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'You have to be a leader but don't want to come across as taking over' : Leading Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care

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*'You have to be a leader but don't want to come across as taking over':* Leading Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care.

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# The study

- Qualitative study, narrative approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of practitioners as they undertook a programme of study to become an Early Years Professional (EYP)
- EYP introduced in 2006 to lead practice and be a '*change agent*' (CWDC 2010 p.17) specifically to improve quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.
  - Sector-overwhelmingly female workforce (97%)
  - Low status
  - Low pay
  - Qualified at level 3 (EYP at level 6)



# methodology

- Narrative approach to collecting, interpreting and presenting the data
- Sample-4 participants enrolled on the Undergraduate Practitioner Programme( UPP) for EYPS- all practitioners, had to 'top up' FD to BA and meet EYPS standards, 12 month programme (2012-2013)
- Semi-structured interviews-dynamic approach (Daiute 2014, Riessman 2008) conversational approach (Oakley 1998)
  - 4 interviews

# analysis

- 3 layers of analysis, 1) presentation of the narratives as monologues, 2) Thematic narrative analysis (gender/class, performativity, professional mandate), 3) Thematic narrative analysis drawing on work of Bolman and Deal (2013), a multiframe approach to understanding organisational structures and practices and to reframing leadership.
  - Exploratory study-emerged from the data that organisational practices and structures significant in shaping the participants' experiences of becoming a professional.



# Bolman and Deal (2013)

- 4 frames
- Structural frame: views the organisation as a factory, focus on organisational architecture- individuals need clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Human resource frame: views the organisation as a family-focus on motivation- individuals want things that go '*beyond money*' (p120.) from their work.
- Political frame: views the organisation as a jungle-focus on power (allocation of scarce resources)-individuals need political skills.
- Symbolic frame : views the organisation as irrational- focus on cultural glue-individuals bound to the organisation by stories, values and rituals etc.

# findings

- EYP undermined traditional structural blueprint of the organisation, particularly when more qualified than the manager. Manager threatened, EYP unable to endorse their authority.
  - *She's not even a level 4, I might have had a bit more respect for her if she had done her level 4'*
- EYP developed reflective skills and political skills of negotiation, alliance building and agenda setting. Power can be exercised at all levels.
  - *On that day I needed to go to Uni my manager wanted annual leave and there is not enough staff. She blamed it on the head so I e-mailed the head and put it out there 'what's the deal with this?'. My manager is really supportive now, it came from that little blow out*
- Moral leadership possible which supports and protects the workforce and is child centred.
- Leader should attend to the symbolic frame and aligning the needs of the individual with the organisation.



# Relevance of findings

- Emerging models of leadership in ECEC suggest leader must rely on influence rather than authority to bring about change (Hadfield et al 2012)
- Challenges to this approach
  - Little has been written about how to lead through influence (- this study)
  - Traditional associations of leadership with authority difficult to shift (Rodd 2006)
  - Individuals resist change (Bolman and Deal 2013, Hadfield et al 2012)
  - Leaders lack training and skills ( this study, Bolman and Deal 2013)



# Contribution of this study

- Integrated model combining Change Curve Model (Kubler-Ross 1989), (stages of change: denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance) with Bolman and Deal's multiframe approach:
  - to help the leader exert influence through anticipating how individuals might react to change
    - RESULT
  - The change curve four frame model of leadership

Change Curve Model: stages of change	Structural frame	Human resource frame	Political frame	Symbolic frame
Denial	<p>Identify what the existing structures are.</p> <p><b>Reflect</b> and Identify what changes may be needed.</p>	<p>Communicate little and often.</p> <p><b>Engage in reflective dialogue</b></p> <p>Allow time to adapt.</p> <p>Avoid overwhelming individuals.</p>	<p>Network with colleagues and stakeholders.</p> <p>Build coalitions</p>	<p>Tell a compelling story to colleagues and stakeholders. Co-create a vision. Communicate this vision to colleagues and stakeholders</p>
Anger	<p>Create structures to support the process.</p> <p>Identify who does what and when.</p>	<p>Hold meetings with colleagues and stakeholders <b>encourage collaborative reflections</b> and gather feedback.</p>	<p>Build alliances with colleagues and stakeholders.</p> <p>Diffuse opposition, and confront conflict</p>	<p>Be a visible leader.</p> <p>Continue to communicate the vision to colleagues and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Continue to reflect on practice and provision.</b></p>
Bargaining	<p>Alter structures that do not support change.</p> <p>Plan for short term successes</p>	<p>Provide training for colleagues.</p> <p>Hold meetings and get feedback. <b>Engage in collaborative reflection.</b></p> <p>Build involvement with colleagues and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Empower individuals.</p> <p>Continue to build alliances with colleagues and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Communicate progress and celebrate success.</p> <p>Create new symbols and rituals which colleagues can share.</p>
Acceptance	<p>Align the operational structure to the new culture</p>	<p>Continue to build broad involvement.</p> <p>Communicate and get feedback from colleagues and stakeholders.</p>		<p>Communicate progress, celebrate success.</p> <p>Share stories of the journey and continue to develop the new culture, <b>continue to reflect.</b></p>



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