through their articulation of innovation and willingness to research it, and by demonstrating an ethic of care for colleagues in the sector at large” (Meade, 2003c, p.3). Educative leadership has been defined by Duignan and Macpherson (1992) as “holistic, pragmatic, values-driven and cultural activity intending to enhance performance in the areas of learning, teaching and leading” (p.184).

1.3 Lack of attention paid to leadership

Leadership within the ECE sector has been virtually ignored in Government policy and also to a large extent within the sector with a scarcity of resources and research (McLeod, 2002) and little recognition of its importance. There appears to be an assumption by the Ministry of Education, and to some extent through the wider sector, that because of the flat organisational structure of ECE services, leadership is unnecessary. Up until the release of Pathways to the Future (Ministry of Education, 2002a) there was no mention of professional leadership in any of the Government’s official documents (Scrivens, 2002), and no policy for supporting leadership development. The Strategic Plan Working Group signalled recognition of the importance of professional leadership in their consultation document and final report (Strategic Plan Working Group, 2001a; 2001b) and although their proposed strategies seem to have been weakened in the final plan, there is some recognition of the existence of leadership in the sector.

The provision of leadership development programmes are signalled at step four in the strategic plan, though at this time there is no detail on what these programmes may look like. Some leadership training and education opportunities do already exist including post-graduate diplomas or degrees in education, professional development courses, and teacher refresher courses. However leadership training and development has had to
compete for scarce financial resources alongside other professional development areas and has not been seen as a priority. McLeod (2002) has commented that the diversion of time and financial resources to meet the new requirements for qualified teachers (as at 2012 all regulated teachers in teacher-led services are required to be qualified and registered (Ministry of Education, 2002a) would make access to professional development on leadership and management even more difficult than at present.

This lack of recognition of leadership in ECE can be contrasted with the support for leadership training and education provided for the school sector, where policy initiatives announced in the 2001 budget allocated $19 million over a four-year period to develop leadership and management capabilities amongst principals (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Government initiatives included an induction programme for first time principals, a development centre programme for more experienced principals, an electronic principals' network and a guiding framework for professional development. Specific positions exist in the Ministry of Education relating to leadership in schools. At present there is no equivalent support for leadership in the ECE sector. It can be argued that effective leadership in the sector is necessary for the implementation of the whole strategic plan as many of the other strategies, for example promoting collaborative relationships, require leadership.

Several New Zealand early childhood researchers have commented on the need for more research into aspects of leadership in quality centres. Scrivens (2003, p.34), commenting on what the ECE sector could learn from educational leadership in schools, noted “further research projects on the effects of early childhood programmes should have built into them a research component to do with the effects of leadership within the organisation on teachers and teaching so that we can better gauge the effects of leadership”. McLeod’s study of leadership and management in childcare services showed a lack of identification with leadership roles and “a void in the area of curriculum and pedagogical leadership” (2002, p.319). In an earlier study of the organisational culture of a childcare centre Hatherly (1997, p.63) suggested: “it may be informative to examine the cultures of excellent centres as an insight into the contributing values, behaviours and assumptions. Such research could help guide those involved with training and professional development”. Meade (2003b, p.6) has stated that “excellence was not one of the criteria for selection” for the COI, however the centres did have to meet rigorous criteria to be accepted and all have a commitment to quality (Meade, personal communication, 13 August 2004).
My interest in issues around leadership has developed over the time I have worked as an ECE professional development advisor and lecturer at the Wellington College of Education. My leadership experience within the Wellington Playcentre Association highlighted for me the lack of attention paid to leadership in the wider sector. The idea for this study was born after my participation in a leadership symposium at the Eighth Early Childhood Convention held in Palmerston North in September 2003. This Convention, which is held every four years and attracts over one thousand participants, has been described by Podmore (2004) as a landmark event. Five Wellington based people with an interest in leadership issues combined to present a symposium entitled ‘Shaping early childhood today: The role of the leader’. Anne Meade’s contribution to the symposium focused on leadership in the COI. My connection with Wilton Playcentre as a centre life member and member of their Centre of Innovation advisory group was a particular reason for my interest in the COI programme. The combination of the two initiatives from Pathways to the Future, COI and leadership development, provided a unique opportunity to research leadership in the sector.

1.4 Research questions

The overall research question was: How is leadership defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation?

Leadership enacted both within and by the COI was of interest. The research question was explored by looking at four different aspects of leadership in the COI programme:

- The role of leadership in reaching COI status including leadership within the application process;
- General notions of leadership including how comfortable educators were with the term leadership;
- Leadership within each Centre of Innovation including what leadership roles existed, how these were shared and what new leadership opportunities arose from participation in the COI programme;
- Preparation and support that existed for leadership roles and any additional support that would have been useful.

The intention was to involve all six COI in the research however only three COI chose to participate in this study. The reflections and writing of Anne Meade apply to all six centres and additional material from the non-participating COI was drawn on so that notions of leadership across the COI programme as a whole could be discussed.
1.5 Organisation of the thesis

This chapter introduces and provides a context for this research study. The following chapter provides an overview of current literature in the field of ECE and beyond. Existing notions of leadership are explored and the current low profile leadership has within the ECE sector and reasons for this are discussed. Models and frameworks of leadership both within and beyond ECE are introduced and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the differences between leadership in ECE and in other settings.

Chapter Three details the approaches taken in designing and carrying out this research study. The choice of qualitative research methods, in particular a collective case study approach, is explained as is the process of gaining entry to the COI. Sources of data and data collection methods are described and issues around ethics and validity and reliability discussed. The data analysis process is outlined and suggestions made as to the limitations of this research study.

Chapters Four to Six provide case studies of the three COI that chose to participate in this study. A similar format will be followed for each case study with a description of the centre and their journey to becoming a Centre of Innovation, a discussion of the research findings and an analysis of key notions of leadership in each centre with reference to relevant literature.

Chapter Seven focuses on the leadership role of Anne Meade, the programme coordinator, who through her key roles in ECE over two decades offers a unique perspective on the sector and on leadership in the COI programme. The literature on leadership in the COI written by Meade will be discussed in this chapter.

The final chapter contains a cross-analysis of notions of leadership across the centres. This includes relevant information on the non-participating COI. Conclusions will be drawn as to how leadership is defined and enacted in the COI. Possible future directions for leadership development will be suggested and implications of this research discussed.
1.6 Summary

This introductory chapter has set the scene for this study into notions of leadership in the COI by providing a policy context for the ECE strategic plan and the COI and leadership initiatives contained within it. Leadership in the ECE sector has only recently been acknowledged in Government policy through *Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002a), as a result of the Strategic Plan Working Group’s recognition of the importance of professional leadership. The COI programme, which showcases excellence and innovation, offers a unique opportunity for research into leadership in quality services, something that is seen as important by New Zealand researchers and that is of interest to me in my work in teacher education and professional development.

2.2 Existing notions of leadership in ECE

Historically there has been a limited amount of literature on leadership in ECE (Rodd, 1998), however there is a growing interest in issues surrounding leadership in the field with a recent increase in the amount of published research (Ebbeck & Wangi, 2005). The leadership discourse in the New Zealand ECE sector has been strongly influenced by overseas literature, particularly from Australia and the United States. Anne Moise, Louise McLeod and Cushla Scriven are among New Zealand academics who have contributed to our understanding of leadership in early childhood settings in this country.

There appears to be no clearly accepted definition of leadership in ECE (Ebbeck & Wangi, 2003; Hurd, 2004). This lack of understanding and consensus on what leadership involves has been attributed to the “complexity of the field and the wide variety of programme types” (Schonberg, 1999, p.251). Rodd (2001, p.13) has argued that “leadership is a contextual phenomenon, that is, it means different things to different people in different contexts”. Scriven (2003, p.30), drawing on Southworth’s (2002) work, agrees contenting that “there is not just one way to be a leader” and that “leadership will vary from culture to culture and situation to situation”. These contextual differences can be viewed positively. Kagan and Hallmark (2003, p.9) believe
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review current literature on leadership in the ECE sector, as well as relevant material from the wider field of leadership, in order to provide a context for an exploration of notions of leadership in the COI programme. The literature review will explore the diversity of understandings of, and approaches to, leadership in the sector. Consideration will be given to the ways in which leadership is viewed and the reasons for these perceptions. The importance of leadership support and development will be established before models and frameworks of leadership from within and outside of the ECE sector that may be relevant to this study are introduced, and the differences between leadership in ECE and the school sector and corporate world considered. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the literature for this research study.

2.2 Existing notions of leadership in ECE

Historically there has been a limited amount of literature on leadership in ECE (Rodd, 1998), however there is a growing interest in issues surrounding leadership in the field with a recent increase in the amount of published research (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). The leadership discourse in the New Zealand ECE sector has been strongly influenced by overseas literature, particularly from Australia and the United States. Anne Meade, Lorraine McLeod and Cushla Scrivens are among New Zealand academics who have contributed to our understanding of leadership in early childhood settings in this country.

There appears to be no clearly accepted definition of leadership in ECE (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Hard, 2004). This lack of understanding and consensus on what leadership involves has been attributed to the “complexity of the field and the wide variety of programme types” (Schomberg, 1999, p.251). Rodd (2001, p.10) has argued that “leadership is a contextual phenomenon, that is, it means different things to different people in different contexts”. Scrivens (2003, p.30), drawing on Southworth’s (2002) work, agrees contending that “there is not just one way to be a leader” and that “leadership will vary from culture to culture and situation to situation”. These contextual differences can be viewed positively. Kagan and Hallmark (2001, p.9) believe
that “the diversity with which early care and education approaches leadership is the source of our greatest strength and provides the greatest potential for continuing positive change in the field”.

It has been suggested that leadership is an elusive phenomenon and that it is difficult to define and observe (Bloom, 2003). The fact that not all leadership capacities are equally observable and accessible adds to this elusiveness. G. Morgan (1997, p.3) has cautioned against “connecting leadership with a role”, as she believes that when defining leadership it is necessary that it be kept open to everyone in the sector. Rodd (1998, p.xv) sees leadership in ECE as being “about the experiences and environment provided for children, the relationships between adults and adults and children, meeting and protecting the rights of adults and children and working collaboratively, crossing existing artificial boundaries to meet the concerns of all concerned with the care and education of young children”. Although Rodd does not provide a succinct definition of leadership, she describes the key elements of effective leadership as the leader's ability to: “provide vision and communicate it; develop a team culture; set goals and objectives; monitor and communicate achievements; and facilitate and encourage the development of individuals” (p.3). This description has been criticised by Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) as being too narrowly focused on the centre-based aspects of leadership rather than including wider issues such as advocacy. Kagan and Bowman (1997, p.xii) have focused on aspects outside the centre context believing that “a deep knowledge of the field, a willingness to take risks, and a breadth of vision and thinking that transcends individual programmes, services, or orientations” are at the core of leadership in the early childhood sector. They have noted that the lack of a clear definition of leadership in the ECE sector impedes the move forward to understanding what leadership actually does. They suggest that leadership needs to be broken down into its component parts in order that it is better understood. Kagan and Bowman's framework will be referred to in more detail when discussing leadership models later in this chapter.

The limited literature on notions of leadership in ECE reveals a lack of agreement about what leadership means or looks like. The existence of many different leadership contexts may have contributed to this lack of consensus. Several authors promote the importance of developing a clear definition of leadership (Bowman & Kagan, 1997; Hard, 2004; Scrivens, 2002), but one that encompasses the breadth of the sector does not seem to have yet emerged.
2.3 The low profile of leadership

The diversity of understandings of, and approaches to, leadership may have contributed to the low profile that leadership has had in the ECE sector both in New Zealand and overseas. The lack of attention paid to leadership has been referred to by New Zealand researchers. Dalli (1999), in her keynote address to a Teachers’ Refresher course on Leadership and Management in ECE, stated “we don’t hear nearly as much as we should about leaders in early childhood education”. McLeod (2002), in her PhD thesis, noted a reluctance to identify with the concept of leadership among practitioners. Only three of the ten supervisors in her study mentioned leadership and recognised the need for conceptual leadership in their role.

Some of the few research studies that touch on the low profile (Livingstone, 2001; Rodd, 1996) have shown that many educators are not comfortable with the leadership aspects of their role, their main focus being the care and education of children. Livingstone surveyed New Zealand childcare supervisors on their perceptions of the type of skills and training needed to fulfil their role. The skill factors they saw as being most important were those of programme planning and working with children, staff management and human relations, managing health and safety, self-management and working with parents. Other leadership related skills such as liaising with management, marketing, public relations, and advocacy were rated lower. Livingstone suggested these perceptions may impact on the sector’s profile: “the lower importance ratings attached to professional liaison skills, and particularly conceptual leadership skills, may be contributing factors to the poor public perception of the early childhood profession” (p.224).

Rodd (1998, p.xvii) has lamented the lack of emphasis on leadership in ECE commenting that “it is evident that scant attention continues to be paid by those working in early childhood settings to the new thinking about leadership in general and the nature of leadership in the early childhood field in particular”. Rodd has observed that many teachers seem content to confine themselves to the care and education of children and are reluctant to step outside the centre environment to become involved in wider professional issues such as advocacy. She has attributed this reluctance in part to the lack of clear understanding of what is meant by leadership in ECE. An Australian research study involving directors and teachers-in-charge of preschools also identified a lack of awareness and a level of discomfort with leadership roles amongst research
participants (Geoghegan, Petriwskyj, Bower & Geoghegan, 2003). Hatherly (1999, p.10) summed this attitude up when she talked about “the ‘cringe’ factor toward leadership that currently seems to pervade in early childhood education”.

The discomfort and lack of identification with leadership described above still appears to exist in New Zealand ECE services. My personal experience is that supervisors and managers in centres often do not see themselves as leaders but rather as equal members of a team. I have talked to groups of supervisors about leadership and the initial reaction has been one of discomfort at the thought that they may be required to step out of their teaching team and even their centre and take a leadership role. I believe this lack of identification with leadership roles has consequences for the early childhood sector. It has been suggested that leadership is necessary to ensure improved quality and to raise the profile of the sector (Rodd, 1998; Kagan & Bowman, 1997). Hatherly (2000, p.31) has claimed that the result of a leader ignoring their role can be “as disempowering and disabling as the very style of leadership she/he is trying to avoid”.

2.4 Reasons for the low profile of leadership

The lack of recognition of the importance of leadership and the reluctance to identify with leadership roles may be explained by three factors: confusion between leadership and management roles; the focus on traditional leadership theories in much of the literature; and a lack of support and preparation for leadership roles. Each of these factors will be discussed in this section with reference to relevant literature.

2.4.1 Confusion between leadership and management

Much of the difficulty in understanding leadership in ECE, and its low profile in early childhood discourse and scholarship, has been attributed to confusion between leadership and management (Rodd, 1998). Rodd views efficient management skills as being necessary but not sufficient for effective leadership. Scrivens (2002, p.44) has suggested that those in leadership positions in New Zealand centres may have “become preoccupied with management, and thus relatively unaware of or confused about, their obligations for leadership”. According to Humphries and Senden (2000, p.26), “managers attend to the details of efficiently running a programme; leaders are oriented to broader issues and future development”. Henderson-Kelly and Pamphilson (2000), in an Australian study of women’s models of leadership, suggested that leadership took second place to management towards the end of the twentieth century. This emphasis
on management resulted in a stronger focus on maintaining the status quo than on
developing new approaches and thinking long term (Bloom, 2003). Henderson-Kelly and Pamphilon believe this is now changing with new pressures requiring early childhood services to cope with rapid change. Bloom has asserted that the difficulty in separating leadership and management in ECE is largely a function of the flat organisational structure. She believes that both roles are complementary and essential for the optimum functioning of the centre. Scrivens sees leadership as including management responsibilities but also being about working collaboratively with colleagues and families towards developing and improving services.

2.4.2 Traditional theories of leadership
Another reason for the lack of identification with leadership roles within the profession is that for many years, much of the available literature on leadership focused on men in positions of leadership, usually over other men – the ‘great man’ theory of leadership (Murphy, 2000 as cited in Harris, 2003). Scrivens (2002, p.45) has asserted that many women struggle with leadership models which measure success through “profit making and an ethos of competition”. Cox (as cited in Rodd, 1998, p.7) has suggested that the development of leadership in early childhood may have been impeded because of “the antithesis many women appear to have towards roles and responsibilities that involve power”. The views that leadership is about a single person and that leaders are concerned with competitive and product-oriented organisations obviously do not fit the early childhood sector, which has a non-hierarchical structure and is dominated by women (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003).

It has been suggested that the very qualities that attract early childhood teachers to the field, such as nurturing and caring, seem to be antithetical to more commonly accepted leadership attributes such as risk-taking (Taba, Castle, Vermeer, Hanchett, Flores & Caulfield, 1999). This view is supported by Dubois Davey (2000, p.181) who has reasoned that the reluctance of early childhood student teachers to identify with leadership and advocacy is because of their tendency to be “sensitive consensus builders” who avoid confrontation. The women in Henderson-Kelly and Pamphilon’s (2000) Australian study of students of management and leadership in ECE did not strongly identify with the traditional male models of leadership presented to them as part of a research project. The authors commented that this lack of identification may result in early childhood leaders minimising “their leadership strengths by constituting them as ‘just natural’” (p.12). They stressed the importance of women recognising,
developing and sharing their own leadership styles. Blackmore (1999, p.57) has warned against accepting the notion that there is a “woman’s way of leading”. She sees this as reinforcing gender stereotypes rather than empowering women.

2.4.3 Lack of support for leadership training

The low profile of leadership in ECE may be attributed in part to a lack of support for leadership training and professional development (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). Preservice teacher training is aimed at developing capable and competent teachers and although there are many similarities between good teaching and good leading, there is general agreement that those in leadership roles need to be further supported through the provision of appropriate training and professional development opportunities (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Boardman, 2003; Brown & Manning, 2000; Culkin, 1997; Geoghegan et al., 2003; Hard, 2004; Henderson-Kelly & Pamphil, 2000; Poster & Neugebauer, 2000; Rodd, 2001; Schomberg, 1999; Scrivens, 2004; Smith, 2005).

According to Schomberg (1999, p.215), “one of the challenges facing the field of early care and education is the preparation and nurturing of a next generation of leaders”. Culkin (1997), discussing the administrative leadership of early childhood centres, commented that it is a complex and challenging job requiring more than just experience and minimal training in administration. Bloom and Bella (2005) have suggested that leadership training should prepare directors for both the leadership and management functions of their role. They point out that management training is of shorter duration and more easily packaged than training for leadership which “takes longer because it involves fundamental changes to the way people think and view their roles” (p.36).

The importance of preparation for leadership roles is clear from the literature discussed above. Leadership development needs to be “coherent, cumulative and comprehensive” (Bloom & Bella, 2005, p.36) in order to meet both the professional and personal needs of participating teachers. Specific suggestions for leadership development will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis so that ideas from the research participants can be incorporated into the discussion.

A number of factors have contributed to the low profile that leadership has in the ECE sector. An emphasis on management rather than leadership, a lack of identification with commonly accepted theories of leadership and an absence of support for leadership development are all factors leading to a lack of awareness and recognition of the importance of leadership. There seems to be general agreement in the literature that
identification with leadership is related to how it is defined. As Hard (2004, p.127) has suggested, “if leadership were to be considered in terms of more democratic and collaborative models, then ECEC (early childhood education and care) personnel will be more positive about adopting leadership activities”. The development of an accepted and inclusive definition appears to be an important future step.

2.5 Models and frameworks of leadership

Although there is no widely accepted definition of leadership in the ECE sector, there are a number of models and frameworks that attempt to explain and analyse what is involved in effective leadership. A model of notions of leadership in the COI will be suggested in the final chapter of this thesis and an examination of existing frameworks will help provide a context for this. Models from within and outside of the early childhood sector will be examined in this section before similarities and differences are discussed.

2.5.1 Within ECE

Existing models of leadership in the ECE sector explain leadership either as a set of skills or expertise (Bloom, 2003; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 2001) or as a range of leadership styles (Geoghegan et al., 2003). A number of authors have promoted models of shared rather than individual notions of leadership (Hard, 2004; G. Morgan, 1997; Waniganayake, Morda & Kapalakis, 2000).

Rodd (2001) has proposed three types of expertise for leaders in ECE. This framework, based on George and Cole’s (1992) model, conceptualises leadership as a range of capabilities that can be developed by training and experience. Rodd suggests that to become effective leaders, early childhood professionals need to develop technical knowledge and skills, including pedagogical and curriculum leadership; conceptual ability, which involves critical thinking and advocacy; and interpersonal skills. In discussing these three elements, Rodd believes that most teachers are confident in the technical aspects of their teaching role but many are unaware of the “need for the high level conceptual and interpersonal skills that are related to effective leadership” (p.11). Bloom (2003, p.5) uses a similar framework to Rodd when she describes “the technical, human and conceptual skills that define effective leadership”. She further categorizes these skills into four areas: communication skills; decision-making and problem solving skills; interpersonal skills; and organisational skills. Bloom comments that defining
leadership in terms of skills broadens the view of leadership to include those outside specific leadership positions.

Another framework for looking at leadership expertise is proposed in the book *Leadership in Early Care and Education* edited by Kagan & Bowman (1997) and discussed further by Kagan and Hallmark (2001). The five faces of leadership proposed are: pedagogical leadership which includes interpreting research and practice and inspiring fresh thinking about pedagogical practices; administrative leadership which is concerned with effective management as well as providing vision, inspiration and direction; advocacy leadership which involves planning and political lobbying; community leadership which is educating and informing others in the community about the importance of ECE; and conceptual leadership which involves being open to new thinking and willing to challenge conventional assumptions. There is overlap between these dimensions of leadership and those suggested by Rodd (2001) and Bloom (2003).

Kagan and Bowman (1997) place more emphasis on the advocacy role in their model, though this aspect is discussed within the notion of conceptual expertise suggested by Rodd and Bloom. All stress the importance of the conceptual aspects of leadership, a view supported by Newman (2000) who argues that conceptual and visionary leadership is necessary to move the profession forward. The interpersonal skills involved in leadership are less prominent in Kagan and Bowman’s model than in the models suggested by Rodd and Bloom.

The models of transformational, strategic and educative leadership were used to analyse the roles of early childhood teachers in leadership positions in Queensland (Geoghegan et al., 2003). The authors found that all three styles were used by both childcare and kindergarten directors and preschool teachers to some extent. Some attributes observed in this study did not fit into any of these three categories however, so two further styles, feminist leadership and shared leadership were added. Geoghegan et al. describe feminist leadership as being about engagement, inspiration and consensus decision-making. This seems to overlap with their notion of shared leadership which emphasises reciprocal relationships and power sharing.

Shared leadership models, which appear in several of the more recent studies of leadership within the sector, contrast with the assumption in much of the earlier literature that leadership is linked to a role (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003) and open up the possibility of leadership for many. Hard (2004) has proposed the concept of
formal and informal leaders. She suggests that the formal leader is recognised because of their position whereas the informal leader is one who shows leadership qualities even though they may not hold a recognised leadership position. G. Morgan (1997, p.7) has also advocated the separation of leadership from a position suggesting that “not all leadership needs to be associated with roles and one can be a leader regardless of role”. One of the key findings in a study of staff perceptions of the meanings and significance of leadership (Waniganayake, Morda and Kapsalakis, 2000) was that leadership was not related to a particular person or position but was a growth phenomenon. Participants were clear that leadership skills and qualities could be enhanced through working cooperatively with others and that holding a particular position did not always mean that a person was recognised as leader. This led them to the conclusion that leadership in early childhood may be more relationship oriented than task oriented. Waniganayake et al. believe shared leadership has advantages in widening the base of leadership growth and offers “increased vitality and strength to the whole organisation” (p.18).

The possibility of multiple leaders within a setting is also reflected in the distributive leadership model proposed by Waniganayake (2000, as cited in Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). This model has knowledge that is shared and explicit at its core, as this is seen as the foundation for leadership. According to this model, leadership is “derived through creating a culture of learning and sustained by sharing knowledge in collaborative ways” (p.35). After discussing a variety of literature on women leaders, Scrivens (2000) concluded that the preferred leadership style of many women is a collaborative and consultative one and that this is a valid model. She quoted Court’s (1998) study on co-principalship in New Zealand primary schools which found that “shared leadership is not necessarily easier, but the combined effort makes it easier to focus on educational and professional goals and not on personal agendas” (Court, 1998, as cited in Scrivens, p.36). Bishop and Lunn (2002) found that the success of a collegial leadership style depended on the willingness of team members to take on new ideas. The leaders in their study of British nursery teachers “saw themselves as leaders rather than merely team members” and although they preferred a collaborative rather than a directive style “as leaders they reminded people where they were going” (p.21).

2.5.2 Outside of ECE

Literature on leadership outside the ECE field contains many references to the models of transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership, referred to in 2.5.1, is concerned with influencing, motivating and inspiring others (Proctor-
Thomson & Parry, 2001). Transformational leaders are role models for the people they work with and have visions that they can clearly articulate. Transactional leaders on the other hand work by rewarding completed tasks and manipulating people and situations (Bass & Avolio, in Proctor-Thomson & Parry). These two models both posit leadership as an individual phenomenon with leaders in the front and followers behind, though transformative leadership involves greater collaboration and "deep transformation or emancipation of those led" (Lambert, 2003, p.8). Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000, p.158) promote a model for school leadership they call 'values-led contingency leadership'. This model based on a study of school heads proposes a number of different leadership dimensions: alignment of vision and values; integrity of actions; responsiveness to context; collaborative development and self-reflection. The heads in their study all valued a collaborative and supportive school culture.

More recent literature has moved "beyond' transformational leadership" (Day, 2003, p.188). This involves a shift from a concept of leadership as something carried out by an individual to more collective concepts such as distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2003, p.443) have described distributed leadership as:

A network of relationships among people, structures and cultures (both within and across organisational boundaries), not just a role-based function assigned to, or acquired by, a person in an organisation, who then uses his or her power to influence the actions of others.

Distributed leadership blurs the distinctions between leaders and followers and "opens up the possibility of all teachers becoming leaders at various times" (Harris, 2003, p.46). This latter element of distributed leadership is further developed by Harris in her discussion of the concept of teacher leadership. She conceptualises this as "a set of behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively" (p.45) and suggests that the reciprocal learning processes involved in teacher leadership can lead to "collective action and meaningful change" (p.46). A similar framework is proposed by Raelin (2003) in the book *Creating Leaderful Organizations*. According to this model, leaderful as opposed to leaderless organisations are distinguished by four tenets which are that leadership is concurrent, collaborative, collective and compassionate. This model will be explored more fully in a later chapter.
2.5.3 Is leadership in early childhood different?

There has been debate about the similarities and differences between leadership in ECE and in the school sector or corporate world. Although some characteristics of leadership such as vision, courage and ethics; consideration of work culture; and productive work style (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001) appear to be universal, several writers have identified and discussed major differences between leadership in early childhood and in other settings. Henderson-Kelly and Pamphilon (2000, p.9), in a discussion of the relevance of generic leadership and management language and practices to childcare, have commented that “many ideas provided structure and affirmation to the children’s services leaders’ work; however, an equal number provided contradictions”. Kagan and Hallmark (p.8) have claimed that “the intimacy, flexibility, diversity and individualisation of early childhood programmes create a decidedly different leadership context than the formality, uniformity, rigidity, and bureaucratisation that has been conventionally associated with the corporate setting”. Many of the commonly accepted definitions of leadership are not appropriate for early childhood settings because of the more collaborative way early childhood teachers work and the lack of a hierarchical structure in the profession (G. Morgan, 1997).

More recent literature has minimized the differences. Rodd in an interview (as cited in Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003, p.22) has stated that:

**Being a leader is not at all different from being a leader in any other field.**

Effective leadership, be it of a large multi-national company or a childcare centre, requires certain attitudes, attributes and skills. These include being an effective communicator and team builder, creating a motivating and rewarding work environment, and supporting the professional development of staff by ensuring they have access to appropriate support and training. Regardless of where they work and with whom they work, effective leaders bring out the best in their staff by respecting and valuing each person’s unique combination of skills and experience, by consulting and involving them in all aspects of running a centre, by keeping them informed about what is happening and what needs to happen to achieve the centre’s vision and goals, by recognising individual contributions and achievements and by delegating meaningful and important tasks in ways that enhance self-confidence and self-esteem in staff.
This statement seems to differ from Rodd’s earlier position (1998) which suggested that the key differences between leaders in the early childhood field and other leaders are that leaders in early childhood are predominantly women leading women with whom they work closely on an equal basis for much of the time but whom they are expected to lead at other times. The more recent literature on conceptions of leadership in the wider field of educational leadership discussed above (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003) suggest frameworks more in line with the collaborative leadership approaches favoured in the ECE sector, so it appears the differences are becoming less significant.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented a general overview of some of the current literature exploring notions of leadership in the field of ECE and beyond. The review depicts a sector in which there is a lack of clarity as to what leadership actually means or looks like. Scrivens (2002, p.52) sums this up in her comment that “there is still confusion in the minds of leaders, particularly at centre level, about how they should construct leadership”. According to Rodd (1998, p.1), where leadership is recognised at a personal level, it does not appear to have been translated into “aspirations for more general or professional leadership which could advance the professionalism of the early childhood field and achieve much needed advances in community credibility and status”. The issues surrounding leadership in early childhood education need to be discussed and debated by the sector in order to raise the profile not just of leadership, but also of the early childhood profession as a whole. Rodd sees leadership as the ‘key element’ in the quest to increase quality and gain recognition for early childhood education as a profession.

Models of leadership both in the early childhood sector and beyond appear to be evolving from those promoting an individualistic model to those that see leadership as ‘collective action’ (Harris, 2003). It is encouraging to see that the gap between leadership discourse in the ECE sector and wider notions of leadership may be narrowing. Models of leadership appropriate for the sector need to be advanced so that those in leadership positions, as well as those aspiring to be leaders, will have appropriate models to emulate. The importance of developing shared philosophies; consistency between philosophy and practice; promoting open communication; and shared decision-making all need to be addressed by the early childhood education sector. Leadership in ECE
may differ from leadership in other fields in some respects but is none the less essential for ensuring quality services for children and their families.

The need for more research into leadership in the field of ECE is clear. This literature review highlights several aspects of leadership that could be researched in the COI programme. Of particular interest and significance are: the definitions of, and comfort with, the term leadership; ways in which leadership roles are enacted and shared; and preparation and support for leadership roles. The study will explore how the COI, which have been identified as having a leadership role in the sector (Meade 2003a; 2003c), are defining and enacting leadership in their settings. The type of leadership shown within and by these centres and their experiences of and ideas for leadership development will be investigated and analysed. A model and definition of leadership in the COI programme will also be suggested.

3.2 Research approach

Qualitative research methodology is best suited to this research into notions of leadership in the COI. Characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Merriam (1998) relevant to this study are that: the participants’ rather than the researcher’s perspectives are of paramount interest; data collection and analysis are mediated through the researcher; fieldwork is involved; theory is built rather than tested; and rich description is involved.

3.2.1 Collective case studies

A collective case study approach was chosen from a number of possible qualitative methods. Collective case studies have been described by Stake (2000, p.437) as the joint study of “a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition”. In this study, the COI provide clear cases in which the phenomenon of leadership can be explored. Case studies have been defined as bounded systems or units (Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this research, the case studies are bounded by the participation of the centres in the COI programme as well as by participants’ membership of the individual COI. Qualitative case studies
CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

3.1 Introduction
This research into notions of leadership enacted both within and by the COI lends itself to qualitative research methods as it involves the study of a phenomenon within a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberaman, 1994). This chapter outlines the approaches taken in designing and carrying out this qualitative research study. The first section explains the choice of research methods, in particular the decision to use a collective case study approach to explore how leadership is defined and enacted in the COI. The process of gaining entry to the COI is the basis for the second section. This is followed by a description of the sources of data and data collection methods used. Issues around ethics and validity and reliability are discussed next. The data analysis process is then outlined and a discussion on the limitations of this research study concludes the chapter.

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have been characterised by Merriam (1998) as being descriptive, particularistic and heuristic. These characteristics fit this study as the notions of leadership within the COI will be described in depth, relate to a particular situation and will help bring about an understanding of this phenomenon.

Some of the advantages of case study research described by Cohen et al. (2000) that are relevant to this research include that: it can be carried out by a single researcher; it can provide a natural basis for generalisation to a wider population; and it may contribute to action and policy. In a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the case study Merriam (1998, p.41) suggests that because of its investigation of real-life situations, the case study “offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences”, and hence “plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base”. Case study research calls for “detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p.61). The research questions posed will be answered therefore with reference to various sources of information including documents and interviews. Yin (1994) sees the opportunity to use a range of data sources as a major strength of case study research.

3.2.2 Centre participation – gaining entry

The population for this study was clear as six centres were chosen as the inaugural COI. An initial approach was made to Anne Meade as COI programme coordinator and she gave a positive response to the suggested research topic. The next step, after writing a research proposal as part of a research methods paper, was to make a preliminary approach to the individual COI to ascertain whether or not this research would be viable. All six COI were approached by phone in November 2003 to gauge their interest in participating. Contact details for the centres available on the Ministry of Education website were used. Four of the six centres, New Beginnings Preschool, Roskill South Kindergarten, Wilton Playcentre and Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten, showed interest in participating at this time. A’oga Fa’a Samoa and Te Kohanga Reo o Puau Te Moananui a Kiwa both declined to participate because of involvement in their own research and already heavy workloads.

Involvement by the COI in research outside their own projects was discussed at a hui (gathering) held for COI in late 2003. As a result of this discussion I was asked by Anne Meade to prepare a letter for the COI reference group outlining benefits for the COI in participating in this research (see appendix A). The reference group discussion
concluded that it was up to individual COI to make their own decision about participating in the study.

At the stage of formal consent Roskill South Kindergarten decided against participating in the research. A decision was made in consultation with my supervisor that the participation of three centres would make the research viable. The three centres that chose to participate represented a cross-section of mainstream early childhood services and hence provided a variety of contexts in which to explore notions of leadership. The participating COI were New Beginnings Preschool (a community-based childcare centre situated in Christchurch), Wilton Playcentre (a parent-led centre in Wellington) and Wycliffe Nga Tamariki (a state kindergarten in Napier).

3.3 Sources of data

In line with the case study approach, multiple sources of data were used to provide information that would help answer the research question. The data sources used in this study included documents, focus group discussions and an interview.

3.3.1 Documents

The use of documents in case study research is seen by Yin (1994) as an important way of supplementing and supporting other sources of data. Participating COI gave permission for the expressions of interest and the research proposals they developed as part of the COI application process to be used in this study. Relevant sections of these documents were accessed through the Ministry of Education. Sensitive parts of the documents such as budget details, teachers' profiles and contingency plans were not released. Other information already in the public domain was also accessed in order to build up a comprehensive picture of the participating centres. Information publicly available for all centres included brief centre profiles from the Ministry of Education website (Ministry of Education, 2004c), Education Review Office reports (Education Review Office, 2004) and articles in the *New Zealand Education Gazette* (Feltham, 2004; Mitchell, 2003, 2004; West, 2003a, 2003b). Other sources accessed varied according to the individual COI. Additional information on Wilton Playcentre was obtained from articles in the *Playcentre Journal*, a magazine published by the New Zealand Playcentre Federation (Lowe, 2004; Wilton Playcentre Communication team, 2003). A paper co-presented by Anne Meade and two teachers from New Beginnings Preschool (Meade et al., 2004) was another useful source of information as was the Wycliffe Nga Tamariki...
Kindergarten newsletter (Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten newsletter, 2004). Additional material on the non-participating centres included material from the A’oga Fa’a Samoa website (A’oga Fa’a Samoa, 2004; Taouma, Wendt-Samu, Podmore, Tapusoa, & Moananu 2003) and articles focusing on the leadership role of Roskill South Kindergarten (Hatherly & Lee, 2003; Carr, Hatherly, Lee & Ramsey, 2003).

3.3.2 Focus groups

The second major data source was focus group discussions with personnel from the three participating COI. According to Cohen et al. (2000) focus groups are a variation of group interviews characterised by interaction between the participants. The term discussion rather than interview was chosen in this study to make the data collection process sound less formal to the participants, but either term could be used. Three characteristics of focus groups identified by Krueger and Casey (2000) that apply to this research are that the people involved are similar in some way; that the discussion provides qualitative data; and that the questions are pre-determined. Focus group discussions were chosen because they fit within a qualitative paradigm (Brotherston, 1994, as cited in Merriam, 1998) and because they allow the exploration of thoughts, beliefs and attitudes through a group discussion (Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996). The assertion that focus group interviews “have the potential to bring the investigator closer to the research topic through a direct, intensive encounter with key individuals” (Vaughn et al., p.16) seems particularly relevant to this research topic.

Focus group discussions also offer a method of data collection that is relatively non-threatening and not too time-consuming for the busy centres. Vaughn et al. (1996) suggest that focus group discussions have several advantages over individual interviews. These include the security of being in a group, which leads to more open and spontaneous responses because not everyone is required to comment on every question, and the fact that participants have the ability to clarify their comments and form opinions through discussion with others. Another strength of this method according to Cohen et al. (2000) is that a large amount of data is produced in a short period of time, a factor of significance when the research involves travelling to another city to collect data. The potential richness of the data gathered was another reason for choosing a focus group discussion. According to Vaughn et al. (1996, p.15), “the interactions between the moderator and respondents and the interactions between the respondents themselves are recognised as having the potential to add depth and dimension to the knowledge gained”. Lederman (1990, as cited in Vaughn et al., p.17) has stated that
“much can be learned from direct, extended conversations with individuals whose thoughts and opinions are critical for understanding a topic”.

All those people within the COI interested in leadership were invited to participate in the focus group discussions. The invitation was deliberately left open so people would not feel obliged to participate. All teachers in both the childcare and kindergarten participated in the discussion as did seven members of the Playcentre. The data collection with the COI took place within a six-week period. All face-to-face interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The transcript of each discussion was sent to the participants to give them the opportunity to verify, clarify and/or delete their comments.

3.3.3 Meeting with the centres
The meeting with the teachers from New Beginnings Preschool was held during their regular staff meeting slot on a Monday afternoon. I met with the teachers from Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten again in their regular Wednesday afternoon meeting time. Three members of Wilton Playcentre attended an evening discussion. Several other Playcentre members who were unable to attend indicated that they would be happy to talk to me at another time. I decided to allow this variation in the data collection for the Playcentre for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fact that parent volunteers have a lot of commitments including young families and part-time work as well as the workload involved in running the Playcentre, doing training and fulfilling COI obligations so it can be difficult for them to attend extra evening meetings. Secondly, the close proximity of the Playcentre to my home means that extra meetings or phone conversations were easy to arrange and inexpensive. The third reason is that most centre members already knew me so would presumably feel comfortable talking to me on a one-to-one basis.

Four Playcentre members who could not make the initial meeting contributed to the discussion. Rather than going through all the questions again with each individual, I transcribed the initial discussion with the original participants’ permission, and sent it to each new participant. This step allowed these people to read the original discussion and confirm, disagree with and/or add new material. This action was also aimed to minimise the main differences between a focus group and an individual interview as described by Vaughn et al. (1996), namely that respondents react to each other’s statements. One centre member came to my house and we taped that discussion. Another added her
thoughts to the original discussion using track changes. I spoke to the other two people over the phone and added their comments to the transcript.

3.3.4 My role as facilitator/researcher
The beginning of the focus group discussion is thought to be critical in setting the tone and making people feel comfortable (Krueger & Casey, 2000). With the two centres with which I was not familiar, New Beginnings Preschool and Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten, I began by introducing myself and saying why I was interested in researching leadership in the COI. I also endeavoured to establish connections with the participants by mentioning my link with Wilton Playcentre, my participation in the leadership symposium with Anne Meade and my position as a professional development advisor in Wellington. Once everyone had introduced themselves and shared a little about their history at the centre, I clarified the format of the discussion. I did this by emphasising that we would use the pre-circulated questions (see Appendix B) as a guide and that it was to be a discussion rather than an interview which meant responding to each other and not just to my questions.

My role as facilitator was important in ensuring that discussion flowed. Critical qualities of the facilitator according to Krueger and Casey (2000) are empathy, respect and a positive attitude. They add that the facilitator’s task is to “ask questions, listen, keep the conversation on track, and make sure everyone has a chance to share” (p.9). Cohen et al. (2000) add that the role of the researcher is “to establish an appropriate atmosphere such that the participant can feel secure to talk freely”. My experience as a professional development advisor, providing professional development for early childhood services, was very helpful as I am quite used to facilitating discussions amongst groups of teachers and visiting centre meetings.

3.3.5 Focus group questions
According to Krueger and Casey (2000), good focus group questions should sound conversational, be clear, open-ended and avoid jargon. They suggest that open-ended questions invite description and elaboration and allow participants “to determine the direction of the response” (p.57). Ideally the questions would have been piloted before use with the centre groups, however this was not possible with such a small sample. The ten questions (see Appendix B) were grouped under four headings. The first section involved reflecting on the process of becoming a Centre of Innovation and what role leadership played within this process. This was followed by a more general question on
perceptions of, and comfort with, the concept of leadership. Leadership roles and opportunities within each Centre of Innovation were then discussed before support for leadership roles was explored. The questions were circulated to the participants ahead of time. The decision to do this was made after sending one of the COI a copy of the questions when they asked for clarification on the focus of the research. It was also decided that it may be useful for the participants to think about some of the issues prior to attending the discussion.

Although the questions were predetermined there was flexibility in the order of the questions and comments made by participants were followed up by further questions. This flexibility is promoted by D. Morgan (1997) who suggests that the questions be used as a guide with the researcher feeling able to “probe more deeply when necessary, skip over areas that have already been covered, and follow completely new topics if they arise” (p.48). Morgan summarises the role of the question guide as “a resource to maintain the balance between the researcher’s focus and the group’s discussion” (p.48).

Dialogue between participants was encouraged and the transcripts show that the issues raised did generate discussion within the group. At the conclusion of each interview participants were given the opportunity to add further comments relevant to the discussion.

### 3.3.6 Other data sources

Initially a second group interview with representatives from all the centres involved in the research was proposed as a follow-up on aspects of leadership arising from the initial interviews. This interview could have been carried out in conjunction with the hui that representatives of all COI attend twice a year. However, the COI reference group’s concern about the workload pressures on the centres led me to decide to abandon this second interview.

An interview with the programme coordinator, Anne Meade, who has the overview of the whole programme, was carried out after all the focus group discussions had been held. The questions used are included as Appendix C. This interview allowed me to validate some of my findings concerning notions of leadership within and by the COI. Meade has already presented her perceptions of the leadership role of the COI in several fora (Meade 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) and these were considered in more depth. According to D. Morgan (1997), the use of complementary sources of data such as individual interviews in addition to focus groups strengthens the total research in a qualitative study.
3.4 Ethical issues

Approval for this research was obtained from the Victoria University of Wellington’s School of Education Human Ethics Committee in May 2004. The four COI who showed interest in 2003 were sent an information sheet explaining the study (Appendix D) and a consent form to sign and return (Appendix E). Anne Meade was also sent an information sheet and consent form to gain her approval for an interview on her perceptions of leadership in the COI in her role as programme coordinator (Appendices F and G). Confidentiality was not able to be preserved for the participating centres because of the public availability of COI details. It was stated in the information sheet that individuals would not be personally identified. However, after the focus group discussions it became obvious that some comments could be linked to head teachers and/or project leaders so their permission was sought by email to use these identifying statements.

Miles and Huberman (1994) have presented a number of different ‘theories’ in their discussion of ethical issues in analysis. The idea of relational ethics (Flinders, 1992 as cited in Miles & Huberman) seems to correspond most closely with the approach taken in this study. Relational ethics is concerned with respect, and emphasises collaboration between researcher and participants. In line with this model recruitment of COI was by collaboration; fieldwork was focused on avoidance of imposition; and reporting served to confirm and support findings. As previously mentioned, participating COI were given the focus group discussion transcript to discuss and edit if desired. The centres were also sent a draft copy of the case study chapter based on their centre to check whether this truthfully described their experience (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Stake (2000, p.447) considers this check to be vital stating “it is important (but never sufficient) for targeted persons to receive drafts revealing how they are presented, quoted, and interpreted and for the researcher to listen well for signs of concern”.

Miles and Huberman (1994) raise the ethical issues of benefits and reciprocity in research. In general the researcher is the greater beneficiary as they obtain the data needed to complete their study, and this research was no exception. Possible benefits for the centres in being involved included that participation would assist the centre in their role of sharing innovative learning and teaching practices with others. The centres were also sent an overview of academic discussion against which their own statements about leadership were contextualised. Other benefits for participants suggested by Miles...
and Huberman are that they are listened to and that they may gain insights. One centre commented that they enjoyed the discussion and that it had got them thinking about leadership, so there may have been some reciprocal benefits.

One issue that needed special consideration in the ethics approval process was my relationship with Wilton Playcentre. As previously mentioned I am a life member of Wilton Playcentre and I am also a member of the centre’s advisory group for the COI project. I was involved in supporting the centre in its COI application process and attended meetings and contributed to the writing of the research proposal that was part of the application process. My relationship means that I not only know more about Wilton Playcentre than the other COI but also that I have access to information such as research reports which are not in the public domain. The following statement was added to the information sheet sent to Wilton Playcentre: ‘This research will be quite separate from my role on your Centre of Innovation advisory group. I undertake not to use any information available to me as a member of this group in my research unless it is in the public domain’. This aim of this addition was to clarify that I would endeavour not to take advantage of this existing relationship. Although as stated above I have a long-standing connection with this particular Centre of Innovation, I do not have regular contact with Playcentre members. Aside from attending advisory group meetings I do not participate in centre life. My position as an early childhood advisor and lecturer with the College of Education means I have regular contact with a range of early childhood services including education and care centres, kindergartens and playcentres. This position ensures I have a broad view and an understanding of the operation of different services within the ECE sector.

3.5 Validity and reliability

External validity in qualitative research is concerned with the extent to which results can be generalised (Merriam, 1998). This study contains half the sample population which can be seen as a strength in terms of external validity, though ideally all six centres would have participated in the research. Creswell (1998), in a discussion of some of the challenges in qualitative case study research, suggests that a larger number of cases increases the ability to generalise between cases but reduces the depth of study in each individual case. Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that multiple case studies add confidence to findings. The three COI that chose to participate represent a range of service types. The inclusion of a Pasifika and/or Maori immersion centre would have
added a broader cultural dimension to the exploration of notions of leadership. However, because of the scarcity of existing literature on leadership in early childhood in Maori and Pasifika settings, this aspect would have been more difficult to research.

Internal validity is concerned with accuracy (Cohen et al. 2000), in particular the research findings accurately describing the issue being researched. The initial baseline data gathering through access to the COI research plans increased validity as it added to the notions of leadership explored in the focus group discussions and interview. Respondent validation, which involved taking data back to the participants for verification (Merriam, 1998), helped reduce the possibility of researcher inaccuracy and bias. In terms of data analysis it is also important to avoid making inferences and generalisations beyond the capability of the data to support such statements.

Reliability of interviews is a more complex issue in a study of this nature. One difficulty with the small population is that piloting questions is not possible as these would not be relevant to a centre outside the project. The use of the same questions for each centre group discussion and the conducting of these interviews at approximately the same time in their three-year term increases reliability. Triangulation or use of multiple data collection methods including written documents and interviews is also important in increasing reliability (Cohen et al., 2000).

The notion of power balance in interview situations discussed by Cohen et al. (2000) is of relevance to this proposed research. In their synthesis of the literature on this issue they mention the risk to reliability and validity of interviewers who are perceived to be more powerful as well as peer researchers who may not elicit honest answers. The fact that these centres are already working alongside well established, and in many cases nationally recognised, researchers as part of their own research may reduce the potential impact that another outside researcher such as myself may have.

3.6 Data analysis

Merriam (1998) advises that data collection and analysis should occur simultaneously in qualitative research. She believes this process assists the organisation and refinement of further data collection and analysis and can help avoid the researcher being overwhelmed by a huge volume of data at the end of the study. In line with this principle, data analysis began with the first reading of the documents available on each
Centre of Innovation and continued through the discussions, interview and writing process. A research journal was kept in which ideas and themes as well as reflections on the research process were noted. This journal was a useful aid in the data analysis process.

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend three concurrent activities in the process of data analysis. They describe these as data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction and display began with the preparation of a profile on each of the three COI prior to their focus group discussion. Information from the primary documents described earlier was summarised in the profiles and some of this information was followed up in the focus group discussions. Data reduction also took place as the data was categorised, a process begun after the first focus group discussion. Merriam suggests that devising categories is largely a process of intuition; however “it is also systematic and informed by the study’s purpose; the investigator’s orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made implicit by the participants themselves” (p.179). Some of these categories arose directly from the questions discussed with each centre and others were key themes that arose from the discussion across all COI. According to Merriam (1998, p.184), categories should: “reflect the purpose of the research; be exhaustive and mutually exclusive; sensitising; and conceptually congruent”. Contrary to Merriam’s principles there was some overlap between the categories above; however, the distinctions between them seemed clear enough to warrant separation. Different coloured highlighter pens were used to classify and sort information from the different sources (expressions of interest, research proposals, website information, articles, papers and transcripts) into these categories which then formed the basis for the reporting of the findings and analysis.

Data display in the form of a matrix was used to look at the similarities and differences between notions of leadership across the centres. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe how researchers begin to draw tentative conclusions throughout a qualitative study and this research study was no exception. They suggest that these conclusions then need to be verified or confirmed. This confirmation, which occurred in part through the data display process, helps ensure validity.
3.6.1 Structuring the report

The structure of this research report was influenced both by the findings from the data and by relevant literature on qualitative case study research. The use of multiple case studies allows for both within and cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998). Eisenhardt (2002, p.18) emphasises the importance of becoming “intimately familiar with each case as a stand alone entity” before any cross-case comparison, as this individual focus allows the unique features of each case to become apparent. For this reason it was decided that each centre case study would be described separately and that the final chapter would include a thematic analysis across the cases. The three centre case studies follow the same format with a description of the centre and the process it went through to become a Centre of Innovation, followed by a description of the findings using the categories referred to above. The participants’ own words are used extensively in these descriptions with the aim of providing “a vicarious experience for the reader” (Merriam, 1998, p.243). The final section of each chapter consists of an analysis of key notions of leadership against relevant literature.

A separate chapter will describe the leadership roles and perspectives of Anne Meade, the COI programme coordinator. This chapter will also include the literature on leadership in the COI written by Meade. The integration of literature into different parts of the report is in line with Creswell’s (1994) suggestion that literature be introduced throughout a qualitative study rather than just concentrated at the beginning. A useful strategy in the data analysis process suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, as cited in Merriam, 1998) was playing with concepts, analogies and metaphors. This process occurred when trying to distinguish the notions of leadership exemplified by each Centre of Innovation and some of these ideas were used in headings of the case study chapters.

3.7 Research design limitations

This small research study has a number of limitations. These include the fact that not all the COI chose to be involved, hence a narrower view of leadership in the COI was obtained than would have been with full participation. The necessity of avoiding additional imposition on the already busy centres meant that there was only one opportunity to speak directly to the centre personnel. Ideally I would have been able to go back and clarify the meaning of statements when analysing the data, though in reality the need for this did not often occur. In hindsight it could also have been useful to talk...
to the research associates to ascertain their views on notions of leadership, particularly with regard to collaborative relationships. In the case of Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten, the Napier Kindergarten Education Manager was joint project leader and so it would have been useful to include her in the discussion.

Scrivens (2004) has commented on the limitations of much of the existing research into leadership in ECE because the focus of these studies has been on how leaders see themselves rather than what impact leadership has on teaching and learning. Although this study does rely on self-report, it takes a wider perspective by involving all educators rather than just those in designated leadership positions. This broader approach is recommended by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) who suggest that educational leadership research should focus on the unit of the organisation rather than the formal leader.

3.8 Summary

Despite the limitations discussed above, this qualitative research design provided a useful vehicle for studying notions of leadership in the COI. The collective case study approach was well suited to the context of the COI programme. The individual COI provided clear cases in which to study notions of leadership and the cross-case analysis allowed some conclusions to be drawn as to what leadership looks like in the COI and how its development can be supported. The various types of data, primary documents, focus group discussions and the interview provided rich sources of information from which notions of leadership could be described and analysed. The lack of attention paid to leadership in the New Zealand ECE context up until the release of *Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002a) makes this study very timely. Although the findings from this study cannot be generalised beyond the COI programme, they can contribute to our understanding of leadership in the New Zealand ECE sector.
CHAPTER FOUR

New Beginnings Preschool – ‘following a vision’

4.1 Introduction
New Beginnings Preschool provides a case study of leadership that shows a group of committed teachers following a shared vision. New Beginnings Preschool is an education and care centre situated in the Christchurch suburb of Linwood. This community-based centre, which caters for children from birth to school age, has a roll of around 100 children with up to 39 attending at one time. Linwood is a predominantly lower socio-economic area and the children attending the centre come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The centre is managed by a parent committee which is elected annually. New Beginnings Preschool, with a teaching staff of ten, has a high proportion of qualified teachers, including five teachers with degree qualifications (Education Review Office, 2004). The centre is a stand-alone centre with no affiliations to an umbrella organisation, unlike the two other centres in this study.

The chapter begins with a description of the significant events that contributed to the centre’s metamorphosis from an isolated to an innovative centre. The findings from the focus group discussion and primary documents will be discussed and significant notions of leadership shown both by individuals and the centre team, in particular the collaborative centre culture which encourages innovative practices, will be analysed with reference to selected literature.

4.2 The journey to Centre of Innovation status
This section describes the centre’s journey in the lead-up to becoming a Centre of Innovation. Significant events in the centre’s journey and the influence these have had are discussed along with the development of the centre’s innovation and action research questions.

4.2.1 Catalysts for change
A number of significant interrelated events occurred in the lead-up to New Beginnings Preschool’s selection as one of the inaugural COL. The head teacher’s enrolment in a Masters level degree paper entitled ‘Critical reflections on theories and practices of teaching and learning’ at the Centre for Education was one of the catalysts for change. Ideas from the paper were taken back to the centre and as a result the whole teaching team became more aware of their own views, and how they were viewed by parents, children and other teachers. This process of discussion and reflection engaged in by teachers at New Beginnings Preschool led them to the belief in the child – as a rich child, competent and confident.”
teaching and learning' at the Christchurch College of Education was one of the catalysts for change. Ideas from the paper were taken back to the centre and as a result the whole teaching team began to reflect on their assumptions around the existing programme, and how they were viewed by parents, children and other teachers. This process of discussion and reflection engaged in by teachers at New Beginnings Preschool led them to develop “a stronger belief in the child – as a rich child, competent and confident” (Meade et al., 2004, p.6). This belief in children was transferred to the teachers who began to believe in their own competency and capability and that of the parents.

As part of the rethink about centre beliefs and practices, the teachers decided to ‘deconstruct’ the centre programme. This process involved removing several group times and the adoption of a more socio-cultural approach to learning and teaching. This approach is based on the view that learning is “socially centred and involves dynamic interrelationships between adults and children through joint involvement and social co-participation” (Wood, 2004, p.29). Assessment and planning processes were also rethought. About this time the centre became involved in professional development work with Christchurch College of Education. The head teacher commented that “by not planning the children’s endpoints, we were suddenly allowing ourselves to see meaningful experiences in all the interactions and experiences of the children, but we had no framework to put them in” (Mitchell, 2003, p.4). The professional development facilitator, who became the research associate when the centre was accepted as a Centre of Innovation, supported the centre to develop a framework. At around the same time the centre began using project work based on the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. This approach, developed in schools for young children in the city of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, is defined by Katz (1993) as extended and in-depth study by young children of a particular topic of interest. The head teacher visited Reggio Emilia in January 2002 and this experience led to the employment of a visual arts teacher to support the children’s representation of their project work. The teachers were also keen to use the project approach to strengthen relationships with parents.

4.2.2 The process of becoming a Centre of Innovation

The centre applied to become a Centre of Innovation under the characteristic of community of learners even though they were not very clear at the time about what this meant (Meade et al., 2004). The guidelines for the expression of interest described it as “approaches evident in the collaborative relationships with parents, whanau and their communities, including relationships with parent support and development programmes,
other agencies, and/or schools” (Ministry of Education, 2002b). The centre believed that their employment of a visual arts teacher was as an innovative practice along with their use of the project approach. The short timeframe between the invitation to centres to apply to become a Centre of Innovation and the closing date for receiving the expressions of interest meant that the application process was led by the head teacher and the co-manager at that time. Other centre staff became more involved in developing the full research proposal with opportunities to contribute literature and review areas of the application. According to the centre’s research proposal “this proved to be a very empowering inclusive activity and much of the wording of this application is due to the teachers’ reflections” (Research Proposal New Beginnings (RPNB), 2003, p.5). Acceptance into the COI programme was not unexpected for the centre, “it wasn’t really a surprise, we just believed in ourselves that strongly” (Focus Group Discussion 1, (FGD1) 2004).

4.2.3 The innovation
Centres were required to describe their innovative approaches to early childhood learning and teaching in their expression of interest (Ministry of Education, 2002b) and to develop a research question in their full application. New Beginnings’ research question, framed in relation to both the innovative use of the project approach and a belief in visual arts, was: “In what ways can visual arts and project approach to curriculum contribute towards building a community of learners?” (Meade et al., 2004, p.8). The action research focus was described more broadly on the Ministry of Education website as “the visual arts and the project approach in pedagogical practice and their effects on children’s self-esteem, confidence and learning, and on parents’ engagement in their children’s learning” (Ministry of Education, 2004c).

4.3 Research findings
This section draws on the focus group discussion (FGD1, 2004) as well as the centre’s research proposal (RPNB, 2003) and a paper co-written by Meade, the COI programme coordinator, the centre head teacher, and another member of the teaching staff (Meade et al., 2004). The findings are discussed under headings which relate both to the areas of discussion in the focus group such as leadership opportunities and preparation for leadership roles, and also to key threads that arose out of the discussion, including vision, values and beliefs and centre culture.
4.3.1 What leadership looks like at New Beginnings

The centre has the designated leadership roles of head teacher and assistant supervisor. The present head teacher chose to change her title from supervisor to head teacher explaining “I think I could be supervising in a fish factory with that term” (FGD1, 2004). She said it took a while to adjust to the term head teacher because of the connotations with a hierarchal structure but came round to thinking “I have the same amount of non-contact time everyone else does so I’m out in ratio the same amount everyone else is and I am the head teacher so ... I sit quite comfortably” (FGD1). The centre has three areas of learning for different age groups (under twos, a middle group and an older group), where the project work is based. Leadership is shared within those three groups and each are doing their own mini-action research cycles. All teachers have responsibility for different areas of the centre such as puzzles or books and have control of a budget. The head teacher also has the title of project leader for the purposes of the COI project.

4.3.2 Notions of leadership

To gain an insight into the ideas about leadership held by centre members I asked what the word leadership brought to mind. The initial response from one participant was that leadership was about team work: “I think team comes to mind here, like we work as a team. There’s not one person, we’re all part of a team” (FGD1). This response was supported by several other participants with comments such as “we use other people’s strengths” (FGD1). The term collaborative leadership had been mentioned in the centre research proposal and when this was raised the head teacher said she believed this “can be a bit of a cop out leadership” (FGD1). She strongly felt that there needed to be some direction given by one person commenting “I think that I am the head teacher and so ... part of my role is the leadership. If I stepped out of that role I wouldn’t be doing my role as head teacher” (FGD1). She went on to say “they know there is leadership there, but it’s not in your face leadership, it’s not being shoved down your throat. So I think it would be silly to say that there isn’t leadership happening by one person”.

There were varying degrees of comfort with the word leadership. The head teacher was very comfortable with it but other people were not so sure. Responses from the group included “to be honest I hadn’t really thought about the word before” and “I actually don’t know whether I’m comfortable with that word or not yet” (FGD1, 2004).
4.3.3 Vision, values and beliefs

The terms direction and vision were raised during the discussion on leadership, for example: “I think leadership’s about direction as well, wherever that comes from. It’s about having a direction to follow, a vision to follow” (FGD1, 2004). Different teachers were seen to have their own visions for the centre: “I believe everyone else has been allowed to have their visions whether they’re big or small, whatever they are” (FGD1). Stated visions included a commitment to working closely with parents: “I have that vision of parents always being a part and having impact and being involved in the centre” (FGD1). Another strong belief is in the importance of a community of learners which “is the core of all the pedagogical and/or research work that is performed by our team of teacher/researchers” (Meade et al., 2004, p.8).

4.3.4 Centre of Innovation opportunities

During the Centre of Innovation term, much of the leadership work previously done by the head teacher has been delegated to other staff because of the time she spends working with the research associate. The assistant supervisor (the term assistant head teacher was thought to be too much of a mouthful) has taken on a greater leadership role as have other teachers. This sharing of leadership roles is seen as positive for those involved. According to the head teacher “it’s allowing other people to grow definitely … everyone’s growing and I think that’s quite cool” (FGD1, 2004). New leadership roles arising from participation in the COI project include giving presentations, showing visitors around the centre and writing papers and reports.

Several teachers have taken on public speaking roles. They admitted that these occasions could be intimidating but satisfying commenting “once you get up there and get going, it’s nice putting out to everybody what you’re involved in especially if you feel passionate about what you’re doing and you believe in what you’re saying” (FGD1, 2004). A recently graduated teacher had the opportunity to present alongside the head teacher and Meade at an Action Research Conference the month before my visit. She described the experience as nerve wracking but said “after I did it I felt really good …. Being involved in the Centre of Innovation, it’s definitely increased my professionalism and my knowledge and it was just really, really nice so it’s been a privilege” (FGD1).

The role of dissemination when people come into the centre is shared between those teachers who feel comfortable with it. The centre stopped visits for a while when alterations to the building made the process difficult but has recently started again.
Some of the first visitors were 'tourists' rather than 'travelers' (Meade, 2003b), perhaps looking for why this centre had been chosen as a Centre of Innovation, rather than being interested in the innovation. The teachers found most of the dissemination to be very rewarding, commenting that “what is worthwhile is the one-to-one talks about project work and learning stories [a framework for assessing children's learning (Carr, 1998)] and visual arts” (FGD1, 2004).

4.3.5 Preparation for leadership roles

When I asked what had prepared teachers for these Centre of Innovation leadership roles there was laughter and comments such as “we just went in there boots and all” and “blind faith” (FGD1, 2004). Further discussion revealed that the professional development work the centre had engaged in with the research associate prior to becoming a Centre of Innovation had helped the centre develop a new direction and become more confident to articulate their practice. The experiences of the head teacher, particularly the trip to Reggio Emilia and the post-graduate study, were seen as important influences on the centre's openness to change and willingness to engage in innovative practices. The post-graduate study also helped the head teacher in the preparation of the research proposal with “the level of writing you're probably doing at that point is making you more comfortable” (FGD1). The head teacher also belonged to a small leadership group that met regularly to discuss leadership issues such as the differences between leadership and management and other topics of interest.

For other teachers there had been little preparation. The lack of emphasis on leadership in teacher education programmes was highlighted by a teacher reasonably new to the centre who revealed “I just graduated last year in December and nothing about leadership, I mean absolutely nothing and I hear bits and pieces of it ... but it doesn’t really mean anything” (FGD1, 2004).

4.3.6 Future leadership development

In this part of the discussion, participants were asked what leadership training and support would have been useful to them. Support for wider leadership roles rather than just for those in designated leadership positions was seen to be important. This feeling was summarized in the following comment “I don’t think it’s leadership as in leadership as head teachers, I think its building up the idea of leadership and it's support and I just don’t think we do it in New Zealand at all for early childhood” (FGD1, 2004). Support for newly graduated teachers was seen as important as professional leadership is one of
the competencies for teacher registration, a licensing system for New Zealand teachers aimed at maintaining quality in schools and early childhood services. It was felt that there should be support “for the beginning teacher…. They just go out into centres and they’re meant to magically know what to do with no support” (FGD1).

More specific ideas for leadership development included support for learning about how to communicate with people, particularly those with different backgrounds and philosophies. Having mentors and supportive role models was also seen as important, “having someone to reflect ideas off, that support system” (FGD1, 2004)). The idea of needing challenge as well as support was raised, “I think for me a mentor’s somebody who knows you really well and that can actually give you that bit of a push” (FGD1).

4.3.7 Centre culture
The discussion on support for leadership development developed into a conversation about the importance of a supportive centre culture. As part of the changes made at New Beginnings described earlier in this chapter, there had been a conscious effort to reduce the hierarchical management structure. The previous supervisor had worked in the office and not with the children. Meetings were not held as frequently as they are now, and teachers did not participate so actively in decision-making processes. Teachers who had been at the centre since before these changes commented very positively on what a difference it had made having a head teacher who worked alongside them and valued their contributions. They commented on the openness of meetings and how they felt free to express their opinions. This positive team climate was described in the covering letter for the research proposal: “we are a team of teachers who works reflectively, communicates honestly, challenges assumptions and beliefs and has seen the rewards of this dedication in the relationship we have with our children” (RPNB, 2003, p.1). Descriptions of the centre climate in the focus group discussion included the words safe, comfortable, and supportive (FGD1, 2004). This safe, supportive environment led teachers to feel more motivated and excited about their work as is shown in the following comment:

There’s definitely a very positive climate and you feel like you can do things to make a difference and if something is bothering you, getting back to the whole leadership thing you feel comfortable within yourself to either talk to a peer or go up higher but it’s just there’s that climate ….

You’re not too scared to say something and I really think that because we
believe in what we’re doing you know like getting the families involved and everything we’ve worked so hard on establishing those relationships and now it’s just been really good for us and for the parents (FGD1).

The fact that being a Centre of Innovation had resulted in a large number of meetings was seen to be an advantage. As one teacher said “we spend a lot more time sitting around talking and discussing and supporting each other” (FGD1, 2004). Plenty of non-contact time and non-contact time taken in groups rather than individually was seen as another positive aspect of the present way of operating.

4.3.8 Openness to change

The discussion participants agreed that another distinction between this centre and previous centres where they had worked was the openness to change. New ideas were welcomed and:

I’ve just found I reflect more on my practice as a teacher and also this place is more open to new ideas and trying new things than other places I’ve been to when its kind of half the time you probably wouldn’t say anything because everything’s a big deal and everyone gets excited (FGD1, 2004).

This openness to change will be explored further in the analysis below.

4.3.9 Collaborative relationships

The importance of collaborative relationships at New Beginnings goes beyond those involving the teaching team. Relationships with the research associate and with centre management and parents are also based on an equal partnership. The choice of research associate was seen to be crucial to the success of the Centre of Innovation research. The fact that there was already an established relationship with the researcher was seen to be important as shown in the following quotes: “if we perhaps had someone that we didn’t know or someone that we sort of didn’t get along with, because she’s just so open there’s no hierarchy”, “we couldn’t have had anyone better and she’s just part of our journey” and “she’s just awesome, she teaches us so much and she creates a lovely atmosphere when we go over research and stuff and we always have a good time but we get everything done and it’s very relaxed” (FGD1, 2004). The relationship with the research associate developed from being a ‘novice-expert partnership’, a concept linked with the apprenticeship system (Rogoff, 1990), to one where she “has joined our
The focus group discussion and the primary documents revealed a centre where despite the large teaching team and varying levels of experience, a lack of hierarchy existed and teachers were encouraged to share their ideas and use their strengths. The leadership role of the head teacher in promoting a centre culture where innovation was encouraged and responsibilities and decision-making were shared appeared to be crucial to the successful functioning of the centre and will be further discussed in the next section.

4.4 The metamorphosis - from a culture of isolation to one of innovation

This section contains an analysis of the key findings. Notions of leadership at New Beginnings are discussed with reference to literature on successful organisations with particular reference to the influence of leadership on organisational culture and change.

4.4.1 Breaking out of the container

The head teacher at New Beginnings has commented that in the past the centre did not have a great reputation (Meade et al., 2004). A culture of keeping themselves separate prevailed “not as the centre that thought we were doing it the right way, but probably for fear of what else we might find that might rock our firmly held assumptions and beliefs” (p.6). This contrasts with the expectation that COI are public, that they are in a fishbowl and are deprivatised (Meade, personal communication, August 13, 2004). The centre’s journey has been described as “breaking out of the container” (FGD1, 2004).

Sampson (1993, as cited in Torres, 1999, p.8) describes the concept of the self as a bounded container as ‘a possessive individualist view’ as opposed to a belief in working collaboratively. The result of the centre's journey was that “the image we had of ourselves as a bounded container no longer holds for us. We no longer have the need for the four walls of that container, and are now finding ourselves free to journey together as competent teacher researchers” (Meade et al., p.9).

4.4.2 From ‘Good to Great’

This metamorphosis from an isolated centre to one displaying its innovation to the ECE community invites comparison with the progress made in ‘Good to Great’ companies (Collins, 2001). Collins led a team of researchers who spent over five years
analyzing why some organisations were spectacularly more successful than others. Although the study looked at American companies, Collins comments that the issues around greatness are human not business-focused, hence findings from the study can be applied to other organisations. Of the seven concepts described by Collins, four appear relevant to New Beginnings Preschool. These are:

- Level five leadership;
- First who ... then what;
- Confront the brutal facts; and
- A culture of discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>A level 5 leader builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>An effective leader who catalyses commitment to and pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>A competent manager who organises people and resources towards the effective and efficient use of predetermined objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>A contributing team member who works with others to achieve group objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>A highly capable individual who personally makes productive contributions.</td>
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**Table one: Level 5 Hierarchy (Collins, 2001, p.20)**

The table above shows the five levels of leadership proposed by Collins. Level five leaders are ambitious for their organisation rather than for themselves. Unlike level four leaders who are charismatic leaders leading from the front, level five leaders are less overt and more collaborative in their leadership style. Meade (2003a) first made the connection between the type of leadership shown in the COI and Collins’ model. She mentioned the quiet modesty of the head teachers when she first met them. This fits with my experience which was that the head teacher did not talk about the role she played in the centre turnaround, even though it seemed clear that much of the original vision and drive came from her. Another characteristic of the level five leader is their willingness to “apportion credit to factors outside themselves when things go well” (Collins, p.35). This has also been described as looking “out of the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit” (Collins, p.36) An example of this attitude is the belief held by the head teacher that everyone is responsible for the centre’s success. Statements such as “it takes a group of people to be innovative” and “people do work in the roles of leaders within themselves or within the areas they work in” illustrate this belief.
A teacher's comments support this view, "we're all on a level playing field and we all contribute and so that's positive" (FGD1).

The 'first who . . . then what' principle is concerned with the people that work in the organisation. A common perception about successful organisations is that if you come up with the right vision you will get people on board with a new direction. In the 'Good to Great' companies, the leaders understood that "if you begin with 'who', rather than 'what', you can more easily adapt to a changing world" (Collins, 2001, p.42). To use the analogy of passengers on a bus "if people are on the bus because of who else is on the bus, then it's much easier to change direction" and "if you have the right people on the bus, the problem of how to motivate and manage people largely goes away" (p.42).

Only about half of the teachers present at the focus group discussion were employed at the centre when it gained COI status. Since then there had been a concerted effort to employ teachers with an open and innovative attitude. The recruitment and selection process was described by one of the newer teachers: "they ... not only look at your qualifications but also will this person fit with the team?, “how is this person going to be with children?” (FGD1, 2004). The people from the 'Good to Great' companies "clearly loved what they did, largely because they loved who they did it with" (Collins, p.62). Comments from the teaching team at New Beginnings reflect this enjoyment: "we have fun, a great sense of humour here you know we just have fun and we're still quite professional when we need to be" and "it's definitely motivated me more as a teacher and I've become more excited in my role" (FGD1).

In Collins' research, all the successful companies "began the process of finding a path to greatness by confronting the brutal facts of their current reality" (2001, p.88). This process certainly occurred at New Beginnings when they had their big rethink. The centre's confrontation is described in the following quote: "we almost threw the baby out with the bathwater and we ended up with all our previous planning style out of the window" (FGD1, 2004). The centre had the courage to admit that their current systems were not working and they needed to change.

The final concept from 'Good to Great' relevant to New Beginnings is that of a culture of discipline. This involves staying focused on what is most important to your organisation, your core philosophy, and working in a determined way to ensure the centre goals are met. The importance of remembering their primary role during the research process was emphasised during the discussion with the comment that "we're all teachers doing our job
and that’s the primary most important thing. Anything else is on top of that thank you very much" (FGD1, 2004). A culture of discipline also involves giving people freedom and responsibility within a framework (Collins, 2001). The delegation of the control of budgets for different areas is an example of this practice. Teachers are expected to be aware of the financial responsibility while being given some autonomy.

4.4.3 A further exploration of centre culture
Organisational culture can be looked at more broadly than the culture of discipline in Collins’ model. Bloom (1995, p.48) has described the culture of a centre as “the basic assumptions and shared beliefs that unite the staff”. She suggests that culture includes: shared norms and values; rituals, history and traditions; and climate and ethics. Hatherly (2000, p.27), who defined culture as “the unique combination of values, assumptions and beliefs that builds over time when people work together”, links organisational culture with centre quality.

The role of the leader in creating a strong organisational culture is generally agreed to be significant (Bloom, 1995; Day, 2003; Hatherly, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Schein, 1996). Peterson and Deal (1998, p.30) claim leaders affect school culture through “their words, their nonverbal messages, their actions and their accomplishments…. They are models, potters, poets, actors and healers. They are historians and anthropologists. They are visionaries and dreamers”. Ways in which the leader positively influences the centre culture according to Bloom (1995) include: developing shared philosophies; encouraging open communication; celebrating successes; communicating widely and openly; encouraging shared decision-making and participation; and encouraging feedback and delegating administrative tasks. Many of these strategies are used at New Beginnings and have been described in the findings above. Another leadership role in relation to centre culture is recognising the need for innovation and improvement (Hatherly, 2000). This is also clearly evident in this Centre of Innovation.

The head teacher was modest about her role in promoting a positive centre culture. After hearing the teachers reflect on their previous experiences and what is different about the current climate I suggested “so it’s almost the culture that the person in the leadership position promotes that makes it important” (Researcher, FGD1, 2004). The immediate response from the teachers was “yes, definitely, definitely”, however the head teacher, rather than taking credit, suggested that the change had been made in reaction to the past situation. This could be seen as behaviour typical of a level five leader.
4.5 Summary

New Beginnings Preschool has undergone a process of metamorphosis from being a fairly isolated centre unwilling to engage with the outside world to a centre sharing their innovation and practices with local, national and international audiences. This journey required self-belief and courage on behalf of the teaching team and it also required leadership. Although leadership roles both within and outside of the centre are shared at New Beginnings to some degree, it seems obvious that the vision and the passion of the head teacher has been an important influence. Scrivens’ (2000, p.33) description of leadership seems apt in this context: “leadership, then, is about setting direction, motivating and inspiring and providing support”.

It is no coincidence that the head teacher was the only person who felt completely comfortable with the term leadership and had taken steps, such as initiating a leadership network, to further explore her role. Her leadership style has evolved as the team has grown in confidence. This relates to Scrivens’ (2000) suggestion that group characteristics can influence leadership style. This contextual nature of leadership will be discussed further in the concluding chapter. The head teacher is now able to delegate many leadership tasks, and distributed leadership as discussed in 2.5.2 is developing within the centre. This head teacher exhibits the leadership qualities suggested by the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu (500 BC): "when the best leader's work is done, the people say, we did it ourselves" (as cited in Bloom, 2003, p.17).
CHAPTER FIVE

Wilton Playcentre – ‘demonstrating emergent leadership’

5.1 Introduction
The shared leadership enacted by Wilton Playcentre within a culture of emergent leadership is described in this case study chapter. Wilton Playcentre is a parent cooperative ECE centre operating under the umbrella of the Wellington Playcentre Association. In playcentre, the parents of the children attending are the educators and managers of the centre, in addition to their role as parents. Wilton Playcentre is a small urban centre with around 18 families involved. Currently three two and a half hour mixed-age sessions are run each week with enrolled families providing an adult to be part of a supervision team once a week. This method of staffing the centre is known as group or team supervision. Centre members undertake parent training in order to meet the Ministry of Education requirements for session supervision as well as sharing office holder roles.

5.2 Playcentre philosophy and centre history
This chapter begins with an outline of playcentre philosophy and centre history. The journey the centre went on to become a Centre of Innovation and the roles taken by centre members in this journey will then be described. The findings discussed in the following section are synthesized from the focus group discussion and relevant primary documents. The analysis which concludes this chapter uses relevant literature on leadership from both within and outside of playcentre to focus on aspects of leaderful practice and emergent leadership.

Playcentre is an ECE service unique to New Zealand. The first playcentres were established in Wellington in the 1940s with the purpose of supporting mothers. According to playcentre philosophy “children can fulfil their potential most successfully when their parents/caregivers understand and participate in their learning process. We believe that parents are the first and best educators of their children” (Wellington Playcentre Association, 2002). The choice of playcentre as an ECE option therefore requires a considerable commitment and hands on participation from parents which in turn leads to a variety of leadership opportunities. Emergent leadership, a principle that
encourages a regular turnover in leadership positions to allow newer people to gain leadership experiences, is a unique aspect of playcentre philosophy that has been attributed to an Auckland educationalist and playcentre pioneer, Lex Grey (Goldschmidt, 1998).

Wilton Playcentre has a relatively stable membership despite the inevitable turnover as new families join and children leave the centre to move to school. The centre had a long history of high training levels and of participation in professional development with the Wellington College of Education prior to becoming a Centre of Innovation. The professional development had focused on the use of learning stories and schema (repeatable patterns of behaviour in children’s learning (Meade & Cubey, 1995)) theory. One of the research associates had been involved in professional development work with the centre for over five years before the centre became a Centre of Innovation. The centre was also involved in the Early Childhood Learning and Exemplar Assessment Project, a national project developing assessment tools for ECE services.

5.3 The process of becoming a Centre of Innovation

This section outlines the process the centre went through to become a Centre of Innovation, from the application being the idea of one centre member, to a project that is now embraced by the whole centre. The centre’s innovation and research question are also detailed in this section.

5.3.1 Inspired to apply

The initial COI application was the idea of one centre member who had been inspired by hearing Anne Meade talk about the COI programme at a research seminar at the Wellington College of Education. The centre had been part of the Early Childhood Learning and Exemplar Assessment Project and through that involvement this person had seen the possibilities for using digital photographs to record children’s learning. She believed that becoming a Centre of Innovation could get the whole centre excited about, and involved in, effective assessment processes and thought “this is how I can get a digital camera in my centre” (Focus Group Discussion 2, (FGD2), 2004). The centre agreed at a business meeting to support the application but according to a centre member “it seemed like a bit of a pipe dream” (FGD2) and there was considerable surprise at their short-listing.
As well as surprise there was also resistance from some centre members. The centre had lost some families between the lodging of the expression of interest and the short-listing and there was concern that the centre would be taking on too much. A number of crucial “conversations of influence” (FGD2, 2004) took place at this time with Playcentre Association personnel and other people from outside the centre whose opinions were respected. Also crucial to the decision to go ahead were a number of meetings where centre members found out more about the project and its implications for the centre. A further turning point was the realization that the research questions could be changed to better support the work the centre was already doing.

5.3.2 The innovation
The initial expression of interest indicated that the action research topic would be focused on how using digital photography “enriches children’s talk about their play” (Wilton Playcentre Expression of Interest, 2002, p.2). The COI reference group were interested in the centre’s use of schema learning theory and with input from the wider group of centre members the focus shifted to that which is described on the Ministry of Education website as “how Playcentre functions as a community of learners and the role of documentation - in print and images - in maintaining continuity across sessions operating with group supervision. The effects of schema learning theory in teaching and learning in a Playcentre context will also be examined” (Ministry of Education, 2004c).

5.4 Research findings
This section draws on material from the focus group discussion (FGD2, 2004), the centre’s research proposal (RPWP, 2003) as well as articles in the Playcentre Journal (Lowe, 2004; Wilton Playcentre Communication’s Team, 2003) and the New Zealand Education Gazette (Mitchell, 2004). The findings will be grouped under the same headings as in Chapter Four.

5.4.1 What leadership looks like at Wilton Playcentre
Leadership is shared in different ways at Wilton Playcentre. As mentioned previously, parents at playcentre have both educator and management roles and both of these have associated leadership responsibilities. Parents work on supervision teams and each team has a leader, usually the parent with the highest level of training or the most experience. Leadership roles associated with the management of the centre include the roles of president, treasurer, education officer, information officer, and property officer. The
following explanation by a discussion participant sums up this sharing of the responsibilities, “there’s leadership in different areas of playcentre. Some people in playcentre are the leaders with regards to educating the children because they have that experience. Other people might be more leaders in the admin side of things” (FDG, 2004). The centre has used some of the COI funding to employ an administrator who is a past centre member. This was seen to be of benefit to the centre in that it had freed up people to work on the research and “she’s just taken all the hard work out of it” (FGD2).

Although the role of president is nominally that of centre leader, present and past presidents described it more as a facilitating role and saw their responsibility as ensuring that decisions are made rather than actually making the decisions. This group responsibility is illustrated by the attitude of a past-president “I can remember someone coming in and saying ‘Are you in charge?’ and even though I was president, ‘No, why are you looking at me?’ it’s a group” (FGD2, 2004). One person has the title of project leader for the Centre of Innovation but “it’s just somebody’s name on the contract and we all work on it together” (FGD2). The centre also decided to form teams to focus on the management and communication aspects of the COI work. The rationale for these teams was to “run and oversee the project and put together information to help us promote our research” (Wilton Playcentre COI Communication Team, 2003), as there was not enough time for these things to happen in regular centre meetings. The membership of these groups was open to all centre members and more people have gradually joined.

5.4.2 Notions of leadership

When asked what comes to mind when the word leadership is mentioned, there were a variety of responses from the focus group discussion participants. One person said that to her “leadership is about individuals (not necessarily one, but perhaps a core group) taking on responsibility. Leadership is also about passing on the culture” (FGD2, 2004). This broad notion of leadership is also reflected in another view that “leadership does not only reside in an individual or individuals, but in the centre culture” (FGD2). Someone else’s initial response was to name leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton. However, she also talked about leadership from within, “leadership can be charismatic and it can be the blinding glimpses of the obvious and the inspirational turning points but I also think .... Sometimes it can just be a word in a conversation. It can quite subtle and it’s very diverse” (FGD2).
Participants in the focus group discussion differentiated between leadership at playcentre and in other organisations, for example “your classic leadership model is a bit different from what happens at playcentre because of the way playcentre’s run. You don’t go off and make your own decision, it’s a group decision” (FGD2, 2004). Shared leadership was also mentioned with the comments “leadership isn’t hierarchical …. Leadership is shared and people are open” and “you feel like you’re in a team here. I’ve been in a team at work but this is much more definitely a team in terms of responsibility or decision-making” (FGD2). Some of the leadership skills and attributes seen to be important included good people skills, emotional intelligence and an ability to see the issues.

5.4.3 Vision, values and beliefs

Some clear visions and values were articulated both in the discussion and elsewhere:

We believe strongly in playcentre and value what we have here. We know that we’re doing some great stuff and saw this project as an opportunity to look at why we are doing so well and show that what we do is valuable (Mitchell, 2004, p.12).

Centre members also saw that Wilton Playcentre could be a role model for other centres by demonstrating the benefits of participating in training and action research (RP, 2003). Other visions related to what was going on inside the centre:

We all had ambitions that whether we were a big centre or a small centre we wanted to achieve and they were along the lines of professional development. We wanted to be able to pursue our interests and proper assessment and planning and documentation and continue working with schemas (FGD2, 2004).

The centre hoped that becoming a Centre of Innovation would enable this to happen rather than “disabling us from having the time to do it” (FGD2).

5.4.4 Centre of Innovation leadership opportunities

The leadership opportunities arising out of involvement in the COI programme were similar to those mentioned at New Beginnings, namely presentations, reports and welcoming visitors. Presentations have been made to groups both within and outside of
the playcentre network and have included local and national audiences. A presentation at the 8th Early Childhood Convention in 2003 was followed by a visit from Margy Whalley, from the Pen Green Centre in England, who was interested in both the use of schema learning theory and the playcentre movement. The Pen Green Centre was one of the first Centres of Excellence, a programme with some similarities to the COI programme. This visit led to an invitation to present at a conference at Pen Green in October 2004, an international dissemination opportunity taken up by the centre.

The earlier presentations and reports were taken on by a small group leading the project. However, as time has gone on and the research has become integrated into the centre, more centre members have become involved. A generic workshop explaining schema theory has been developed that can be delivered by anyone in the centre. This is seen as another way of getting people involved in dissemination. This principle of emergent leadership, which will be further explored in the analysis section, is expressed in the observation “people have started doing things they never thought they would do which is consistent with the playcentre model” (FGD2, 2004).

5.4.5 Preparation for leadership roles

Centre members believed that there was some support for existing leadership roles such as the centre president’s role through Playcentre Association workshops and courses, however despite this external support “mainly you just find yourself in it and you’re doing it” (FGD2, 2004). The support from other centre members was also seen to be important with the feeling that “within the centre the fact that everyone is obviously supporting you” (FGD2). People had tended to draw on previous work experience to help them with Centre of Innovation leadership roles. With all parents having careers before becoming involved in Wilton Playcentre, and many still working part-time, there were people with experience in public speaking and report writing within the group. Less experienced people were “buddied” with more experienced people to build up the number of centre members able to share the dissemination tasks. This support for emergent leadership requires strategies such as shoulder tapping and “the trick is to ask people to do something that’s not too scary and build on that” (FGD2). Support and mentoring were also seen to occur from outside the centre “there’s quite a strong network I think if there’s real issues that require leadership, outside of the centre members” (FGD2).
5.4.6 Future leadership development

Ideas from the group for supporting leadership development included networking with others in leadership roles so that there would be opportunities to see and hear other leaders. Freeing playcentres from some of their administrative workload was also suggested. It was thought that this would allow people to focus more on the educational leadership aspects of their role rather than the more mundane administrative tasks described by a centre member as “the donkey work parts” (FGD2, 2004). The hands-on involvement of parents in running their own playcentre was seen as important in ensuring a sense of ownership is maintained: “the fact that you have to run your centre has real positives for drawing you together as a team so if you take too much administration or too much power or responsibility away then people can stand back”. Reducing the administrative workload was, however, seen as a way of increasing the educative leadership role:

If you replace that administrative burden with a heightened sense of need to do your training and that this is your role maybe that would bind you as you concentrated on the curriculum and how you delivered it. If there was more emphasis on that then you’d get leadership in the area (FGD2).

5.4.7 Centre culture

There were both explicit and implicit references to the centre culture or ways of operating at several times during the focus group discussion. These related both to the supportive climate with the belief that “the beauty of playcentre is that whole support network. People in positions such as president have a team supporting them. You’re never on your own. It is a safe environment – a good training ground for developing skills”. The “healthy emotional state of the centre” was also referred to (FGD2, 2004). Emergent leadership was also seen as part of the centre culture with the belief that “it’s both a cultural thing and also a really strong need to have people constantly turning over so we’re used to it” (FGD2). People who have been at playcentre for a long time are encouraged to stand back and “not dominate the culture” (FGD2). This encouragement of new leaders is seen as important for several reasons:

One reason is that new ideas are healthy, another is that by people realising that they are the ones who must make the decisions, people will make those decisions, and they thereby take responsibility for the centre. Importantly, people enjoy their experience more if they feel empowered, and the centre is then a happier place (FGD2).
Benefits for the centre culture in being part of the COI project were also expressed “the place feels really committed and intelligent. People are thinking about early childhood” (FGD2).

McLeod (2003) has referred to the influence the founder has on the culture of a centre. In the case of a playcentre this influence is likely to be that of a group rather than an individual. One centre member referred to “a core group who carry the reigning culture of the centre” (FGD2, 2004). The culture is passed on by new people “observing others, both in how to work with the children, and the degree of commitment to the centre” (FGD2).

5.4.8 Openness to change

Wilton Playcentre had not undergone significant change prior to or since becoming a Centre of Innovation; however there appeared to be an openness to both change and new ideas. Centre members openly discussed the areas they needed to work on that were highlighted in the first action research cycle, for example “we probably think that we read to our children a lot and all the literacy stuff was there but actually to have fresh eyes and to realize that our resources and our practices weren’t that good” (FGD2, 2004). This led to a new action research cycle focusing on “creating a more print-saturated environment, and through professional development and possibly videoing each other, will also try to improve our own questioning skills when we are interacting with the children” (Lowe, 2004).

5.4.9 Collaborative relationships

As well as strong collaborative relationships between centre members, relationships with people from outside the centre were seen as crucial. Of the centre’s two research associates, one had had a long-standing relationship with the centre that was characterised by “absolute trust” (FGD2, 2004). The research associate/centre relationship was seen as important in the centre’s decision to proceed with the application:

I wouldn’t have wanted to do this if I hadn’t really liked them and also respected their technical abilities. It was a big factor for me, I wouldn’t want to even if the research was really appealing, if we didn’t have the right people (FGD2).
The successful partnership with the research associates is illustrated by the following comments, “they were just perfect” and “they’ve been fantastic researchers for us to work with” (FGD2).

Relationships with Playcentre Association personnel and people in the local community are also seen to be important and have been formalised with an advisory group being set up to give advice to and support the centre. Networks with other playcentres and interested early childhood professionals have been encouraged through face-to-face discussions that have occurred as a result of presentations and also through the email network.

These findings illustrate how leadership is shared in this small parent cooperative centre through the promotion of a centre culture that encourages people to take on new challenges and share the responsibilities involved in running a centre and being a Centre of Innovation. Unlike New Beginnings Preschool, which made significant changes to the way it operated prior to becoming a Centre of Innovation, Wilton Playcentre has maintained their centre culture over a long period of time, continuing a tradition of professional development and involvement in playcentre training opportunities. Aspects of leadership significant to the playcentre context will be analysed in the following section.

5.5 A ‘leaderful’ centre

Two key areas of leadership emerge from this case study of leadership in Wilton Playcentre. These are leaderful practice, which involves leadership roles being shared by centre members, and emergent leadership, a principle that involves more experienced people standing aside to let new leaders emerge. The importance of emotional intelligence to effective leadership will also be explored in this section. The literature drawn on will include some specific to playcentre as well as some more broadly-based literature.

5.5.1 Illustrating leaderful practice

Harris’s (2003) concept of teacher leadership and Raelin’s (2003) concept of leaderful practice both seem to fit with notions of leadership enacted at Wilton Playcentre. Teacher leadership is based on the belief that “leadership potential is widely distributed among organisational members” (Harris, p. 46). Raelin’s model promotes concurrent,
collective, collaborative and compassionate leadership practice. Leadership practice is concurrent at Wilton Playcentre in that several people are demonstrating leadership at any one time; collective in that leadership emerges from all the centre members; collaborative in that everyone’s opinion and contribution counts; and compassionate in that the views of everyone in the group are considered and respected.

The journey the centre took in the lead-up to and after becoming a Centre of Innovation can be used to illustrate this sharing of leadership roles. As previously mentioned, the initial application to become a Centre of Innovation was led by one person. Her interest in assessment which had been stimulated by her teaching background, post-graduate study and involvement in the Exemplars Project inspired her to convince the centre to apply. Once the centre had been short-listed, the initiator realised that she was not the best person to persuade the centre to proceed with the application and the mantle of leadership passed to the then centre president. In the words of the initiator:

"I could see because of how I work and my own weaknesses, I could see that if I pushed it, it was going to fall over. I could see that (the centre president) was positive, she was on my side, she was on my team, she was playing for me and she had better skills than I had so I could let her be the captain. I trusted her there was going to be a fair process" (FGD2, 2004).

Other centre members give her credit for this withdrawal: “she did really well.... She managed to step back far enough to allow the centre to consider it” (FGD2). The centre president consulted with people from outside the centre in the process of “trying to figure out from as many sources as possible what they thought this would be like, the impact on our centre” (FGD2). These people from outside the centre including myself were used to help the centre in the decision-making process.

The meetings held at this time turned out to be important in allowing honest and open discussion. In the words of one of the centre members “we moved through what was a push by one person and not necessarily supported through to looking at the idea” (FGD2, 2004). Although this process was challenging for the person who had initiated the project she later saw the benefits:
There were questions that I found frustrating at the time but in retrospect I could see they were really valid and it's part of the reason that the project is working now is that ... we got really clear that the quality of the session for the children comes first and if the project begins to compromise that then the project's got to go. It was really important ... and that's part of the strength of the playcentre process (FGD2).

The cooperative nature of playcentre and the need for everyone to be involved in decision-making can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. The weakness is that it takes a lot of time and effort to get people on board. This is not unique to playcentre however; the difficulty of using consensus decision-making processes is also referred to by Scrivens and Duncan (2003) in a study of leadership in childcare centres in New Zealand. In the long term people feel more ownership when they are involved and have had a say as is shown by the following comment:

The way the project has panned out is much better than I could ever have imagined or done on my own. It's way beyond anything I could have managed on my own. Because everyone contributes, because everyone has bought in, because it utilizes people's strengths (FGD2, 2004).

5.5.2 Emotional intelligence in action

Emotional intelligence was mentioned as being an important leadership characteristic by one centre member. This fits with Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee's (2002) assertion that well-developed emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for effective leadership. This view is supported by several other authors who refer to Goleman et al's concept of emotional intelligence when discussing aspects of leadership (Bloom, 2003; Day, 2003; Fullan, 2003; Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon, 2000). In addition to social competence, the equivalent of the interpersonal expertise promoted in Rodd's (2001) leadership model, Goleman et al. stress the importance of personal competence which includes self-awareness and self-management. They suggest that unless leaders are aware of their own emotions, they will not be good at managing them in others or attuned to the emotions of others. This self-awareness was shown by the project initiator when she stepped back from a position of strong advocacy in the knowledge that her skills were not best suited to convincing other people to support the project. The other aspect of emotional intelligence described by Goleman et al. is social competence which includes social awareness and relationship management. The centre president at the time of the
application demonstrated two elements of this awareness in the way she showed empathy, sensing others’ emotions and understanding their perspectives and also in her organisational awareness which involved reading the situation and using networks. Her role is described by another centre member, “she’s got a real ability to just really listen things through and she can put herself aside and really hear and process the information and she did that really, really well, she listened to people’s concerns” (FGD2, 2004). This leadership style was important in helping the centre reach a consensus decision to proceed with the full application.

5.5.3 Embedding the innovation – emergent leadership in action
The passing on of the responsibility for the Centre of Innovation within the centre from a few to many was a gradual process. After the centre was chosen to be a Centre of Innovation, leadership roles were taken up by those involved in the management and communication teams and have now spread across the centre until the stage has been reached where “I think that most centre members have taken on a Centre of Innovation task, not just as part of the management team, but as field researchers, or in designing a workshop, or in presenting our research” (FGD2, 2004). This distribution of leadership relies on the principle of emergent leadership described by an experienced centre member as:

An important and articulated principle. That is, people who have held positions of leadership will encourage others who might not feel ready to take on leadership positions, and if the person does so, those experienced person (sic) will support them as they learn (FGD2).

The term emergent leadership, as previously mentioned, is attributed to Lex Grey, a president of the Auckland Playcentre Association in the 1950s (Goldschmidt, 1998). The rationale behind the concept, which involves more experienced people moving aside to allow newer members to take up leadership roles, is to ensure continuity of the group in the long term (Goldschmidt). With playcentre’s membership continually turning over, it is important that those experienced people in leadership positions empower newer centre members to take on responsibilities. According to Densem and Chapman (2000, p.171) “a good leader brings out the best in others, and appreciates that, just as he or she has been encouraged to learn and develop in a role, so he or she must be prepared to make way for someone else to have a turn”.

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The principle of emergent leadership relies on a degree of trust. As Goldschmidt (1998, p.40) suggests, “total trust that the group holds the power leads to group members tackling projects, learning skills and taking responsibilities quite outside anything they, their parents or the public would judge them quite ready for”. This culture of encouraging people to take on new challenges and responsibilities by standing back is expressed by one of the longer-serving centre members, “as an old timer said to me ‘always take on a job you can’t do’. Now that I am an old timer myself, I am very conscious not to dominate the culture and the new people by saying ‘this is the way we do it’” (FGD2, 2004). To quote Goldschmidt again, “the amazing thing about groups is that whatever is needed is always there. Emergent leadership allows the talent, the new idea, the support, whatever, to emerge” (p.42). Centre members indicated that they choose to take on new commitments with the comment “in a work situation you’re given the ability to lead a certain project ... are given the responsibility but here at playcentre you just take the responsibility yourself” (FGD2). Shared responsibility can be beneficial in that the load isn’t just on one person. As one centre member remarked:

The thing that I really like about it is having a sense of community and the responsibilities are kind of shared. You don’t have to feel that you’re indispensable because someone else will step up and do it if you can’t and if it is really important it will get done and if it doesn’t get done ... it's obviously not really important! (FGD2).

The principle of emergent leadership fits with Raelin’s (2003, p.43) assertion that in a leaderful organisation “when the need arises, any one of the members may emerge to fulfill a given responsibility”.

5.6 Summary

Leadership in Wilton Playcentre is shared between centre members with people taking responsibility for different areas according to their strengths and interests. Working in a parent cooperative can be challenging at times and taking on a leadership role requires courage. A high degree of emotional intelligence and excellent communication skills are also a great asset to those in leadership roles. Because people are working at playcentre in a voluntary capacity, those who put themselves forward to take on extra responsibilities are encouraged and supported. The principle of emergent leadership is a strong aspect of the centre culture and this has the effect of encouraging people to take
on new roles as the following comment illustrates: "it's that emergent leadership thing that if somebody says to you they think you can do this then it gives you confidence to give it a crack" (FGD2, 2004).

Leadership in Wilton Playcentre can be summarized by the following quote, which was also used by Wilton Playcentre in their research proposal to explain how leadership would be provided for their network:

In Playcentre, leadership depends on the support of the group; ideally everyone takes up some aspect of leadership. It is recognised that anyone working in Playcentre makes a considerable voluntary contribution. It is the democratic process that is basic to cooperation, and it demands maturity, openness of communication, consideration, and personal involvement at all levels (Densem & Chapman, 2000, p.55).
CHAPTER SIX
Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten – ‘making others aware of the possibilities’

6.1 Introduction
Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten offers a case study of leadership that has an outward focus. Teachers at the kindergarten see leadership as being about ‘making others aware of the possibilities’ and this mentoring approach to leadership will be explored in this chapter. Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten is situated in the Napier suburb of Onekawa South and is one of fifteen kindergartens operating under the umbrella of the Napier Kindergarten Association. Support is provided by the General Manager and Education Manager of the Association in a variety of ways. Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten operates five morning and four afternoon sessions a week with 30 children attending each session. In the afternoon sessions which are the focus of the Centre of Innovation research, one third of the children are Samoan, one third Maori and one third Pakeha. The kindergarten employs a teacher aide and a Samoan language support teacher in addition to their three full-time trained teachers, one of whom is funded through the COI programme.

The strong relationship with the local Samoan community that led to the centre becoming a Centre of Innovation will be detailed in the first section of this chapter. This will be followed by a discussion of findings from the focus group discussion and the primary documents. Finally, an analysis of the centre’s significant leadership role in various learning communities will be carried out with reference to selected literature.

6.2 The pathway to Centre of Innovation status
This section outlines the history of the relationship between Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten and the local Samoan community and how this has resulted in the kindergarten attaining Centre of Innovation status for its modelling of collaborative relationships. The decision to apply to become a Centre of Innovation and the kindergarten’s innovation and research question will also be detailed.
6.2.1 A long history of collaboration

The collaborative relationship between the kindergarten and the local Samoan community had its beginnings over 15 years ago in chats over the fence between teachers at the kindergarten and educators working at the then unlicensed playgroup, Upu Amata (Focus Group Discussion 3, (FGD3), 2004). Unlicensed playgroups are more informal settings than licensed centres and are only eligible for a small amount of Government funding. Upu Amata was at that time based at the Samoan Assembly of God church next door to the kindergarten. Over time the two centres realised that they both were committed to “providing the best for the community’s children” (Feltham, 2004, p.1) and they decided to work more closely together. The kindergarten provided a venue for Sunday school classes and also offered the Samoan children use of their playground in the afternoons. This encouraged Samoan parents to enrol their children at the kindergarten in the afternoon after spending the morning at Upu Amata.

The kindergarten adapted their afternoon sessions to allow for children from a wider age range to attend. According to an educator at Upu Amata whose children attended both services, there were many benefits for Samoan families in their children attending the kindergarten as well as the Samoan centre. These include improving the English language of both children and parents and also encouraging parents to learn different skills to promote good behaviour (Feltham, 2004).

In 2002, the head teacher of the kindergarten was seconded by the Ministry of Education to work as a ‘role-model’ trained teacher in a local Samoan language nest. This experience further strengthened understandings of Samoan culture and language and also strengthened links with the Samoan community. More recently the kindergarten, along with the Napier Kindergarten Association, supported Upu Amata to become a licensed Samoan early childhood centre and the head teacher of the kindergarten provides professional support on a weekly basis. The kindergarten teachers are learning the Samoan language with help from the Upu Amata and educators at Upu Amata help the kindergarten with translations from English to Samoan.

6.2.2 The appeal of research

The idea to apply to become a Centre of Innovation came originally from the head teacher who after reading the application thought “we do lots of this” (FGD3, 2004). The research aspects of the project appealed – as a participant reported “we just saw the word research and thought we’d like to do that” (FGD3). The teachers knew they were
doing something different and “had a lot of questions we wanted the answers to” (FGD3). Once the teachers mentioned the application to the Napier Kindergarten Association support and assistance were provided. This took the form of release time and help in writing both the expression of interest and research proposal. Both the full-time teachers working at the centre at that time contributed to the writing as did the Education Manager of the Kindergarten Association who became a joint project leader for the Centre of Innovation along with the head teacher from the kindergarten.

6.2.3 The innovation

According to the COI website “Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten fosters good relations, tolerance and appreciation of different cultures in the children, parents and whanau, provides bilingual learning experiences, uses IT in the curriculum, and builds a community of learners” (Ministry of Education, 2004c). The teachers at the kindergarten were particularly interested in researching how to best support successful learning outcomes for Samoan children. The overarching research question became ‘How can learning and teaching be improved for all children in the inter-cultural setting of the afternoon sessions at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten?’ (Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten newsletter, 2004).

6.3 Research findings

The research findings in this section draw on material from the focus group discussion with teachers from Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten (FGD3, 2004), the centre’s research proposal (RPWNTK, 2003) as well as an article in the *New Zealand Education Gazette* (Feltham, 2004).

6.3.1 What leadership looks like at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten

New Zealand kindergartens are traditionally staffed by either two or three qualified and registered teachers depending on the number of children enrolled. The three teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki all appear to work collaboratively with little differentiation between their roles. One person has the role of head teacher and she is also joint Centre of Innovation project leader. However, to her these titles just mean some added responsibilities such as always attending the COI hui and “I get to write the milestones” (FGD3, 2004). The teachers agreed that none of them were indispensable to the running of the kindergarten and that they worked as a team. The comment was made referring to
leadership that “it’s also very much a kindergarten thing that it’s a team” (FGD3). This comment refers to the accepted lack of hierarchy in a small kindergarten teaching team.

6.3.2 Notions of leadership

Responses to the word leadership from the head teacher included “making others aware of the possibilities” and “taking opportunities, rising to the challenge, risk taking and showing enthusiasm” (FGD3, 2004). Other team members agreed with the risk-taking elements and also saw leadership as something that happened within the team, “I suppose I am seeing it more as a leader guiding their team” (FGD3). Further discussion led to the teachers expressing a view that the head teacher had a particular project leadership role, something Meade (2003a) had written about. The head teacher saw this as just a title saying “that’s just something I write on the bottom of letters” (FGD3). Her view was that it was the centre that was leading rather than one individual. This was expressed in the following comments: “it’s the leadership of the centre leading the way to innovative practice for other centres” and “leadership is what you do in putting it out there” (FGD3).

Teachers expressed discomfort with the word leadership. They remembered reading Meade’s article on leadership in the COI and commented “she’d bandied us around with this word leadership and it was very frightening” (FGD3, 2004). This perception has changed slightly with teachers admitting that they were feeling slightly more relaxed about the term though one teacher said “I’m still scared”. She could see leadership happening by the centre but admitted “I would feel uncomfortable being/saying that I’m a leader” (FGD3). The term leadership also seemed to have connotations of competition as expressed in the comment: “by saying you’re a leader it’s ... like putting into a competition (sic) ... when it isn’t because every centre is run very differently ... their culture is different to another one so how can you compete?” (FGD3).

6.3.3 Vision, values and beliefs

The kindergarten teachers had articulated a clear vision of meeting the needs of the community through their innovation (Feltham, 2004). The belief that “Samoan children will achieve greater educational outcomes when they learn in a setting that embraces their culture and language” (RPWNTK, 2003) was an important aspect of this vision. The kindergarten had also clearly expressed the value it placed on relationships with parents and whanau and how it was committed to “provide an atmosphere where families/whanau feel comfortable, valued and welcome” (RPWNTK). The belief in the child as an active learner came through the research proposal as another key conviction.
6.3.4 Centre of Innovation leadership opportunities

Leadership opportunities that had arisen out of participation in the COI programme were similar to those in the other two COI. Meetings were mentioned as another new responsibility with the comment “I’ve never been to so many meetings before in my life as I’ve been to in the last 18 months” (FGD3, 2004). All three teachers had been involved in presentations to both local and national groups as part of COI requirements. The kindergarten celebrated attaining Centre of Innovation status with an event attended by kindergarten parents, people from the local Samoan and Maori communities, and Ministry of Education personnel at which they presented their innovation. This involved using PowerPoint and was a challenging introduction to dissemination. Reflecting back a teacher said “I don’t know why we started off like that. I wouldn’t do it again” (FGD3). Talking to visitors and other teachers about their innovation has definitely been a highlight of involvement in the COI, as one of the teachers commented “it would definitely be the people, the people we’ve mixed with” (FGD3). The enthusiastic reaction of a professional development network of teachers to the findings from the first research cycle was described as “a buzz, a real, real buzz” (FGD3).

6.3.5 Preparation for leadership roles

The response to the question about the support that existed for leadership roles was “we were thrown in at the deep end and we had to swim” (FGD3, 2004). Although there had been support for Centre of Innovation leadership roles from the Kindergarten Association and later from the research associates, the teachers had initially felt rather overwhelmed, particularly at the first hui for all the COL. When having to speak about their innovation in front of nationally known researchers, the reaction was “what am I doing here?” (FGD3). This feeling of being out of their depth subsided as the teachers got to know the other participants in the COI programme.

The kindergarten had been operating an internal review system for a number of years before becoming a Centre of Innovation and had “provided leadership to other teams in this area” (RPWNTK, 2003). They were also a founding member of the ‘Hawke’s Bay Teaching and Learning Stories Network’ and this involvement provided opportunities for them to discuss their practice with others. Professional development opportunities provided by the Kindergarten Association have included in-service courses on ‘stress management’ and ‘articulating your practice’. The teachers are also studying Samoan and two are studying for a qualification in teaching English to speakers of other languages.
6.3.6 Future leadership development

Suggestions as to what leadership development might be useful in the future included release time to come to grips with new responsibilities, new technology and also time to network. The teachers expressed a view that having someone in a mentoring role “just to be there to ask questions” would have been helpful when they were a new Centre of Innovation (FGD3, 2004). Even though both the Kindergarten Association Education Manager and Meade were very supportive, as were the research associates when they came on board, the teachers saw a gap which they would like to see filled for new COI. They were keen to offer support saying “we’re all wanting to help the next COI(s) that are coming through and give them that support that we never had and we haven’t had, and that we’ve had to find ourselves” (FGD3).

One of the teachers had heard about the leadership development offered to participants in the ‘Centres of Excellence’ programme in Britain. Dr Margy Whalley had discussed the design and theoretical underpinnings of the ‘Early Years Leadership Training Programme’ on a visit to New Zealand in September of last year (Whalley, 2003). The teacher thought something similar would be very useful, particularly if it helped prepare teachers to be researchers.

6.3.7 Centre culture

Centre culture was not referred to in any of the primary documents or in the focus group discussion. It appeared that because of the small teaching team and the collegial way they worked that their focus was on the relationships with people outside of the kindergarten team rather than within. This fits with the observations made in section 6.3.1 about a lack of hierarchy and the kindergarten ‘thing’ of working as a team.

6.3.8 Openness to change

Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten was flexible in the way they worked and open to new ways of doing things. Introducing the innovation took courage, as a participant stated: “there was many a time when we could have sat on our bum (sic) and said ‘it’s too hard, we’ll just be like how we’ve always been’, but we didn’t, we kept going” (FGD3, 2004). Flexibility was seen to be essential to strengthening the relationship with the Samoan community (Feltham, 2004). As part of the process of making Samoan children welcome in afternoon sessions, children were accepted regardless of age resulting in sessions where some children were under three and others were nearly five.
6.3.9 Collaborative relationships

Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten’s innovation is based on collaborative relationships with the Samoan community. As with the other two COI, collaboration is also a feature of other relationships – with research associates, parents, other kindergartens and the local school. Unlike the other two COI in this study, the kindergarten did not have a long-standing relationship with their research associates. One of them was the tutor of an extramural paper on English as a second language two of the teachers were enrolled in, and the other research associate was chosen, with direction from Meade, for her expertise in ECE. Despite the shorter duration of the relationship there is now a strong partnership based on a relationship agreement. Support given by the research associates is illustrated by the comment “they’ve held our hand haven’t they, well and truly” (FGD3, 2004).

Collaborative relationships with the wider kindergarten community can be illustrated by a description of the process the kindergarten went through in designing the kite (shown below) which is now a symbol of the project. The kindergarten had decided that they would like something tangible to represent the project and that they could give out to visitors as they had been given so many gifts from well wishers. The kite design is used as a logo on the kindergarten’s letterhead and small kites made of bamboo, flax, toitoi and shells are made by both parents and teachers. It became “a community project, there were many heated committee meetings discussions ... as to what it was finally going to look like and lots of people had a little go at trying to design something and the consultation to finally come up with something that was, that represented the project” (FGD3).

The kite is something the children and community strongly identify with and it is described as “very, very meaningful, meaningful to everybody” (FGD3, 2004). The teachers were very touched when a parent “surprised us ... she’d made us little brooch ones which we wear everywhere and she just brought them in as a special present for us to wear, these little brooches, it was just so special wasn’t it?” (FGD3).

These findings illustrate the importance the teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten place on meeting the needs of their community. Their commitment to the goal of supporting successful learning for all children has resulted in a strong outward
leadership focus and involves working collaboratively with various groups including parents, other kindergartens and the local Samoan community.

6.4 **A learning organisation showing the way**

The ambivalence shown by the teachers to being identified as leaders contrasts with their clear articulation of the leadership role taken by the kindergarten as a whole. This analysis section begins with a discussion on the perceptions held by the teachers in this Centre of Innovation about leadership and how these fit with the recent literature from the field. The kindergarten's leadership role in a number of different learning communities will be further analysed taking the position that these relationships involve a form of mentoring.

6.4.1 **Lack of identification with leadership**

The teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten were uncomfortable with being personally identified as leaders, as shown by the comments cited in 6.3.2. There was, however, some acknowledgement of the leadership role taken by the kindergarten. This perception of leadership as something that happens outside the centre fits with the literature discussed in 2.4.2. The comment about the competitive connotations of the word leadership indicated that it was viewed by the teachers in the kindergarten in terms of the traditional male models involving power and competition (Blackmore, 1999). The term leadership also had implications of responsibility with one teacher commenting "when you think leadership you think huge responsibilities, well I do. I think that's a lot ... I've only got little shoulders" (FGD3, 2004). Dubois Davey (2000) believes that this link between leadership and responsibility is one reason for those in ECE avoiding identification with the concept of leadership.

These teachers had taken on responsibilities that could be viewed as leadership roles but as Geoghegan et al. (2003, p.19) found, they were “unaware of the depth or breadth to which they manifest various leadership styles on a daily basis”. Dubois Davey (2000, p.181) cites Whitebrook (1997) who she says “points out that we frequently fail to identify for ourselves the leadership involved in being an effective teacher”. Even though these women had all been involved in advocacy through dissemination of their research findings and work in the community in addition to their teaching roles, they still felt uncomfortable identifying with the term leader. Rodd (2003) noted a similar
reluctance to identify with leadership roles among participants in a research study she conducted. However, she found that:

Once people understood how leadership was displayed in their work, they were able to articulate considerable insight into aspects of leadership in early childhood centres. But helping people understand initially that they were leaders who undertook leadership roles and responsibilities was the biggest hurdle to conducting an interview (as cited in Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003, p.22).

The participants in this study had already been identified as leaders by Anne Meade but interestingly the teachers saw this leadership as being specific to the head teacher and commented: “the way Anne Meade mentioned that you were the project leader and she’d mentioned you in particular and I think the way she did it was that you were bringing in the leadership qualities to take everyone along” (FGD3, 2004). The head teacher had quite a different view saying “leadership is what you do in putting it out there. That’s the leadership that I see that the Centre of Innovation’s done. And they see it in a completely different way” (FGD3). I made the suggestion that:

It’s not a concept we talk about much so I think that’s part of the reason people feel uncomfortable. It’s not that you’re not doing it .... All three of you are taking leadership roles, but it’s partly the title isn’t it? (Researcher, FGD3, 2004).

The response to this was “maybe it’s just the title then” and “yes”. This reluctance to identify with leadership could be linked to the humility shown by the level five leaders discussed in 4.4.2. When discussing the decision to apply to become a Centre of Innovation, the thought of personal recognition was obviously not a factor as is shown by the following conversation:

It had nothing to do with leadership. That was probably a component of it we hadn’t even thought of. Had you thought of leadership?

No, no it never entered my head.
And personal development, none of that sort of stuff really was part of it at all. It would never have formed part of it. We just saw the word research and thought we'd like to do that (FGD3, 2004).

Scrivens (2002) has advocated a re-conceptualisation of the notion of leadership so that it is more closely aligned with the way teachers actually carry out their leadership roles. She suggests that this may clear up some of the confusion about how leadership should be constructed and help teachers develop their own perspectives.

6.4.2 Collective leadership within learning communities

The way the teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten provide leadership can be aligned to Lambert’s (2003, p.2) understanding of leadership as “reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community”. This conception of leadership involves all members of a group taking leadership responsibilities as necessary. Raelin (2003) claims collective leadership promotes learning for the entire organisation. Some of the characteristics of learning organisations suggested by Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton (2004) that are relevant to Wycliffe Nga Tamariki and its collaboration with the Samoan community are that it is engaged in shared learning; that it is reflective and self-evaluating; and that it thinks broadly. Hartle and Hobby (2003, p.391) promote the need for “continuous innovation and adaptation” in relation to learning organisations. Both innovation and adaptation are certainly features of this centre.

The collaborative way Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten operates can also be linked with Wenger’s (1998) concept of ‘communities of practice’ in which learning occurs through interaction with others. Wenger describes three dimensions of communities of practice: mutual engagement of participants; joint enterprise; and a stored repertoire (p.73). The communities of practice to which the kindergarten belongs that fit these dimensions include the COI community, the Napier kindergarten community, the Samoan community and the local Onekawa South community. Lambert’s (2003, p.4) definition of community assumes “a focus on a shared purpose; mutual regard and caring; and an insistence on integrity and truthfulness”. These characteristics all seem to apply to the communities to which Wycliffe Nga Tamariki belongs.

Southworth (2002) suggests that the concept of learning organisations and communities of practice supports the development of ‘knowledge creating schools’. These schools would be characterised by identification, articulation, transfer and application of social
and intellectual 'capital'. This fits with the notion of the COI as leaders within the ECE sector and will be discussed further in the next chapter. According to Southworth, “such communities will encourage all members to be professional learners and to take responsibility for one another’s professional development” (p.13). This kindergarten as part of a community of learners can be seen as a place that learns as well as a place where learning occurs (Hartle & Hobby, 2003).

6.4.3 Mentoring through making others aware of the possibilities

The head teacher’s explanation of leadership as “making others aware of the possibilities” (FGD3, 2004) brings to mind the mentoring aspect of leadership. Crow and Matthews (1998) use the metaphor of a journey to explain mentoring. The mentor’s role in providing a map but not telling the mentee which route to take is similar to the idea of ‘making others aware of the possibilities’. Mullinix (2002) has suggested that mentors need to have a reputation as effective teachers; a clearly articulated vision of teaching and learning and an expressed educational philosophy. All these are clearly demonstrated by Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten. Mentoring is often seen as a process that occurs between individuals however many of the characteristics of effective mentoring relationships apply just as well to groups or communities. Some of the characteristics that fit the relationship between Wycliffe Nga Tamariki and Upu Amata are that it is collegial; ongoing; and that self-reliance is developed (Portner, 1998). The kindergarten has had a long-standing and collaborative relationship with the Samoan education and care centre and has supported it through the licensing process. One of the founders of Upu Amata has suggested “if we had not had this relationship, I don’t think we would be at the stage we are now, (licensed) because we have been supported all along” (Feltham, 2004, p.5). As already mentioned the kindergarten head teacher is providing ongoing professional support for the centre.

The relationship is of course mutually beneficial with the kindergarten learning from the Samoan centre as well. The relationship has been described by the head teacher as one of “trust and reciprocity” (Feltham, 2004, p.1). Reciprocal learning is increasingly being seen as an important aspect of an effective mentoring relationship (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, as cited in Pavia, Nissen, Hawkins, Monroe & Filimon-Demyen, 2003; Zachary, 2000). Mullinix (2002) suggests a number of benefits for teachers acting as mentors that are relevant to Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten. These include increased reflective practice; professional renewal; collaboration and collegiality; and contributions to teacher research and leadership. Mullinix (p.2) also suggests:
Mentoring can offer teachers the opportunity to shine and share where they might otherwise hesitate or hide. Innovators isolated in their classrooms who may appear threatening to their peers, are transformed into inspirational role models for new teachers and feel appreciated and are renewed through the process of mentoring.

Even though this quote refers to individual teachers, mentoring relationships can also allow communities of learners to share their practices with others. The kindergarten acts as a mentor in many of the communities of practice named in 6.4.2. Examples of this mentoring include the relationship the kindergarten teachers have with a group of early childhood teacher trainees from Upu Amata for whom they provided work experience before the centre became licensed. The students now come to the kindergarten on Tuesday mornings to work on their assignments “so we’re on hand if they have any questions, they can pop out and talk to us. Instead of sitting there mulling it over between them. If they’re not getting anywhere they can just ask” (FGD3, 2004). These students feed back what they have learnt to the other parents at Upu Amata. The kindergarten teachers are pleased that the students feel “comfortable coming into this environment” and describe the relationship as “part of that community of learners” (FGD3).

Other teachers in the Napier area are also being encouraged and supported by the kindergarten. On sharing the research findings at various network meetings the teachers have received comments such as “if you could do that we could do it too” (FGD3, 2004). The leadership provided through the Hawke’s Bay Teaching and Learning Stories Network and with other kindergartens in the area of self-review can also be seen as a form of mentoring.

6.5 Summary

Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten is providing leadership in a number of ways despite the reluctance of its teachers to personally identify with the concept. The focus of the kindergarten’s leadership is outwards rather than inwards as it works collaboratively mentoring other groups and individuals in its various communities of practice. The notion of “making others aware of the possibilities” (FGD3, 2004) offers a powerful insight into leadership practice in this centre. The kindergarten provides a
model of a learning community and a community framework is useful for contextualizing leadership in this Centre of Innovation. Lambert (2003) suggests people’s participation in leadership is influenced by how it is framed. Her notion that acts of leadership can be thought of as “doing what the community needs when it needs to be done” (p.4) fits well with the ‘community of learners’ approach at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten. Reframing leadership in this way may make the teachers more comfortable with their leadership role and hence assist them to develop their own conceptions of what leadership means in their context.

7.2 The role of programme coordinator

This section will explore how Anne Meade has shown leadership within the COI programme through her input into the design of the programme, her conceptual leadership, her facilitation of the networking between the six COI, and her mentoring role with the individual centres.

7.2.1 Shaping the COI programme

Meade (2005a, p.11) has described her programme coordinator role as “planning, sequencing and implementing the COI programme”. As part of this role she visited Great Britain in the lead-up to the establishment of the COI programme to do some “informal research” (MI, 2004) particularly looking at Centres of Excellence and Beacon Schools, projects similar to the COI programme. The insights gained from this visit were used to inform decision-making about the shape of the programme. The importance of having ‘buy in’ for the application from everyone involved in each centre.
CHAPTER SEVEN

COI Programme Coordinator – ‘providing another level of leadership’

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the leadership role and insights into leadership in the COI of Anne Meade, the COI programme coordinator. Meade has made a significant contribution to the ECE sector in the areas of policy development and research. Her pivotal roles have included the chairing of the Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group producing *Education to be More* (Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, 1988) and the Strategic Plan Working Group. These roles have given her a breadth of knowledge and a unique perspective on the sector as a whole. The first part of the chapter presents an overview of the leadership Meade provides in her role as programme coordinator. Much of the material in this section will be drawn from an interview with Meade (MI, 2004). In the second part of the chapter, Meade’s perceptions of notions of leadership in all six COI will also be explored through a discussion of her scholarly writing in this area. Comments from the interview transcript will be incorporated into the discussion and links made with findings from the three COI case studies.

7.2 The role of programme coordinator

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7.2.1 Shaping the COI programme

Meade (2003a, p.11) has described her programme coordinator role as “planning, sequencing and implementing the COI programme”. As part of this role she visited Great Britain in the lead-up to the establishment of the COI programme to do some “informal research” (MI, 2004) particularly looking at Centres of Excellence and Beacon Schools, projects similar to the COI programme. The insights gained from this visit were used to inform decision-making about the shape of the programme. The importance of having ‘buy in’ for the application from everyone involved in each centre
became obvious to Meade. The experiences of the British centres and schools revealed “the ones that have been really shaky and have had relationships disharmony, to put it that way, are those where people were not on board when they came in” (MI).

The application process to become an inaugural Centre of Innovation was designed to ensure that the innovations were embedded in the centres and the application was not the idea of one or two people (MI, 2004). The application process had two stages: an expression of interest which required centres to detail how they met certain criteria laid down for the programme; and for those short-listed centres, a more detailed research proposal. There was also a requirement for letters of endorsement to be sent from parents and teachers in support of the application. Meade visited all twelve short-listed centres. Part of the rationale behind the visit was “discerning whether reality matched the picture painted in the applications and in supporting evidence” (Meade, 2003a, p.4). There was flexibility in how the visit was organised, partly because the choice of who was involved in the day would indicate how involved the wider community was in each centre. Meade comments:

How that visit day goes is a bit indicative. Do they bring members of the management committee along? Do they introduce you to one or two people who are really important in their wider support network? All those sorts of things. So we were looking for that there was some indication of parental connect (MI).

The type of leadership evident in the centre was something else to watch for, as Meade explains:

We were looking out with a little bit of caution if somebody was: very autocratic leader because it doesn’t go with the whole theoretic and philosophical underpinnings of the programme. So if that had jumped out at us we would have been wary (MI).

A second reason for the flexible structure of the visit day was because the visit was seen to be an opportunity for Meade to assist the centres in addition to her assessment role. She explains:
I was doing a bit of an evaluation of what was going on there while I was there but in some cases I actually sat down and did an hour or two of quite intensive support work to help them with the research proposal and that is in part why I said ‘you set the agenda for the day’ (MI, 2004).

Meade’s brief was to provide descriptive information to assist the reference group in the process of selecting the inaugural COI. The group’s recommendations were forwarded to the Minister of Education who made the final decision. Meade was not involved in the selection, a separation of roles she sees as important to her position as programme coordinator.

7.2.2 Conceptual leadership
Meade has emphasised the significance of the coordinator’s role in providing a research base for the programme as a whole. She sees this as being particularly important in the initial years of setting up the programme. Meade describes an aspect of her leadership role as working “on the conceptual side” (MI, 2004). She goes on to say:

I’ve been trying to think about the programme as a whole and think about some of the goals and functions of it and work my way through that and try and make it so that it’s got a philosophic and theoretical underpinning to it that is compatible with what’s in the sector (MI).

The use of action research methodology within the COI programme is important in ensuring compatibility with current thinking in the sector. Meade et al. (2004) discuss three reasons why this is so:

1. Improvement is at the educational base of action research and the COI project is designed to “model and foster improvements in the quality of ECE” (p.3);
2. Action research fits well with the daily work of teachers and “draws on ongoing assessment and documentation processes” (p.3);
3. Action research could help align the COI initiative with the goals in Pathways to the Future (Ministry of Education, 2002a) and the principles of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996).
Theoretical thinking about the programme needs to be conveyed to both the COI and the wider early childhood sector. Meade (2003a, p.11) describes this facet of her role as working in collaboration with the COI “to weave together research on the effectiveness of innovative learning and teaching approaches” and fulfills it by writing papers and giving presentations. She has also set up an intranet for the COI on which she has posted articles and she frequently sends resources and up-to-date reading out to the centres.

### 7.2.3 Brokering relationships between the COI

An important aspect of the programme coordinator’s role is to foster collaborative relationships between the six COI. Meade et al. (2004, p.2) have described the collective COI as a “larger ‘community of inquiry’”. The significance of membership in the COI community was conveyed to prospective COI during the preliminary visit with the message that they “won’t be working in isolation, that there are some things we need to do as a programme, and that they’re part of a wider team” (MI, 2004). Networking began even before the COI were chosen when Meade arranged for the short-listed centres to attend a seminar on action research that was being held in Wellington. She describes this as “a chance actually to start meeting, and they started even then supporting each other, even though they were in competition with each other” (MI).

One of Meade’s roles is to help COI connect with each other as she explains “I will suggest at times that people go talk to somebody else in the programme because I know where the strengths are or who will be supportive as well” (MI, 2004). She comments that different people from the COI, both research associates and educators, have taken on leadership responsibilities in different areas depending on their skills and knowledge. Examples of this leadership include people providing expertise in ethics applications and technology for use in their research. Meade describes the hui held for COI twice a year as being really important for relationship building. This was confirmed by the COI I visited who talked about the benefits of meeting and networking with the other centres at the hui. They mentioned the value of sharing ideas (FGD3, 2004); and said that they have found it both interesting (FGD1, 2004) and affirming (FGD2, 2004) to hear about the research undertaken by the other COI.
7.2.4 Acting as a mentor

The support given by Meade to individual COI is a form of mentoring. She visits each centre twice a year to “talk things through, give feedback on how things are going” (MI, 2004). More frequent visits occur if there have been changes or issues that they have wanted advice about. When I asked Meade whether she would describe this support as mentoring she agreed that it was “in some respects”, adding in relation to the additional support “generally that’s the role of a mentor, they come up with their own solutions so yes I have seen the nature of my relationship like that” (MI). Support in between visits and hui is provided in the form of phone calls. Meade also provides detailed personal feedback on the quarterly milestone each Centre of Innovation submits to the Ministry of Education as part of their contract. She describes this feedback as “a mixture of mentoring – because I could do a very standardized letter – and of dealing with the contract management side” (MI). There are some areas such as giving presentations where she would have liked to provide more tangible support to the COI however she has had faith in their abilities and she has “tried to convey that to them ‘you can do it’ and they can, of course they can” (MI).

All three COI in my study mentioned that they appreciated the encouragement given by Meade with comments such as “she is very, very, supportive” (FGD1, 2004) and “by taking what you’re doing seriously, she’s been very supportive” (FGD2, 2004).

I suggested to Meade that her role as programme coordinator incorporated the three aspects of Rodd’s (2001) leadership framework – technical, conceptual and interpersonal expertise. She provides technical knowledge and skills through her theoretical and research expertise; conceptual ability through her overview of the programme; and interpersonal skills in the way she supports the individual COI and fosters collaboration between them. In response to this suggestion she reflected “I hadn’t seen it in that way but yes Rodd’s framework’s actually quite useful. I’ve got to induct someone else for round two coordination – here we go, here’s the framework” (MI, 2004).

7.3 Insights into notions of leadership

Anne Meade first linked the New Zealand COI to the concept of leadership. She has used several theoretical frameworks in her analysis of aspects of leadership in the COI. Some of these frameworks have been referred to in earlier chapters and others are new to this study. In this section I will discuss her writing with regard to two leadership
directions: ‘inside the COI’ and ‘beyond the COI’ (Meade, 2003a). I will make links with the relevant research findings from Chapters Four to Six and will also include material from my interview with Meade. A talk given by Meade to the Wellington College of Education ECE ‘Effective Leadership Network’ will also be referred to (Meade, personal communication, August 13, 2004).

7.3.1 Leadership inside the COI

Meade has made a distinction between the four centres (A’oga Fa’a Samoa, New Beginnings, Roskill South Kindergarten, and Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten) that have a designated leader and the two centres that have distributed leadership (Te Kohanga Reo o Paua Te Moananui a Kiwa and Wilton Playcentre). Although individuals are identified as project leaders, Meade (2003a, p.8) has suggested that “the majority of COI head teachers share in common their view that leadership in early childhood settings needs to be a shared approach”. This view certainly fits with my findings that the title of project leaders was for the most part just a title. Although the project leaders felt a greater responsibility in terms of attendance at hui and involvement in report writing, many of the internal and external aspects of COI leadership were shared. Sometimes this was as a result of head teachers “mentoring other team members” (Meade, 2003a, p.8) to take on these responsibilities. Meade described how an invitation is issued and then “the person who puts their hand up is mentored and supported to do it” whether it be public speaking or writing an article for a refereed journal (MI, 2004). Meade (2003a, p.8) also mentioned similarities between COI head teachers and Collins (2001) ‘Good to Great’ leaders who combine humility with professional will. She interpreted professional will as ‘professional staunchness’ and explained this as “staunchness to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult’. The resolve of the head teachers in challenging times was evident in my study. The Wycliffe Nga Tamariki head teacher’s determination to continue with the innovation rather than taking the easier path of staying as they’d always been (6.3.8) and the New Beginnings reflective thinking process and subsequent ‘breaking out of the container’ (4.4.1) both illustrate this professional staunchness. Meade’s comment that the leaders in the COI are continually pushing boundaries and asking “and what more can we do?” (personal communication, August 13, 2004) also fits with this determination.

The personal humility was described as acting with “calm determination” and relying on “high expectations, not inspiring charisma, to motivate” (Meade, 2003a, p.8). This
corresponds with the modest persona of the head teachers I met. Meade summarises their style in the following observation:

Some leaders are threatened by somebody saying ‘I can do that’ but I think all of the COI project leaders … have been able to accept and foster what’s in the team and not feel threatened, so they just look to the people, look to the process that is going to be effective. So I guess it’s a comment about leadership, there’s nobody with really big egos (MI, 2004).

Meade discussed the greater complexity of leadership roles in the two COI without designated head teachers. She commented that the leadership roles in the Kohanga Reo are shared by at least five people, both management and kaiako (MI, 2004). She suggested that this shared leadership is influenced by whanaungatanga, defined as relationship building by Macfarlane (2000), and Kaupapa Maori principles, described by Smith (1990) as “the Maori way of doing things; Maori control; Maori autonomy” (as cited in Glynn, 1998, p.5).

7.3.2 Leadership beyond the COI

One of the responsibilities laid down for the COI is “to share information with others in the early childhood sector about the innovative learning and teaching practices” (Ministry of Education, 2002b). Meade (2003a, p.10) described this dissemination role of the COI as modelling “pedagogical inquiry and action research in New Zealand contexts for other educational settings to learn from” and using “their knowledge and skills to be educational leaders horizontally”. She commented that this role of promoting change and improvement for others is “one of the most challenging things because they’ve got no … positional authority behind them. So it is a matter of finding ways” (MI, 2004). Meade suggested that the transfer of ideas from the COI to other centres may take the form of structural changes such as other centres picking up on the idea of employing a Samoan teaching assistant or using schema learning theory. She saw curriculum changes as a result of COI dissemination as being more problematic to implement because “it has to be something that you design for yourself if we’re true to the socio-cultural underpinnings that we have in this country in our curriculum. So it’s not a direct transfer thing and it can’t be philosophically” (MI).

The ways the COI have found to show ‘horizontal leadership’ according to Meade (2003a, p.10) have included “articulating vision, acting with integrity, effectively
communicating, acting as an advocate, coaching and so on”. Most of the COI began by working with their established networks which are obvious in the case of the kindergartens, playcentre, kohanga Reo and the Pasifika centre but not so clear for New Beginnings, the education and care centre. These networks have been extended as the centres have welcomed visitors, written journal articles and given presentations to groups outside their networks including international audiences. Meade has noted how broad the dissemination opportunities have become:

None of us appreciated at the outset how wide the outreach would be. All COIs have presented at national conferences inside of a year. As well, one COI has presented papers in Australia and England, a second has presented in Fiji, and a third has been invited to speak at a conference on the far side of the globe in England (Meade et al., 2004, p.2).

Meade has used several leadership frameworks, which have also been referred to in previous chapters, in her discussion of leadership shown by the COI. She has linked the COI to Southworth’s ‘learning-centred’ approach which suggests that leadership is about “helping colleagues make sense of their professional world” (2003a, p.11). Meade has suggested that this happens through centres researching effective education; introducing ideas likely to engage others; and “opening up opportunities for ECE centres to learn about different approaches from each other” (p.11). She also suggested that the COI programme is demonstrating Kagan and Bowman’s (1997) five ‘faces of leadership’ as follows:

- **Pedagogical:** interpreting theory and practice, and inspiring fresh thinking about pedagogical practices,
- **Administrative:** providing vision and direction,
- **Advocacy:** contributing to policy development,
- **Community:** educating and informing others in the community about the importance of ECE, and
- **Conceptual:** willing to open up new ways, challenge assumptions and think forward (Meade, 2003a, p.11).

Meade has also linked the COI to Rodd's key domains of educational leadership. She has noted that the COI are already planning and delivering effective curriculum;
beginning conceptual work and “caring for their communities” (2003c, p.2). These and other relevant frameworks of leadership will be referred to again in the final chapter.

7.4 Summary

Anne Meade has provided an additional level of leadership through her role as programme coordinator. Her leadership has helped shape the project and she has both supported and connected the individual centres together. Senge et al. (1999) have proposed a model of community leadership with three types of leaders: local line leaders, community builders and executive leaders. These latter two types of leadership seem to aptly describe Meade’s role as programme coordinator. Community builders or ‘network leaders’ participate in and nurture alliances, and ‘seed’ new ideas and practices, and executive leaders “create an organizational environment for continual innovation and knowledge generation” through the processes of mentoring and stewardship (Senge et al., p.18). Both these types of leadership, demonstrated by Meade, are important to the COI programme and are appreciated by the individual centres.

Meade also offers a unique perspective on leadership in the COI. Her long involvement in the ECE sector in a number of influential roles, and her position within the programme have given her insights into leadership both within and beyond the centres. She has described leadership in the COI as being concerned with high expectations, courage and determination, promoting change and sharing responsibilities. These views build on the insights gained from the case study chapters and contribute significantly to our understanding of notions of leadership within the programme. The following quote which concluded Meade’s contribution to the Convention Leadership Symposium seemed to offer an accurate view of leadership in the COI: “The picture we have created is not of leaders who lead and followers that follow. It is of leaders who empower, enable and enhance colleagues’ and parents’ actions to benefit children’s learning and development” (2003c, p.4).
CHAPTER EIGHT

Notions of leadership in the COI – courage, commitment and collaboration

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how leadership is defined and enacted in the COI. The research methodology chosen was a collective case study approach. Primary documents, focus group discussions and an interview were used to build up a picture of notions of leadership in these centres which have been chosen to showcase excellence and innovation (Ministry of Education, 2002a). The insights gained through this study show leadership in the COI to be enacted collaboratively within learning communities and to be characterised by courage and commitment. This concluding chapter will provide a summary of notions of leadership enacted within and by the COI. An analysis of leadership across all the COI with reference to the findings and literature begins the chapter. This is followed by a description of the key notions of leadership that emerged from the findings. These notions are discussed with reference to some of the models and frameworks of leadership discussed in Chapter Two, and a definition and model of notions of leadership in the COI is proposed. Possible implications of this research are discussed and suggestions made as to future directions for research and leadership development.

8.2 Cross-analysis – similarities and differences across the COI

This section analyses the differences and similarities between notions of leadership across the COI. Although only three of the six COI chose to participate in this study, Meade’s reflections and writing apply to all six centres and additional material from the non-participating COI was drawn on in the analysis process. This was limited in the case of Te Kohanga Reo o Paua Te Moananui a Kiwa as the brief description on the Ministry of Education website was the only written information that could be found. This scarcity of material could be due to the strong emphasis on face-to-face (kanohi ki te kanohi) dissemination in this Centre of Innovation discussed by van Wijk (2004). The aspects of leadership discussed in each case study, with the exception of leadership development which will be discussed in a later section, will be analysed across the centres with reference to relevant literature in order to reach some conclusions as to notions of leadership in the COI.
8.2.1 What leadership looks like across the COI

Leadership structures vary across the COI. As Meade (2003a) has mentioned, four of the centres have a designated head teacher and two have a structure of distributed leadership. In reality leadership appears to be more shared than hierarchical across the centres in the study. The most overt leadership of the three COI in the study appears to come from the head teacher at New Beginnings who, because of her larger team and the parent cooperative nature of the management committee, has a large and complex role (MI, 2004). Leadership in the playcentre is shared between parents with different people taking responsibility for different aspects of leadership. Leadership in the kindergarten is also shared between team members. These findings reflect the views of both Rodd (2001) and Scrivens (2003), who suggest that leadership varies between contexts and that there is more than one way to demonstrate leadership.

8.2.2 Notions of leadership

There was considerable variation within and across the centres as to their definitions of leadership. The head teacher at New Beginnings, who as mentioned above probably had the most complex leadership role, was clear that leadership was about direction and vision (FGD1, 2004). She was also comfortable with the word leadership. This contrasted with the teachers in her centre who were not sure how they felt about leadership and hadn’t really thought about it much. The teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki were uncomfortable about being personally identified as leaders however there was some acceptance that the kindergarten was providing leadership through “making others aware of the possibilities” (FGD3, 2004). These views fit with Geoghegan et al.’s (2003) study that identified a lack of awareness and some discomfort with the concept of leadership among teachers. This lack of awareness may be attributed in part to a lack of identification with traditional leadership roles as was mentioned in 2.4.1.

8.2.4 COI leadership opportunities

The head teacher at Roskill South identified leadership within her kindergarten when she aligned the kindergarten’s vision with Kagan and Neuman’s (1997) conceptual leadership model as part of a leadership story (Hatherly & Lee, 2003). This identification with leadership may be related to the kindergarten’s participation in the Educational Leadership Project, a professional development programme operating in the upper North Island, whose aims include to “develop professional and pedagogical leadership within the teachers themselves” (Carr, Hatherly, Lee & Ramsey, 2003, p.190). The head teacher and her colleagues have been identified as “leaders in learning within the wider professional community” (Carr et al., p.207) and as Rodd (as cited in Ebbeck &
Waniganayake, 2003) has mentioned, ensuring people understand they are leaders is crucial to them being able to articulate their leadership practice.

Of the three COI studied, the members of the playcentre were best able to articulate what leadership looked like in their setting. They were generally comfortable with the concept of emergent leadership, the principle of encouraging turnover in leadership positions, and were able to compare leadership in playcentre to other leadership experiences. This difference between playcentre and the other services could be attributed to the emphasis on leadership in playcentre training programmes and the workplace experiences of playcentre parents which provided a comparison with the playcentre context. The concept of shared leadership, which is conducive to a parent cooperative, fits with the literature that warns against connecting leadership with a role (Hard, 2004; G. Morgan, 1997; Waniganayake et al., 2000).

8.2.3 Vision, values and beliefs
All centres applying for the COI programme were required to provide philosophy statements that showed a commitment to their belief in children as active learners (Ministry of Education, 2002b). Shared visions, values and beliefs have been articulated by the three centres participating in the study in their primary documents and focus group discussions. Clear vision and beliefs are also detailed by Roskill South Kindergarten (Carr et al., 2003; West, 2003a) and A’oga Fa’a Samoa (A’oga Fa’a Samoa, 2004; West, 2003b). The importance of vision to effective leadership is emphasised in much of the literature (Day et al., 2000; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Lambert, 2003). Having a clear vision to work towards gives direction to the centre and encourages a culture of continuous improvement.

8.2.4 COI leadership opportunities
The ‘horizontal’ leadership opportunities arising from participation in the COI programme were very similar for all COI and involved giving presentations and writing papers and articles. These opportunities have been shared among the teams with all the study centres endeavouring to give everyone an opportunity to be involved in dissemination. The expectation that busy teachers will “write, develop online networks and talk to stimulate others in ECE centers to debate and try out new ideas in their practice” (Meade et al., 2004, p.2) is a challenging one and requires courage on the part of the centres. Advocacy outside the centre is an aspect of leadership that Rodd (1998) believes is neglected by many in leadership positions in the ECE sector. The COI
programme has certainly encouraged advocacy through the expectation that centres share information about their innovation with others.

8.2.5 Preparation for leadership roles
Most of the leaders and/or initiators in the COI had some relevant experiences outside their centres prior to being accepted into the COI programme. As Meade explains:

The ones that came through with the stronger expressions of interest and then applications turned out to be people who had had speaking, writing, or other experiences on top of their regular early childhood teaching experiences and part of the reason for the standout I think was that they had learned to articulate what it was they were on about through those processes (MI, 2004).

These experiences included people involved in post-graduate study (all three study centres and possibly others); participation in the Early Childhood Learning and Exemplar Assessment Project (two centres); involvement in professional development (five centres); and involvement in support work outside the centre (three centres). These experiences would have given the centres a broader perspective on their practices. To quote Meade again: “for those centres who have had that chance to go outside, gain another perspective and look back in on themselves they can articulate whatever it is they’re doing and make the points of differentiation between them and us” (MI, 2004).

Although the experiences described above helped the centres articulate their innovation, no one mentioned any formal leadership development and support opportunities, and individuals commented how they felt unprepared for some of the leadership roles they were expected to take, particularly the research and presentation aspects of the COI programme.

8.2.6 Centre culture
The importance of a collaborative and supportive centre culture was mentioned by the two COI in the study with larger teams. It seemed that teamwork was taken for granted in the kindergarten with the comment that in kindergartens, leadership is a ‘team thing’ (FGD3, 2004). Meade mentioned the importance of quick and effective communication in a two or three teacher kindergarten team. She commented that good team work was seen as a priority in Roskill South Kindergarten and revealed that the kindergarten had
actually suspended their research for a time while they inducted a new teacher to enable them to “gel as a team” (MI, 2004). Meade also commented that although they made team work look easy, it was “the result of a hell of a lot of hard work and absolute in-depth understanding of Te Whaariki in action” (MI).

The cultures of different centres are influenced by service-specific features such as philosophy and management structure as well as by center-specific features such as the personnel working in the centre and the community they serve. Despite these contextual differences, there are strong similarities between the centre cultures in the COI. They all seem to correspond with Nias, Southworth and Yeoman’s (1989) description of collaborative cultures that are characterised by behaviours, attitudes and qualities of help, support, trust and openness (as cited in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Collaborative cultures tolerate and to some extent encourage disagreement. They also respect and celebrate individual teachers and thereby empower them. The importance of leadership in promoting strong organisational cultures was discussed in 4.4.3 and was reinforced by Meade. She linked this with innovative practices saying “to have actually introduced an innovation and to get it accepted and embedded demonstrates that that’s in the culture of the place and somebody’s got that leadership ability to make it happen” (MI, 2004).

8.2.7 Openness to change

Openness to change is a characteristic of the three study COI and also comes through in the information available on Roskill South Kindergarten and A’oga Fa’a Samoa. These two centres have both made major shifts in practice linked to their vision, values and beliefs. For Roskill South Kindergarten, shifts in assessment practice have been made leading towards “a manageable and meaningful framework for assessment” (Carr et al., 2003, p.196). The educators at A’oga Fa’a Samoa were challenged when parents approached them about taking a younger group of children. Meade comments that:

They really had to push their own boundaries on thinking it through, researching, reading, studying and they did all of those things before they did act and say all right we’ll extend what we’re doing and we’ll have some under twos as well (MI, 2004).

Meade describes how in general the COI “push themselves out of their comfort zones ... and it’s usually in response to something either for educational benefit or to benefit the families in some way” (MI, 2004). Meade has also observed that the changes made
by the COI have been carefully thought through, “if something is presented to them as a pretty important step to consider taking they’ll give it a go but they won’t just plunge in, they’ll do it in a very considered way” (MI).

8.3.1 Courage, commitment and collaboration

The openness to change noted in the COI can be linked to the collaborative nature of leadership in these centres. Wilson-Evered, Dall and Neale (2001, p.63) found that “supportive leaders who develop a participative decision-making style will increase support for new ideas among individual members of work groups by increasing their morale and increasing support for team objectives”. Senge et al. (1999) agree with the importance of a collaborative leadership style suggesting that there is little evidence that ‘hero-leaders’ have any significant success in implementing change because this top-down drive disempowers others in the organisation. They add “shared commitment to change develops only with collective capability to build shared aspirations” (p.9).

8.2.8 Collaborative relationships

Collaborative relationships are clearly a feature of the COI programme. Podmore (2004, p.193) has noted that “interpersonal and cooperative aspects of leadership” were emphasised in the COI application documents. In addition to the examples given in the case study chapters, there is evidence that collaborative relationships between teachers, parents, researchers and wider communities are a feature of Roskill South Kindergarten and A’oga Fa’a Samoa as well. Roskill South Kindergarten’s 2002 ERO report states that “the relationship between teachers and parents is an outstanding feature of this kindergarten” (in Carr et al., 2003, p.202) and the teachers have publicly stated how they value the involvement of parents in the documentation of their children’s learning (West, 2003a). A’oga Fa’a Samoa’s innovation involves a close link with the bilingual Samoan class at the local school (A’oga Fa’a Samoa website, 2004) and the importance of families belonging and being involved in their children’s learning has been emphasised (Taouma, Wendt-Samu, Podmore, Tapusoa & Moananu, 2003; West, 2003b).

8.3 Key notions of leadership in the COI

Although leadership is enacted in different ways across the COI programme, consistent with the contexts in which the individual COI operate, some clear notions of leadership emerge from this study and these will now be described and discussed. These notions will be compared with some of the leadership models and frameworks described in the
review of literature in Chapter Two. A definition and a model of leadership in the COI will then be proposed.

8.3.1 Courage, commitment and collaboration

Courage, commitment and collaboration were three key notions to emerge from this study into leadership in the COI. Courage is an aspect of leadership that applies to both leadership within and leadership beyond the COI. In order to introduce and embed an innovation, individuals and centres have had to challenge themselves and their beliefs. Bravery is also required to open your centre up to the scrutiny of others. According to Meade (2003b, p.6), “sharing ideas with others when still researching and developing them requires courage”. Teachers at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten described leadership as being about taking risks and rising to the challenge. Meade agrees when she describes COI as doing “some things that really have pushed them out of their own comfort zones and yet they've done it” (MI, 2004).

Public speaking took courage and was described as nerve wracking by several educators. Meade observed a member of A'oega Fa'a Samoa visibly shaking as she presented at a conference:

You could see her skirt was shivering, you could see her shaking before your eyes but she did it, she did it. I mean it was just fantastic. She was an absolute wreck in terms of emotions but she did it (MI, 2004).

Courage as a significant aspect of leadership is also mentioned in some of the literature. Grey (2004), in a study of the role of the leader in centre self-review, found that courage and honesty needed to be shown by those in leadership positions for self-review to be effective. The importance of leaders being willing to take risks has emphasised by Bloom (2003) and Kagan and Bowman (1997), and Kagan and Hallmark (2001) and Scrivens (2000) have both emphasised the need for leaders to be courageous.

All the COI have visions, values and beliefs, discussed above, to which they are committed. This commitment, which takes various forms, involves doing what is best for the children attending the centres and their families. A recently graduated teacher from New Beginnings described the “commitment and dedication to doing quality practices” (FGD1, 2004) at her centre. This commitment is not just related to being a Centre of Innovation but is ongoing. Teachers at New Beginnings Preschool commented “this isn’t
put on for the Centre of Innovation ... we were like this before we were chosen” (FGD1). The dedication shown by the COI has been noted by Meade: “I started off feeling really pleased about them but I have just become increasingly respectful and have got a lot of admiration for what they’re doing over the time” (MI, 2004).

Leadership in the COI studied for this research was collaborative with leadership roles and responsibilities being shared between team members. This collaborative style of leadership was part of the culture of each centre and resulted from the willingness of the designated leader to encourage and support the leadership experiences of others. Waniganayake et al. (2000, p.18) suggest that this style of leadership “offers increased vitality and strength to the whole organisation”. Although individuals took defined leadership roles at certain times, for example in the initiation of the COI applications, decisions were made jointly and everyone was encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities. Meade gives a wider perspective commenting “it was a very genuine and valid comment in their initial papers that they were putting in to the Ministry that they work collegially, that they worked as a team and that’s been demonstrated since in every case” (MI, 2004).

Collaborative leadership in the COI fits with the findings from the unpublished Best Evidence Synthesis into the effects of leadership on early childhood services (Scrivens, 2004). Scrivens (p.10) cites Johanssen (1997) who suggests that learning and teaching is improved by “the development of a pedagogically focused teaching culture that encourages co-operation, collaboration and pleasure in professional work”. This fits with the collaborative cultures described above and also with the passion and enthusiasm of the teacher leaders in the COI which will be explored further in the next section. Scrivens also found evidence that “horizontal management styles encourage staff to work more closely together and work more collaboratively with parents” (Lara, McCabe & Brooks-Gunn, as cited in Scrivens, p.10). This relates to the concept of distributed leadership which was evident in the study centres.

8.3.2 Analysis of notions of leadership in the COI with reference to existing models

Leadership in the COI programme can be linked with several of the early childhood models of leadership referred to in Chapter Two. Meade (2003a; 2003c) has already discussed Kagan and Bowman’s (1997) and Rodd’s (2001) leadership models in relation to the COI as has Podmore (2004). Leadership in the COI does involve the community, pedagogical, administrative, advocacy and conceptual leadership in Kagan and Bowman’s model and the pedagogical, conceptual and interpersonal leadership in
Rodd's model but these frameworks do not explain the collaborative nature of leadership in the COI or place enough emphasis on the importance of learning to leadership. Kagan and Bowman's model as previously mentioned ignores the importance of emotional intelligence and even Rodd's model focuses only on the interpersonal rather than the intrapersonal aspect of Goleman et al.'s (2002) framework.

The contribution distributive or shared leadership makes to the strength of an organisation is acknowledged by Waniganayake et al. (2000). Collaborative leadership is also supported by Geoghegan et al. (2003), whose educational leadership framework includes feminist and shared leadership and by Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003, p.35) who promote a “participatory and decentralized approach to leadership” in which people can lead in their areas of expertise. The fact that there is some discomfort shown with the concept of leadership by educators working in the COI may be due to the fact that the models they are familiar with promote individual rather than distributive leadership. Playcentre members were familiar and comfortable with the concept of emergent leadership and saw that leadership was shared in different ways.

Of the models from outside the ECE sector, Harris and Lambert's (2003, p.2) suggestion that leadership is about "learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" gives a broad framework that fits the 'community of learning' approach of the COI programme. This model of leadership separates leadership from individual roles and embeds it within a community. According to Lambert (2002, p.37), “everyone has the right, responsibility, and ability to be a leader”. The concept of teacher leadership (Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003) fits well with notions of leadership in the COI. Harris (p.46) suggests that teacher leadership “engages all those within the organisation in a reciprocal learning process that leads to collective action and meaningful change”. Lambert's (2003, p.33) description of teacher leaders as “those whose dreams of making a difference have either been kept alive or have been reawakened by engaging with colleagues and working within a professional culture” fits with the passion and enthusiasm shown by those working in the COI.

These distributed models of leadership do not mean that there is not also a place for formal leadership roles. According to Harris (2002, p.2), “the job of those in formal leadership positions is primarily to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship”. This view supports the comment made in the playcentre discussion that the president's role was not to make decisions but to ensure that
decisions got made (FGD2). Positional leaders also have an important influence on the organisational culture of the service. Leaders who promote and model respectful and collaborative relationships, and provide support and mentoring, encourage their colleagues to become involved in the leadership of the centre. The amount of direction given by those in formal leadership positions may depend on the composition and maturity of the group (Scrivens, 2003). There is less guidance necessary in a group of three trained and experienced kindergarten teachers (as at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten) than there is in a team of ten teachers, some of whom are recent graduates (at New Beginnings Preschool). The type of positional leadership shown in the COI can be linked with Collins’ model of level five leadership where the leader is modest, yet very focused on what is best for the organisation (refer 4.4.2).

8.3.3 Defining leadership in the COI

Several authors have suggested that a definition is necessary to an understanding of leadership (Bowman & Kagan, 1997; Hard, 2004; Lambert, 2003; Scrivens, 2002). As a result of this study, leadership in the COI can be defined as working collaboratively in a learning community towards a shared vision. This requires courage and commitment. The diagram below presents a model of notions of leadership in the COI.
The leadership characteristics of courage, commitment and collaboration are enacted in the COI within the framework of a learning community and a collaborative culture. The centres were all committed to providing a quality service for the children attending the centre and their families. They had discussed and articulated clear visions, values and beliefs and had shown courage in the way in which they rose to the challenges of introducing and embedding an innovation and sharing this with others. The COI all worked collaboratively with the groups in their learning communities including parents, researchers and colleagues.

8.4 Implications for leadership in the ECE sector

The findings from this study exploring notions of leadership in the COI cannot be generalized beyond the COI programme, however we can learn from the notions of leadership defined and enacted by these centres which have been recognised as being of high quality. The study findings, that leadership is concerned with working collaboratively in a learning community towards a shared vision, contribute towards an improved understanding of “the contributing values, behaviours and assumptions” of the cultures of excellent centres suggested by Hatherly (1997, p.63) and what leadership might be like “within a professional community of learners framework” (Scrivens, 2004, p.19).

This study has highlighted a lack of clarity about educators’ understandings of leadership, and a lack of support for leadership development. Although leadership is definitely being shown within and by these quality centres, this needs to be acknowledged and articulated. As Lambert (2003, p.4) has indicated, “how we define leadership frames how people will participate in it”. The definition developed in this study could provide a starting point for others to consider. Any broader definition needs to be inclusive of the way leadership is enacted in different services and also needs to promote the concept of collaborative leadership.

This research has implications for both teacher education and professional development programmes. If collaborative leadership is to be promoted then teacher education programmes need to encourage an acceptance that leadership is something that everyone can be part of. Rather than viewing leadership as something that is solely the responsibility of those in positions of head teacher or supervisor, new graduates need to be challenged to develop as teacher leaders. As Lambert (2002, p.37) has suggested, “leadership is an essential aspect of an educator’s professional life”. Those already in
leadership positions need to engage in ongoing professional development opportunities that encourage them to reflect on frameworks and models of leadership and to consider their role in promoting collaborative cultures in which teacher leadership is encouraged.

8.5 Ideas for supporting leadership development

This study revealed a lack of support for leadership development in both preservice and professional development programmes. A variety of suggestions were made across the COI for future leadership development programmes. These included leadership development for all teachers, particularly as professional leadership is one of the criteria for teacher registration, and support from mentors. Strategies for supporting leadership need to encourage the development of distributed or teacher leadership. The evidence that this collaborative style of leadership is influenced by the support and encouragement provided by those in designated leadership positions also needs to be taken into account in planning leadership development. Mentoring and formal opportunities for reflecting on models of leadership and emotional intelligence are both important aspects of leadership development.

8.5.1 Mentoring

Both the literature (Bloom, 2003; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Senge et al., 1999; Smith, 2005; Southworth, 2002) and the research participants promoted the value of mentoring relationships as part of leadership development. Meade has acted as a mentor to the COI but this aspect of her role was restricted by limited time and funding. Mentoring support to enable those in leadership roles to develop their own skills and to learn how to effectively mentor others is vital for the sector. Mentoring programmes exist for the compulsory education sector in New Zealand as part of the ‘First-time Principals’ Induction Programme’ delivered by the University of Auckland Principals’ Centre. This programme focuses on “improving educational leadership and supporting new principals as educational leaders” (West, 2003c) and currently involves 22 mentors and 200 principals. A more personal approach with one-to-one service-specific mentoring partners may work better in the ECE sector.

Mentoring programmes already developed for the ECE sector need to be explored to see how they could be adapted for national use. A mentoring programme for ECE teachers has been operating in California since 1988. This comprehensive programme provides training for experienced teachers who wish to mentor new teachers. An initial
A training course is followed up with ongoing training and professional development and the programme involves the supervision of student teachers (California Early Childhood Mentor Programme, 2004). I have been involved in developing a mentoring programme for the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association which is to be implemented in 2005. Twelve experienced head teachers have taken part in a mentoring training programme and they will form partnerships with up to twelve newer head teachers in the Kindergarten Association. The mentoring relationships in this programme will be based on mutual trust, respect and professionalism and it is expected that the mentors and mentees will learn from each other. This type of programme may be suitable for use in the early childhood sector if funding was available from the Ministry of Education to cover the cost of training and to compensate the teachers for their time. The benefits for prospective mentors mentioned in 6.4.3 include professional renewal, and contributions to teacher research and leadership, both of which could benefit the sector as a whole.

**8.5.2 Study opportunities**

Formal study opportunities that promote aspects of teacher leadership such as reflection, inquiry and self-assessment (Lambert, 2003) are crucial for those working in the field of ECE. Rodd (2001) has promoted the development of conceptual and interpersonal expertise as the key to realising leadership potential. Her suggestions for developing conceptual expertise include a focus on critical thinking, goal setting and articulating a vision. The aspects of interpersonal expertise she believes to be important include emotional literacy and reciprocal communication. Other authors have promoted the importance of developing self-awareness and self-reflection as part of leadership development programmes (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Goleman et al., 2002; West-Burnham, 2003). Day et al. (2000) have advocated leadership training which focuses on values analysis; reflective thinking; intrapersonal and interpersonal skill development; and problem solving. Fullan (2003, p.454) has discussed the importance of relationship building with diverse groups as part of leadership development and suggests that “emotional intelligence is equal to or more important than having the best ideas”.

The need for post-graduate study is emphasised by McLeod (2002, p. 261) who notes that a diploma level qualification, the minimum recognised qualification for early childhood teachers, marks “the beginning of a teaching career not a supervisory one” and that “continuing professional development that encourages deeper levels of reflection, and understanding should follow, particularly in the form of post-graduate..."
study in the field of leadership and management”. Meade (MI, 2004) also considers post-graduate study that involves reflection on principles and frameworks of leadership to be an important aspect of leadership development. She mentioned the Government supported leadership development programme that was set up for the Centres of Excellence in Britain as a worthwhile model to consider. This programme, which is seen to be equivalent to what is available to school leaders, offers a range of leadership development opportunities including leadership and management support, network meetings and modules, and can lead to a MA in leadership and management (Whalley, 2003). Thorpe and Gasper’s (2003) study into the support provided by this programme found that the most valuable aspects were mentoring and networking with other teachers. They also noted the deeper reflection and greater confidence shown by teachers who had completed the study modules. Bloom and Bella (2005), in a discussion of the impact of leadership training initiatives in the State of Illinois, reported that participants experienced a sense of empowerment, an increase in their advocacy roles, and a shift in priorities from day-to-day management tasks to broader leadership challenges. Bloom and Bella have proposed a number of key elements that serve as a framework for planning effective leadership development programmes. These include basing the programme on participants’ assessed needs; focusing on the role of the leader as change agent; providing opportunities for collegiality and networking across different ECE services; and ensuring follow-up training is available.

The Ministry of Education needs to be offering leadership development programmes for early childhood services equivalent to what is offered to the school sector. This action would help meet the promise made by the current and previous Labour Governments of giving ECE equity with other education sectors (Department of Education, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2002a). The programmes that already exist for school principals could be tailored to fit the collaborative way in which early childhood services operate. Some small-scale programmes already operating as part of Ministry of Education funded professional development contracts may provide a blueprint to be followed. Scrivens (2004) has suggested that an evaluation of the Educational Leadership Programme, discussed in 8.2.2, would be useful. This project aims to develop “a pool of leaders” (Carr et al., 2003, p.209) who can share their experience, energy and enthusiasm in the field of assessment and curriculum. This approach aligns with the concept of teacher leaders discussed above and the stories told by participants in the lead centres in the programme certainly show their commitment and enthusiasm (Hatherly & Lee, 2003). This project also promotes a community of learners approach by clustering groups of teachers (Carr et al.).
into this project would contribute towards meeting a research question suggested by Scrivens: “What will leadership ‘look like’ for early childhood leaders working within the framework of an extended community of learners?” (p.19).

Rodd (2001, p.12) has suggested that “the tools to untangle and capture the complexity of leadership have yet to be accessed by researchers”. She does, however, recommend further exploration into leadership development as does Scrivens (2004). Research into existing leadership development programmes such as the Educational Leadership Programme and mentoring programmes would add to our understanding of what training and support is most useful for leadership development.

8.6 Conclusion

When I began this study into notions of leadership in the COI I had an expectation of finding leaders who motivated and inspired their teams in their Centre of Innovation roles and responsibilities. What I found was leadership in the collective sense, leadership that is characterised by courage, commitment and collaboration. The innovative approaches of the COI appear to be due in no small part to the collaborative centre cultures in which innovation is encouraged, educators feel valued and supported, and there is regular reflection and a commitment to continuous improvement. Those in leadership positions in the COI have promoted these collaborative cultures and through their example teacher leadership has been encouraged. The model of teacher leadership, which is a feature of the COI, needs to be encouraged in the whole ECE sector to ensure that teachers working with young children work collegially, are committed to quality practices and maintain their dedication and enthusiasm. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003, p.446) “leadership must be embedded in the hearts and minds of the many, and not just rest on the shoulders of an heroic few”. Those responsible for teacher education and the development of leadership support programmes need to work towards ensuring this statement becomes a reality.

The COI not only provide case studies of educative leadership (Meade, 2003c) but also case studies of learning communities. Bloom (2003, p.55) has defined learning communities as places where “collective aspirations are set free, new patterns of thinking are nurtured, and the organisation expands its capacity for constructive and innovative problem solving”. These learning communities include not only the educators but also the parents, researchers and members of the wider community.
Leadership as defined and enacted in the COI is a shared endeavour and this model of working collaboratively in a learning community towards a shared vision is one that the rest of the sector can learn from.

This research was carried out in the middle of the three-year term of the inaugural COI programme and provides a snapshot of how leadership was defined and enacted by the centres in the programme at this time. Processes of educational leadership were suggested as a possible focus for the second round of COI and educational leadership has been announced as part of the research focus of two of the recently selected round two COI (Ministry of Education, 2004b). We can therefore look forward to continued research into notions of educational leadership in the COI over the next three years. It is to be hoped that both this study and future leadership research will contribute to a greater recognition of the importance of leadership and leadership development. This will have benefits for the ECE sector in New Zealand as a whole. To quote a Chinese proverb:

“If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow forests. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow leaders”

Reference List:


100


Wilton Playcentre. (2002). Expression of interest submitted as part of centre of innovation application.


Dear Reference Group members,

I am writing to you concerning my proposed research into notions of leadership in early childhood education focusing on the Centres of Innovation. The research would be part of the study towards my M Ed degree which I will be completing this year with Victoria University of Wellington.

I would like to focus on leadership within the Centres of Innovation provide a unique opportunity for research into educational leadership. I am aware that the COIs are looking for guidance in terms of involvement in outside gain benefits both educationally and also included some possible benefits for individual COIs.

APPENDICES

Benefits for the COI

- Would assist in sharing knowledge practically to share knowledge and practice within the early childhood sector.
- Would highlight the leadership role that current COI have within the national scene. This would assist other centres aspiring to become COI in the next round to reflect on leadership models and practices (Meade, 2003, p.2).
- Would provide opportunities for the enactment of leadership within each COI to become visible. Diverse approaches to leadership would be explored, a strength of early childhood education according to Kagan & Bowman, (2001).

Benefits for individual COIs

- A further avenue for dissemination of practices and research.
- An opportunity to reflect on leadership practices through a focus group discussion.
- Would provide documentation of some of the multiple responsibilities the personnel in the COI have in the course of their term.
- Centres would receive an overview of academic discussion about leadership including a literature review against which their own statements about leadership would be contextualized.
Dear Reference Group members,

I am writing to you concerning my proposed research into notions of leadership in early childhood education focusing on the Centres of Innovation. The research would be part of the study towards my M Ed degree which I will be completing this year with Victoria University of Wellington.

I would like to focus on leadership within the Centres of Innovation provide a unique opportunity for research into educational leadership. I am aware that the COIs are looking for guidance in terms of involvement in outside ... explain what benefits both for individual COIs and the project as a whole. I have also included some possible benefits for the wider early childhood sector.

Benefits for COI project

- Would assist centres in meeting objectives of COI initiative, specifically to share knowledge, information and models of practice with others in the early childhood sector.
- Would highlight the leadership role that current COI have within the national scene. This would assist other centres aspiring to become COI in the next round to reflect on leadership models and practices (Meade, 2003, p.2).
- Would provide opportunities for the enactment of leadership within each COI to become visible. Diverse approaches to leadership would be explored, a strength of early childhood education according to Kagan & Bowman, (2001).

Benefits for individual COIs

- A further avenue for dissemination of practices and research.
- An opportunity to reflect on leadership practices through a focus group discussion.
- Would provide documentation of some of the multiple responsibilities the personnel in the COI have in the course of their term.
- Centres would receive an overview of academic discussion about leadership including a literature review against which their own statements about leadership would be contextualized.
Benefits for the early childhood sector

• Would contribute to the ece sector’s understanding of notions of leadership.
• Would contribute to raising the profile of leadership and highlighting the importance in leadership in the sector.
• Would contribute to leadership development as signaled in the strategic plan by supporting exploration into training and development needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Kate Thornton
Focus group discussion questions

Notions of leadership within the application process (advance thinking)

• How was the decision made in your service to apply to become a centre of innovation?

• Was there encouragement for your application from outside your centre? What form did this take?

• Who was involved in leading this process? What different leadership roles were involved and how were they shared?

General notions of leadership (perceptions)

• What comes to mind when the word leadership is mentioned? How comfortable are you with that term?

Leadership within each centre of innovation

• What leadership roles exist in your centre? How do they work? In what ways is leadership shared within your centre?

• Have any new leadership opportunities arisen (both within and outside of the centre) as a result of your centre being chosen as a Centre of Innovation? What form have these taken? (presentations/opportunities for advocacy)

Support for leadership roles

• What leadership training, professional development or other experiences have you had as individuals or a centre to prepare you for this?

• What support/mentoring have you had in developing your leadership roles?

• What further resources/support would have been/would be useful to you in your leadership roles?

Have we missed anything?
Is there anything else people would like to add?
Questions for Anne
Exploring your perceptions of leadership within and by the COI
(Some follow up of your writing and some checking of my own observations)

Leadership in relation to the selection of COI

• You commented in your Pen Green address that most head teachers had already done some public speaking and some had already written papers at the time of application. I have noted that the leaders/initiators of the COI applications from the centres I have talked to, all had opportunities/experiences outside their centres (masters study, exemplars, outside work) that may have given them a different perspective/opened up the possibilities. How significant do you believe this experience to be?
• Have you any other comments on the contribution or influence that leadership within each service made to the selection of the COI?

Leadership within the COI

• You have commented on the different leadership approaches across the COI. Have you any thoughts about the impact these different approaches may have had on the COI programme within each centre?
• All the leaders in the COI in my study have educator roles and work alongside other educators rather than just in management roles. Do you consider this to be significant?
• You have mentioned that you have observed COI leaders in mentoring and advocacy roles. Can you tell me more about this? (Some COI had their own personal/professional friends).
• You have written about the significance of the research associate/centre relationship. Collaborative relationships (that is between teachers, between research associates and teachers and between parents and teachers) seem to be extremely important in all the COI. How important do you believe these relationships are to effective leadership practices?
• You commented in your talk to the ELN that the COI are pushing boundaries and asking what more can we do. What are your thoughts on the importance of this openness to change? You made the following statement last year “Sharing new ideas with others when still researching and developing them requires courage. A new type of educational leadership has been created, as well as a new type of professional partnership” (Ed rev). Do you have any further comments a year on?

Leadership beyond the COI

• You have mentioned the modeling role of the COI, that they will “use their knowledge and skills to be educational leaders horizontally” (PG).
• In what ways have the COI fulfilled this expectation? You made a comment that it is a big ask for busy teachers to “stimulate others to debate and try out new ideas in their practice”. What have been some of the challenges of this role?

Leadership role of project coordinator

• You have mentioned that your role as project coordinator provides another level of leadership. In what ways does this happen?
Support for leadership development

- The COI have commented that they didn't have a lot of preparation for their leadership roles beyond the COI. What is your view on further support/resources that may have been useful to assist COI leaders?
- Is there likely to be anything in place for the new COIP?

So if I ask you to stand back from the project at this point, what insights would you say you have gained about the nature of leadership in the COI?

Exploring notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation

Information Sheet for Centres of Innovation

Researcher: Kate Thornton

Hi there, my name is Kate Thornton and I am a Masters of Education student at Victoria University of Wellington. For the thesis component of my degree I would like to explore notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation project. The COI project provides a unique opportunity exploring the role leadership plays in centres recognized as innovative with high quality practices. This research may also assist your centre in their COI role of sharing innovative teaching and learning practices with others. Participating centres will also receive an overview of academic discussion about leadership including a literature review against which their own statements about leadership would be contextualized. This will be sent to centres within 3 months of their focus group interviews.

This study has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington’s Human Ethics committee.

I invite you, as a Centre of Innovation to participate in this study.

Agreement to participate will mean that:
- I can have access to your centre’s expression of interest and research proposal submitted as part of the COI application process;
- Those within your centre interested in discussing leadership issues will be invited to participate in a focus group discussion on this topic;
- The focus group discussion will be recorded on audio tape and notes taken;
- Focus group participants will receive a copy of the discussion notes for verification, clarification and deletion if necessary;
- You are free to withdraw from the research without question at any time before the data is analysed;
- The results of this research may be disseminated through appropriate conferences and publications;
- The thesis arising from this research will be deposited in the University Library.

P.O. Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand, Telephone and Facsimile +64 4 463 6196.
E-mail kate Thornton@VUW.ac.nz, Website www.vuw.ac.nz
Information Sheet for Centres of Innovation

Kia ora, my name is Kate Thornton and I am a Masters of Education student at Victoria University of Wellington. For the thesis component of my degree I would like to explore notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation project. The COI project provides a unique opportunity exploring the role leadership plays in centres recognized as innovative with high quality practices. This research may also assist your centre in their COI role of sharing innovative teaching and learning practices with others. Participating centres will also receive an overview of academic discussion about leadership including a literature review against which their own statements about leadership would be contextualized. This will be sent to centres within 3 months of their focus group interviews.

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- You are free to withdraw from the research without question at any time before the data is analysed;
- The results of this research may be disseminated through appropriate conferences and publications;
- The thesis arising from this research will be deposited in the University Library.
Although your centre will be identified in the research report because of the public availability of COI details, identifying features will be removed from individual responses. All written material collected will be kept in a locked file, all electronic information will be kept in a pass-word protected file and all material will be destroyed two years after the end of the project. The data collected will be seen by only by myself and my university supervisors, Dr Carmen Dalli and Sarah Te One. They can be contacted by phone, on 04 472 1000 or by email Carmen.Dalli@vuw.ac.nz or Sarah.TeOne@vuw.ac.nz if you have any queries.

If you are willing to participate please complete the attached form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. Please contact me by phone, 04 475 7241, or by email: Kate.Thornton@xtra.co.nz if you have any questions or want any further information.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Kate Thornton.

---

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

[ ] I give my consent for Kate Thornton to carry out this research project with [ ]

---

The centre expression of interest  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

The centre research proposal  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Audio tape recording of focus group discussion  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Note taking at focus group discussion  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that:

* Focus group participants will receive a copy of the discussion notes for verification, clarification and deletion if necessary.
* Our centre will be identified in the research report.
* Any personal information or opinions will be kept confidential and reported only in non-attributable form.
* We have the right to withdraw from the research without question at any time prior to the data analysis stage.
* We have the opportunity to have audio tapes wiped or returned to us at the conclusion of the research.
* All data will be destroyed 2 years after the completion of the study.
* The findings of this research may be disseminated or presented to appropriate conferences and publications.
* The thesis arising from this research will be deposited in the university library.

Name of Centre:
Name of person signing:
Signature: [ ] Date: [ ]

[ ] 100, Wellington, New Zealand. Telephone and Facsimile: +64-4-472 3166
[ ] 80 moralferences on. Without prior written notice
Title of research project: Exploring notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation

Consent form: Centres of Innovation

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I give/do not give consent for Kate Thornton to carry out this research project with our centre using:

- The centre expression of interest
- The centre research proposal
- Audio tape recording of focus group discussion
- Note taking at focus group discussion

I understand that:
- Focus group participants will receive a copy of the discussion notes for verification, clarification and deletion if necessary
- Our centre will be identified in the research report
- Any personal information or opinions will be kept confidential and reported only in non-attributable form
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Name of Centre:
Name of person signing:
Signature........................................ Date ....................

P.O. Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand, Telephone and Facsimile +64-4-463 5166
E-mail ichec@vuw.ac.nz, Website www.vuw.ac.nz/ichec
Institute for Early Childhood Studies

Victoria University of Wellington

Exploring notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation

Kia ora Anne.

For the thesis component of my Masters of Education degree at Victoria University of Wellington, I would like to explore notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation project. As you have discussed, the COI project provides a unique opportunity for exploring the role of leadership in centres recognized as innovative with high quality practices. This research may also assist the centres in their COI role of sharing innovative teaching and learning practices with others and have benefits for the COI project and early childhood sector as a whole.

This study has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington’s human ethics committee.

I am inviting you to participate in this study in your role of Project Coordinator.

Agreement to participate will mean that:

- I can interview you to explore your perceptions of leadership within and by the Centres of innovation;
- This interview will be recorded on audio tape and notes taken;
- You will receive a copy of the interview notes for verification, clarification and deletion if necessary;
- You are free to withdraw from the research without question at any time before the data is analysed;
- The results of this research may be disseminated through appropriate conferences and publications;
- The thesis arising from this research will be deposited in the University Library.

P.O. Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand, Telephone and Facsimile +64-4-463 5166
E-mail iecs@vuw.ac.nz, Website www.vuw.ac.nz/iecs
As your role of Project Coordinator is publicly known, anonymity and confidentiality will not be able to be preserved. All written material collected will be kept in a locked file, all electronic information will be kept in a pass-word protected file and all material will be destroyed two years after the end of the project. The data collected will be seen by only by myself and my university supervisors, Dr Carmen Dalli and Sarah Te One. They can be contacted by phone, on 04 472 1000 or by email Carmen.Dalli@vuw.ac.nz or Sarah.TeOne@vuw.ac.nz if you have any queries.

If you are willing to participate please complete the attached form and return it to me in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed. Please contact me by phone, 04 475 7241, or by email: Kate.Thornton@xtra.co.nz if you have any questions or want any further information.

Thank you for considering this invitation,

Kate Thornton.

\[\text{Consent Form: Project Coordinator}\]

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I give/do not give consent for Kate Thornton to interview me in my role as Project Coordinator for the Centre of Innovation. This interview will be recorded using audio tape and notes will be taken.

I understand that:

- My name and designation will be identified in the research report.
- I have the right to withdraw from the research without question at any time prior to the data analysis stage.
- I understand that I will receive a copy of the discussion notes for verification, clarification and deletion if necessary.
- I may ask for the audio tapes to be returned to me or wiped at the conclusion of the research.
- All data will be destroyed 2 years after the completion of the study.
- The findings of this research may be disseminated or presented to appropriate conferences and publications.
- The thesis arising from this research will be deposited in the university library.

Name:

Signature:………………..Date:………………………….

\[\text{Carmen Dalli, Research Project: Exploring notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centre of Innovation}\]
Title of Research Project: Exploring notions of leadership as defined and enacted in the Centres of Innovation

Consent Form: Project Coordinator

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I give/do not give consent for Kate Thornton to interview me in my role as Project Coordinator for the Centres of Innovation. This interview will be recorded using audio tape and notes will be taken.

I understand that:

- My name and designation will be identified in the research report
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Name:

Signature…………………………… Date …………………

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