Simmran Singh

Developing Leadership in the Early Years

'In the twenty-first century organisation, we need to establish communities where everyone shares the experience of serving as a leader, not sequentially, but concurrently and collectively. These I call leaderful organisations' (Raelin, 2003: XI). Horne and Stedman Jones (2001) state that leadership is a concept that is complex and often misunderstood. This may be because there is no universal definition of leadership. Furthermore, Rost (1991) cited in Marturano and Gosling (2008), agrees as he believes that the notion of leadership is widely known which results in the term having different meanings and usage. This could also mean that the term can differ between individuals and settings which results in a range of interpretations. This essay will focus on leadership and management in the provision of Children Centres and the professionals within the setting, relating this to The British Association for Early Childhood Education's (2011) Early Education Code of Ethics. This will include considering how the professionals within the setting can ensure that they are taking a leadership role but also being ethical within their practice. The essay will then explore the various concepts within leadership focusing on an earlier concept of 'The Great Man' theory and providing a critical argument, discussing the challenges this concept presents for those working with children, drawing from feminist perspectives such as Chodorow (1978) and Nodding (1984) and linking this closely to Etzioni's 'Semi-professions and Their Organizations' (1969). Etzioni's work is something which will be discussed further in relation to gender, providing a reflection on how these theories can enhance my own leadership development as an Early Childhood Studies graduate entering the children's workforce.

'Leadership is a philosophy in action and management is an integral part. Managing without leadership was unethical; leadership without management was irresponsible' (Hall, 1996: 11). This quote could indicate that there are differences between the concepts of leadership and management but also that they are interwoven with each other. The notion of leadership and management is something with which Rodd (1998) agrees, as she believes to become a competent leader, the individual must also need to be an effective manager. Referring to what Rodd stated, this could mean that the individual will need to have the skills and attributes of both roles to

ensure that they are providing effective practice within the setting. Bennis and Nanus (1985: 21) believe that managers 'do things right' whereas leaders do 'the right thing.' Relating this back to Bennis and Nanus's (1985) thought, this could indicate that there is a difference between the roles of managing and leading which may have an overall effect on the provision. For example, the individual who is implementing the role of manager may share their mind-set to their colleagues which may result in most of the professionals working in a way where they are doing the correct thing but may have little acknowledgement on whether it is right for the provision. Whereas the individual who is implementing the role of leading practice may view aspects as whether it is suitable for the provision.

DfES/Sure Start (2005) research cited in (Cheminais 2007: 112) states that one of the key principles of successful children's centre management is to be 'cohesive with a shared philosophy and to have a shared vision and values'. The term 'shared' could indicate that the provision requires the professionals who work together to have similar mind-sets to ensure the appropriate aims are achieved. In order to do this, organisations can encourage distributed leadership styles. Lindon and Lindon (2012) state that the term, 'distributed leadership' represents 'a deliberate organisational strategy in which aspects of leadership behaviour and actions are shared with some, not necessarily all, staff throughout an organisation'. Promoting this type of leadership can enable professionals to be more aware of the aims and goals for their provision and therefore be able to take responsibility for different tasks to reach them. The Department for Education and Skills (2007) previously set National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres where leaders 'need to work collaboratively to explore, clarify and develop shared values, principles and vision...' (Briggs and Briggs, 2009: 137). Furthermore, Rodd (1998) believed stating that leadership is about the vision and the influence which the individual has within the organisation. However, looking at this in more detail, the DfES/Sure Start (2005) research highlighted how it is the management styles and techniques within the provision rather than the leadership role within the organisation that resulted in successful Children Centres. Taking this into account, where does the leadership aspect reside within this provision?

The National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) was a qualification which was designed for individuals within children centres and it became the first programme to meet the needs of leaders within the provision. This qualification has now been discontinued from the year 2014. Children Centre leaders and other staff members thought highly of the programme as they believed the qualification enhanced their professional and personal development and allowed them to show their knowledge within practice (Sharp et al. 2012). The National College for School Leadership (2005) conducted a study on participants' views of this qualification and they agreed that it promoted changes to their leadership styles and improved their personal development of confidence. As a result of this qualification, it allowed individuals to enhance their leadership development using their skills and attributes and be able to implement it within practice. However, a few individuals criticised this programme as they believed that individuals needed to have more of the expected traits and behaviours of leaders (The National College for School Leadership, 2005). The perspective in which some of the individuals criticised the programme links closely to the leadership style of the 'Great Man Theory' and illustrates the influence of the idea of a 'strong' leader (Spector, 2016) which will be discussed later in the essay.

Drew Dudley (2010) states that the term 'leadership' is something that society views as beyond the ordinary and therefore something that many individuals feel they cannot achieve. He believes that 'leadership' is in many aspects something that we do every day and that transforming someone's perspective of what they can do is a form of everyday leadership. This could indicate that leadership can be developed and created within each individual rather than the individual possessing the skills and attributes within them. Lynn Ang (2012) conducted a research study on 'Leading and Managing in Early Years' and how the NPQICL had an impact of the professionals' practice. One of the participants believed that the qualification allowed them to reflect on what leadership is, consider their own personal development and how to alter and change their own leadership style (Ang, 2012). This could indicate that the professionals within this study believed that the NPQICL qualification allowed them

to be aware of the various styles of leadership but enabling them to adopt the appropriate leadership style for the provision and situation they found themselves in. These leadership styles may vary from the 'The Great Man Theory' to the 'Servant' leadership (cited in Spector, 2016).

When in a leadership role, it is important that the individual promotes their leadership development in practice but it is also important for the individual to be ethical in what they do. Rodd (2006) states that each individual may see themselves as professional and as part of this each individual will have specific attributes of professional identity. This suggests that different professionals within a variety of sectors will develop their own attributes according to their profession. Individuals within early childhood leadership roles should be informed by a Code of Ethics such as that developed from Early Education (2011). Comparing primary school teachers and family support workers within Children Centres, they may each aspire to particular attributes to ensure their leadership development is ethical. For example, primary school teachers may follow the Code of Ethics seeking to 'create and maintain safe and healthy environments which foster children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development which respect their contributions to communities and their dignity' (Early Education: Code of Ethics, 2011). Family support workers may prioritise the Code of Ethics differently to 'respect the dignity and preferences of each family and endeavour to learn about their structure and lifestyle, culture and customs, language, religion and beliefs' (Early Education: Code of Ethics, 2011: online).

An awareness of ethical codes helps professionals work across different settings. Those developing good practice across different settings, might be considered 'trans-cultural leaders'. Focussing on the two Children Centres that I have worked in, each setting does have their own culture in the way the professionals work and how the service users gain support from the provision. For example, when working in one Children's Centre, I observed that there were many families from diverse faiths and backgrounds that were explicit and visible whereas observing practice in the

second Children Centre, I was aware that there were few ethnic minority groups as the majority of the service users were from a white background. The majority of the service users was something that was implicit in the work environment as most of the families were from a white background but the family itself may present their own individual culture to another. This observation which I encountered is something which leaders may need to be aware of in their own work environment as they may have to adapt their practice for families who may present a different culture.

Many factors define the unique structure of the family, for example, 'Poverty, disability, ethnicity, education, both or single parents are all contributors to the family structure which makes each family different' (Bernardes, 1997: 12). Graen and Hui (1999) cited in Osland et al. (2014) state that leaders should aspire to become trans-cultural leaders. This is something that Pfeifer and Jackson (2008) cited in Marturano and Gosling (2008) state, as they believe that a transcultural type of leadership style allows people to respect diverse cultures and allow the individual to build new cultures based on the provision. Leaders in settings who are aware of the individuality and diversity of the provision allows other colleagues to be aware of these aspects as they may be working towards the same goal. Individuals can do this through distributed leadership where responsibilities are shared between individuals to achieve a common target. For example, a professional within Sure Start Children's Centre who may aspire to become a trans-cultural leader, may have more of an awareness of the differences within the provision and may provide alternative perspectives on how to achieve visions and goals for the centre.

The Great Man Theory is an aspect that was developed in the year 1840 by Thomas Carlyle (Spector, 2016). Carlyle believed that 'great men were sent by God to be heroes and these heroes became leaders through the righteous process of hero worship' (Spector, 2016: 253). Furthermore, Iszatt-White and Saunders (2014) state the Great Man theory of leadership reflects how leadership qualities were innate and not learned and that these were specifically masculine characteristics'. A critique of this early theory of leadership may be that it continues to prejudice people against women leaders as Chodorow (1978) and Nodding (1984) argue as they believe that

women are different as they are able to provide different methods of making sense of concepts and acting upon them. This could indicate that the authors are suggesting that women can provide an alternative perspective in a leadership role. Focusing on the provision of Children Centres, the data collected by Evangelou et al. (2014) state that there were more females (98) than males (3) providing support for the service users. This something that I observed during placement as majority of the staff members including the manager of both Children Centre settings were female. This could mean that there may be a shift of roles, where women are taking on leadership positions and are opposing the early theory of 'The Great Man' theory.

Different professionals may follow a range of ethical codes such as the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) 1977 Code of Ethics or the Early Education: The British Association for Early Childhood Education Code of Ethics, none is superior, primacy will depend on the context and individual needs and may need to be negotiated and figured out by the stakeholder. Being ethical within a leadership role is not the same as developing 'macho' or 'Great Man' leadership, it means that the individual is following an ethical code based on their profession and the context that they are in.

Ladkin (2008) cited in Marturano and Gosling (2008) argue that the term leadership has a stereotype, which can be shown as a masculine portrayal. This may be because of the elements of early theory of 'The Great Man' theory may exist in society today. Hayward (2005) believes she has seen a changing role of women as she thinks that in today's society, women are becoming more independent where they are making decisions and responsibilities for themselves. Relating this to the leadership positions in Children Centres, it is clear to see that females are embracing the view that they are able to take on leadership roles. However, Etzioni (1969) believes that women are being classed as semi-professionals. The term means individuals who are in the nursing, teaching or social work profession, may not be recognised as full professionals. Does this mean that woman in caring professions such as individuals who work in Children Centres or in the social work sector are not classed as full and equal professionals? Etzioni (1969: 197) states that 'in

comparison with professional employees, semi-professionals lack autonomy: they are told what to do and how to do it'. This could indicate that not having the freedom to meet their full potential may be a factor within their leadership role. Folta et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study of leadership characteristics between women in the profession of public health. One aspect that the researchers found was that one of the participants believed that being female restricted her from many opportunities. The participant stated *'I have felt in the past that opportunities passed me by because they were looking for men... And in some ways maybe that freed me up. I really did things my own way…'* (Folta et al., 2012: 7). From this recent experience, it seems as though the gender roles within leadership have changed and women are beginning to take leadership positions towards a more transformational style; where individual leaders are changing agents and they encourage their followers to achieve greater goals (Whalley, 2008). Relating this to Children Centre professionals, it can be seen that the professionals may have their own mind-set and organisation to lead the setting.

To conclude, leadership is a concept that has changed over time, place and culture. The changes of interpretations of leadership from the early 'Great Man' theory towards more feminist perspectives, have allowed women to gain confidence in reforming leadership positions in the early years sector, enabling people and centres to achieve their full potential. In today's society, individuals still may hold an idealistic view that leadership is dominated by males but it is important that this perspective is challenged as this will allow females, including myself to take on leadership roles and not feel the pressures to perform to unhelpful stereotypes of being in that position. I believe this discussion of leadership will allow me to look at different perspectives of leadership and be able to recognise these concepts within practice. The key discussion of gender within leadership will allow me to reflect upon my own practice within settings and allow me to break stereotypical restrictions of leadership.

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