Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD CENTRES: A QUALITATIVE
CASE STUDY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

at
Massey University
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Lorraine Sheryl McLeod
2002
Abstract

The provision of education and care for young children in Aotearoa/New Zealand has evolved in a haphazard manner for more than a century, with a marked increase in the number of childcare centres in the last decade. The present study was designed to use the concept of organisational culture to examine leadership and management practices from the perceptions of those involved in childcare centres, to compare these practices with the international literature on leadership and management, and to develop a theoretical model which could inform concepts of quality management in centres of the future. The underlying assumptions, beliefs and values of the organisational culture shared by those within each centre were mostly based on those originally articulated by the founder, and were taught in subtle ways to new staff and parents. An analysis of those assumptions revealed traces of many different historical, political, educational and theoretical influences that formed the image of the child and of childhood held by the adults in each centre. It was argued that the organisational culture and organisational structure of a centre, based on an unconsciously held image of the child and childhood, and influenced by external societal forces and beliefs, shaped the environment in which each child’s learning took place. Perceptions of good leadership and management practice were contextually based. The study argues that a model for developing or reviewing practice in centre leadership and management should begin with a conscious consideration of the image of the child and childhood held within the centre. It is claimed that the influence of this image on the ways in which children learn and are taught should be central to leadership and management functions that govern and shape centre structures and activities. At the macro-level, however, our society also must address the hegemonic practices that underpin its treatment of young children so that children are seen as unique, with interests and rights rather than needs, and as competent, rich, strong and powerful.
Acknowledgements

Beginning doctoral study is daunting. As I have progressed through this amazing learning journey, I have been indebted to many people who have encouraged me, critiqued my work, and assisted me to complete it. First, my supervisors have provided me with sound, steady, reasoned advice and support which has guided my thinking and writing. Dr. Sarah Farquhar encouraged me to begin the journey and assisted me conscientiously in the preparation of my proposal and pilot study. When she left Massey University, supervision of my study was undertaken by Professor Joy Cullen. I have valued highly her sharp eye for detail and strong intellectual focus, as well as her trust in me to keep the research moving on. Professor Wayne Edwards honoured me by offering to be second supervisor. I have appreciated his gift of inspiring me to see the “bigger picture”, and his ability to quickly and concisely sum up what needs to be done.

Central to this research was the generosity of 51 participants. They provided me with their time, thoughts and other details that have allowed me to take a closer look at early childhood practices and to make some recommendations that may, I hope, help to make their important work easier for them. Their support is gratefully acknowledged. Colleagues, too, have provided highly valued support for this research. A group of doctoral candidates with nursing backgrounds helped me to get started. As the work continued, I have been most grateful to Helen Hedges, who read several drafts, debated with me and provided on-going encouragement. I am indebted to Margaret Turnbull, who also read drafts, provoked many intellectual discussions, and led me to the APA manual. I was fortunate, too, to be able to draw on the information and opinion provided by other early childhood researchers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

My heartfelt thanks go to my family and my husband, Jim McLeod. My family tolerantly coped with my absences from some motherly and grandmotherly duties and provided moral support for and interest in my research. Jim actively supported the research in many ways - housework, computer expertise and patience, encouragement, understanding and support for the time commitment - that I have been so grateful for.

Thank you all for accompanying me on the journey.
Abstract ........................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ................................................................ iii
Table of Contents ................................................................ iv
List of Appendices ................................................................ x
List of Tables ....................................................................... xi
List of Figures ...................................................................... xii
Glossary ............................................................................. xiii

Chapter .............................................................................. Page

Chapter One ....................................................................... 1
   Definition of terms .......................................................... 2
   Influences on images of the child and childhood .............. 3
   More than a century of early childhood services in Aotearoa/New Zealand ................................. 4
      Growth in numbers of childcare places in childcare centres .................................................... 4
      Legislative changes and the search for “quality” ................................................................. 5
      Training and teacher education ....................................................................................... 7
      Changes to early childhood curricula, and the influence of research ................................. 10
      Summary ........................................................................ 11
Research processes .............................................................. 12
Organisation of the report ................................................... 13

CHAPTER TWO Literature Review .............................................. 15
Part 1: Images of the child and childhood ............................. 16
   Temporal and spatial historical differences in context, beliefs and discourse .................. 16
   Influences on the shaping of images of the child and childhood (pre late 18th century) .... 18
   More recent influences on images of children and childhood ................................................. 19
Organisational culture ............................................................ 23
   Organisational culture; the concept explained ................................................................. 24
      Organisational culture in early childhood centres; a societal subculture ...................... 27
      The development of an organisational culture ............................................................ 30
      A model for examining organisational culture ........................................................... 31
Conceptualising leadership, management and/or administration ............................................. 33
   Leaders and leadership .......................................................... 35
   Women as leaders ................................................................. 38
   Educational leadership .......................................................... 41
   Preparing supervisors for leadership, management and administration roles .................. 46
Relevance of the concept of organisational culture to the present study .................................... 47
Summary ........................................................................... 47
Part 2: Organisational structure and philosophy, communication, teamwork and change ......... 48
   Philosophies, values and ideology .................................................................................... 52
   Communication ........................................................................ 54
      Communication between centre personnel and children ................................................. 55
Phase 4: Clarification, modification and integration of concepts and writing of the research report ................................................................. 115
Chapter summary .................................................................................................................................................................................. 115

CHAPTER FOUR  Research procedures and initial data analysis ................................................................. 116
The research sample .............................................................................................................................................................................. 117
  Rationale for the sample definition .................................................................................................................................................. 119
  Selection and participation, including ethical considerations ..................................................................................................... 120
Interviews ........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 120
  Interview design .................................................................................................................................................................................. 121
  Interview procedures .......................................................................................................................................................................... 121
  Interviews; limitations and ethical issues ........................................................................................................................................ 122
  Memo-writing and journal entries .................................................................................................................................................... 124
  The transcription, analysis, coding and categorising of interviews .................................................................................................. 124
  Constant comparison of data leading to emerging categories .................................................................................................... 125
Supporting research methods used .......................................................................................................................................................... 126
Demographic data questionnaires ......................................................................................................................................................... 127
Coding of each supervisor’s self-reporting forms ................................................................................................................................. 127
  Diary codes ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 129
  Leadership, management and administration ................................................................................................................................ 130
  Working with children, preparing the educational environment and curriculum planning ......................................................... 132
  Working with parents ....................................................................................................................................................................... 134
  Routine tasks .................................................................................................................................................................................... 135
  Professional development, working with other agencies, public relations .................................................................................... 135
  Summary ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 135
Coding of each centre’s latest ERO accountability review report and examination of other artifactual material .................................................. 136
  Summary ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 136
The literature reviews .................................................................................................................................................................................. 139
  Theoretical sampling, clarifying, modifying and integrating of data ............................................................................................. 140
  Data collation and triangulation ...................................................................................................................................................... 141
  The pilot study: Centre A .................................................................................................................................................................. 142
Chapter summary ................................................................................................................................................................................................... 142

CHAPTER FIVE  Data presentation: Part A ......................................................................................................................... 144
The research sample .................................................................................................................................................................................. 145
  Participants and the organisational structure of centres ............................................................................................................... 145
  Centre B ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 145
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 146
  Centre C ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 146
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 147
  Centre D ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 148
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 148
  Centre E ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 149
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 149
  Centre F ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 150
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 150
  Centre G ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 151
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 151
  Centre H ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 152
    Organisational structure ............................................................................................................................................................. 152
Centre I
Organisational structure

Centre J
Organisational structure

Centre K
Organisational structure

Centre structures
Private/private trust centre structures
Corporate/institution centre structures
Community centre structures

Organisational culture and philosophical issues: basic assumptions of centre personnel regarding the purposes of their work
The influence of founders on the philosophy of centres
Private/private trust centres
Corporate/institution centres
Community centres
Common perceptions about the purposes for which centres exist
Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
The “culture of children”; parental opinions on staff attributes
The use of language

Chapter summary

CHAPTER SIX Data Presentation: Part B
Leadership and management practices
Summary
Communication
Communication between centre personnel and parents
Oral communication.
Written communication.
Using combinations of oral and written communication
Communication between centre personnel
Communicating via staff meetings
Interpersonal communication between personnel in centres
Respectful communication with children and others
Summary
Teamwork
Positional definitions of teamwork
Centre structural and cultural influences on perceptions of decision-making
The rights and responsibilities of working within a team
Staff members’ perceptions of teamwork
Parent perceptions of teamwork
Summary
Management of change
Communicating change
Managing organisational structure and changes
The effects of qualified staff on change processes
Staff changes
Changes to legislation
Summary
Pedagogical issues
Use of Te Whāriki
CHAPTER SEVEN   Leadership and management in early childhood centres: a discussion

Organisational structures, organisational cultures, and images of the child ........................................... 241
Private centres: the “family” image of the child ......................................................................................... 241
Support for the concept of family in the data ......................................................................................... 242
Private centre structures .......................................................................................................................... 243
Corporate/institution centres; discourses of “support for working/studying parents” and “care” ............. 243
Support for working/studying parents .................................................................................................... 244
Care ......................................................................................................................................................... 246
Corporate/institution centre structures; reflections of parent body structures ........................................ 248
Community centres; the discourse of “support and respite” for parents and “care” for children ......... 250
“Care” .................................................................................................................................................. 250
“Respite and support” for parents; possible charitable and welfare functions ........................................ 252
Community centre structures ............................................................................................................... 253
Parental images of the child .................................................................................................................... 253
Summary ............................................................................................................................................... 254
Organisational activities .......................................................................................................................... 254
State or private provision; tensions and influences .................................................................................. 255
Concepts of leadership and management in early childhood centres ....................................................... 257
Summary ............................................................................................................................................... 260
Communication ................................................................................................................................... 261
Centre personnel and parents/whanau: communication and/or partnership? ........................................... 261
Communication between centre personnel .............................................................................................. 265
Communication with children ................................................................................................................ 267
Summary ............................................................................................................................................... 268
Teamwork ............................................................................................................................................ 269
Perceptions of teamwork related to centre structures and cultures ......................................................... 269
Summary ............................................................................................................................................... 271
Management of change ............................................................................................................................. 272
Internal change ..................................................................................................................................... 272
Staff changes .......................................................................................................................................... 273
**Externally initiated change** .......................... 274
**Summary** ............................................. 275

**Pedagogical issues and the “educated” child** ............. 276
**The use of Te Whāriki; perception and reality** ............ 277
**Assessment and curriculum planning; theory and practice** 278
**The tensions of planning for three and a half to five year olds** 282

**Curriculum implementation** .................................. 284
**Programme evaluation** .................................... 287
**Summary** .................................................. 289

**Professional development issues** .......................... 289
**Use of resources** ........................................ 290
**Appraisal** ............................................. 292
**Summary** .................................................. 293

**The research questions addressed: A synthesis** ........... 294

**The interconnected influences and practices involved in current leadership and management of early childhood centres** 296

**Chapter summary** ........................................ 299

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  Implications, recommendations and conclusion .................................. 302
**Implications of findings for early childhood education** .................. 304

Reciprocal influences; organisational culture, structure and image of the child .................................. 304

The development of organisational culture in centres .................. 307
Images of the child; difficulties for parents .......................... 309
The misalignment of centre cultures and the use of Te Whāriki .................................. 310
The impact of the image held of the child on centre structure .................. 311

Internal and external influences on organisational activities .......................... 312

Educational leadership ........................................ 315
Visionary leadership .......................................... 316
Reflective leadership .......................................... 317
Pedagogical and curriculum leadership .................................. 318
Provision of an educational environment .................................. 321
Reciprocal communication ........................................ 323
Teamwork; communication, trust, change and shared understandings .................................. 324

Professional issues .......................................... 328

Implications for other early childhood services .................. 330
From implications to recommendations; a summary .................. 330

**Conclusion** ............................................. 333

A review of the methodology and methods and their limitations .......................... 336
Criteria of soundness .......................................... 336
Choice of methodology and methods .................................. 336
Theoretical sampling .......................................... 338
Bias and interpretation of data .................................. 338
Participant motivation ......................................... 338
Sample size .................................................. 339
The literature review .......................................... 339
Organisational culture .......................................... 339

Epilogue .................................................. 342

References .................................................. 343

Appendices .................................................. 373

ix
# List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendices</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. NUD.IST: Nonnumerical, unstructured data in qualitative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research by supporting processes of indexing, searching and theorising.</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Information, questionnaire and forms provided for participants</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 Introductory letter to participant</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2 Information sheet</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3 Statements of informed consent</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4 Demographic questionnaires</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5 Centre licensee/supervisor or supervisor diary form</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C. Guiding questions/ideas for interviews</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D. Examples of memos written during interview analysis</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E. Summary of demographic data provided by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>licensees, supervisors and staff</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F. Triangulation procedures</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G. Letter to supervisor of Centre A re involvement in pilot study</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H. Pilot study: Centre A</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Estimated time recorded by supervisors or supervisor/licensees as spent on tasks over three days</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Estimated self-reported time spent by individual supervisor/licensees working in areas they defined as leadership, management and administration</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Estimated self-reported time spent by supervisor and supervisor/licensees in working with children, preparing the educational environment and in planning the curriculum over three days, combined to give time spent on all components of teaching</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>The date of the most recent ERO report, and the number and type of compliance requirements for each centre</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Specific content included in statements made by licensees, supervisors, staff and parents about the philosophy of their centre</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table E1</td>
<td>Demographic data provided by licensees, supervisors and staff of centres</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Grounded theory research design by phase</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>The aggregated amounts of self-estimated, self-reported time spent by ten supervisors and supervisor/licensees working in areas they defined as leadership, management and administration over three days</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>The collective estimated time recorded by supervisors and supervisor/licensees as time spent on tasks over three days</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>The hierarchical organisational structure of centres in the three Ministry of Education (MoE) categories of authority</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Basic assumptions articulated by participants regarding the purpose and philosophy of centres in the three MoE categories of authority</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>The six themes that were common to all centres in the three MoE categories of authority within the early childhood education subculture</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Images of the child held in centres in the three MoE categories of authority</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Theoretical model of interconnected influences and practices concerning the current management and leadership of early childhood centres</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Bottery's suggested model for engaging societal debate to encourage the democratic participation of children in society</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>The relationship between the organisational culture and structure of a centre and the image held of the child</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>The importance of communication to centre functioning and its relationship to organisational culture and structure</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>The centrality of pedagogical considerations within the image held of the child, and the relationship between these, leadership and management (with specific attention to curriculum leadership), and centre structure, culture and communication</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Theoretical model of leadership and management in early childhood centres</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>A diagrammatic illustration of the &quot;family tree&quot; storage system of the NUD.IST software programme, showing its root, node, sub-node and sub-sub node capabilities as used in the present study</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>A diagram of the nodes used in the NUD.IST software programme to store categorised data</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Centre: Used to denote a chartered early childhood organisation that is licensed to provide education and care for children up to the age of five years. In this study, the term excludes “Free” Kindergartens, Ngā Kōhanga Reo, Playcentres and family daycare.

Centre personnel: Used in the present study to denote all who work in a centre.

Community centre: An early childhood centre that provides sessional and/or full time care and education. It is a not-for-profit organisation, usually operated by a city council and administered by a management committee.

Corporate/institution centre: An early childhood centre that provides sessional and/or full time care and education, and which is part of a corporation or an institution such as a school. While some such centres are open to the public, others are provided for the use of employees of a corporation or employees and students of an institution. It may operate for-, or not-for-profit.

Curriculum: In relation to early childhood education, the sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster learning and development in early childhood education centres.

The Education Review Office (ERO): A government organisation established under the 1989 education reforms, responsible for ensuring accountability within schools and early childhood services.

Grounded theory: A qualitative method of examining data in order to develop theory. The theory is developed as the researcher systematically examines everyday behaviours or organisational patterns.

Charter: An undertaking by an early childhood service (or umbrella organisation) to the Minister of Education that designates the special character of the centre and specifies the steps that the management will take to reach standards beyond licensing requirements.

DOPs: The Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) articulates the government’s expectations of early childhood education providers and specifies guiding principles and goals for the delivery of early childhood education and care.
Kaupapa: Philosophy, principles, plan, purpose.

Kindergarten: An early childhood centre provided under the auspices of the Free Kindergarten movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Usually offers sessional programmes, is a not-for-profit organisation.

Licensee: In relation to a licensed centre, the holder of the license for that centre.

Māori A member of the aboriginal race of Aotearoa/New Zealand; tangata whenua, or people of the land.

Manager: A term often used interchangeably with “supervisor”. A manager can “manage” a centre without early childhood qualifications but must employ a “person responsible” (see below) if government funding is to be obtained.

Ministry of Education: A Government organisation established during the 1989 reforms, responsible for providing policy advice to the Minister of Education, ensuring the implementation of national policies, overseeing the provision of funding, and negotiating charters.

Ngā Tikanga Māori: Māori cultural practices.

Ngā Kōhanga Reo: An initiative aimed at reviving Māori knowledge and cultural practices which has resulted in the development of language nests or centres in which whānau development is nurtured and where young children are immersed in te Reo Māori and ngā Tikanga Māori.

NUD.IST: A computer package designed to aid users in handling non-numerical unstructured data by indexing, searching and theorising.

Pakeha An Aotearoa/New Zealand person of non-Māori descent.

Person responsible: In relation to a licensed centre, a person directly involved in, and primarily responsible for, the day-to-day care, comfort, education, health and safety of the children. The “person responsible” must have 100 licensing points, or, from 2001 if a new appointment, and for all centres from 2005, a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or equivalent.

Private centre: An early childhood centre which offers sessional or full time care and education. It is privately owned and operates for profit.
Staff member: A person employed to work in an early childhood centre who is not the owner, licensee or supervisor.

Supervisor: Term used to denote the person “in charge” of a centre. The position may include the responsibilities of “person responsible”, licensee and/or owner of the centre. Sometimes (outside of this study) the term is used interchangeably with director or manager.

Tangata whenua: Native, aborigine, local person (in Aotearoa/New Zealand, usually a person of Māori ancestry).

Te Reo Māori: Māori language or speech.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi: The Treaty of Waitangi.

Te Whāriki: The mat (also the metaphor of woven mat chosen as the title for the Aotearoa / New Zealand early childhood curriculum document).

Whānau: Members of an extended family and its support network who form a context for the care and guidance of the child.

Qualified: In early childhood teaching terms, a person who holds a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) or a Teacher Registration Board-approved degree and is a registered teacher or able to apply (having completed an approved programme of teacher education) to become one.