

Building Leadership Capacity: Learnings from Australia

Manjula Waniganayake

Institute of Early Childhood

and

Anthony Semann

Semann & Slattery

Presentation at the ILRF in Trondheim, Norway, June, 2014

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY
SYDNEY ~ AUSTRALIA



Semann & Slattery

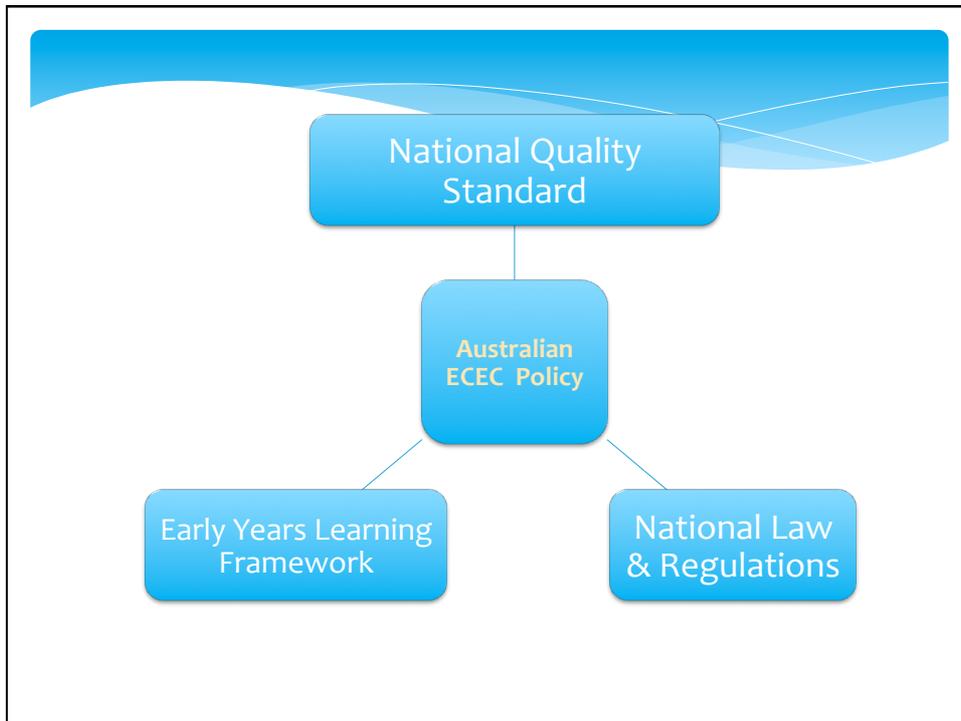
Defining leadership in ECE

“Leadership is a relationship between people and the best leaders are those who are able to empower others.”

(ACECQA, 2011, p.171)

“Leadership for learning is a journey of joint inquiry, exploration and reflection....”

(Waniganayake & Semann, 2011, p.24)



National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2012)

- 1 Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice
- 2 Quality Area 2 - Children's health and safety
- 3 Quality Area 3 - Physical environment
- 4 Quality Area 4 - Staffing arrangements
- 5 Quality Area 5 - Relationships with children
- 6 Quality Area 6 - Partnerships with families and communities
- 7 Quality Area 7 - Leadership and service management



Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority

The Educational Leader and the National Quality Standard (NQS) - Element 7.1.4

Provision is made to ensure **a suitably qualified** and **experienced** educator or director leads the **development of the curriculum** and **ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.**

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.4

Effective curriculum development requires ambitious goals and clarity of purpose. It requires attending to the principles, practice and outcomes of the approved learning framework.

The role of the educational leader is to

- a) **work with educators to provide curriculum direction** and
- b) **ensure children achieve the outcomes of the approved learning framework.**

Some definitions

(Fleet, Waniganayake, Semann & Soper, 2014)

- * **Practitioner inquiry** = a scaffolded form of thinking professionally about pedagogy & practice
- * **Generate local knowledge** = finding out things you didn't know before relevant to your context
- * **Taking an inquiry stance** = assuming there are things you do not yet know about your self, your class, your role, your site- which might be interesting to think about generated by those outside = books and those beyond the site including the knowledge constructed through the joint efforts of educators working together in inquiry communities = new understandings generated by investigating data important to you and analysed with others

About the Aspiring Leaders Forum (ALF)

- * ALF has been funded by Children's Services Central, a key provider of professional development and support of early childhood professionals in Australia.
- * It began in 2010, and we are currently working with the fifth cohort. To date we have worked with **100+** ALF participants and we will report on what we have learnt from them during their journeys with us and beyond.
- * A critical component of the ALF was the inclusion of a leadership project which the ALF participants developed and worked on during the year.

Aspiring Leaders Initiative - AIMS

It aims to bring together a range of early childhood professionals from anywhere in the state of New South Wales interested in pursuing leadership opportunities within their local communities.

Over a period of 12 months, we facilitate the development of learning communities that nurture leadership growth in the early childhood sector. Through their involvement in this initiative, the capacity of aspiring leaders to embrace critical challenges in the sector is fostered as they build their leadership knowledge and skills to make a difference for children and families.

ALF & emerging trends....

- There is an increasing interest in doing EC postgraduate studies, including PhD studies - especially by those who have been in the sector for over 25 years
- EC organisations are setting aside funding in their budgets for professional development – often more than 10% of the annual budget
- Increasing proportion of EC leaders feel that they were either very well or somewhat prepared for leadership roles but there is no incentive to take on the role

Benefits of participating in ALF

- * **Leadership knowledge and skills:** "A leader is someone who works alongside a team not sitting back and giving orders";, "leading through change"; "What can be achieved when leaders are motivated"
- * **Professional growth:** "developing a (leadership) style"; "To think in a leaderful way" ;
- * **Personal growth:** "self confidence"; "inspiring myself"
- * **Removing isolation:** "The importance of engaging in dialogue with other leaders";" networking";
- * **Long-term relationships:** "maintaining connection with academic institutions." "making new life long friends"

Benefits of practitioner enquiry

(Fleet, Waniganayake, Semann & Soper, 2014)

- * Empowerment of teachers (the key!)
- * Creating a learning community – safe space for a powerful exchange of ideas
- * Generating locally relevant knowledge
- * Supporting a focus on pedagogy
- * Building on areas of interest to teachers
- * Establishing partnership with academic colleagues (and current research)

Overall conclusions

(Fleet, Waniganayake, Semann & Soper, 2014)

- * Leadership initiatives can be impactful in that they provide participants with insights into their own leadership development
- * The 'practice' of leadership is the critical component to create a change in the exercising of leadership through professional learning and development
- * Sustained engagement in 'leadership' learning, be it formally or informally, is the intervention that will assist in ongoing leadership growth and transformation of individuals and the EC sector

Implications & Issues arising

(Fleet, Waniganayake, Semann & Soper, 2014)

- * Site and discipline specific professional learning can enhance leadership development
- * Time and infrastructure support can enhance facilitated professional learning communities
- * Authentic leadership thrives in environments that demonstrate openness to change and receptivity to ongoing professional growth

Therefore to build EC leadership capabilities.....
continue to support opportunities that offer
contextualised professional learning and growth