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Leadership in Early Childhood:
the kindergarten experience

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Abstract

The kindergarten service was, until 1997, a state sector service. It is staffed principally by women teachers who work in groups of two or three in kindergartens. Senior Teachers in the service carry the responsibility for the professional leadership and support of these teachers.

This qualitative, exploratory study investigates the perceptions of leadership of a group of Senior Teachers. It examines how these ideas are expressed in their work. The constraints, tensions and dilemmas experienced in working in a New Public Management or neo liberal environment are also investigated, and the coping strategies of these women are analysed.

Six Senior Teachers were asked to keep a log of their work for a week. Semistructured interviews were used to investigate the Senior Teachers' personal theories of leadership and explore how these theories influenced their work, using the log as a springboard for description and reflection. In order to increase the validity of the study, further perspectives on their leadership practices were obtained through interviews with the General Managers of the associations and a selection of Head Teachers with whom they worked. Relevant additional material, such as job descriptions and Association reports, was also collected. The interviews were transcribed and sorted into categories that arose out of the material.

The personal ideas of this group of Senior Teachers about leadership were found to be similar to those identified in several studies of women leaders in schools. These ideas included a commitment to children and to teaching and learning and a preference for collaborative, supportive leadership.

The ways in which these Senior Teachers were able to carry out their ideas about collaboration, power sharing and supportive action within the setting of their job, were described and analysed. The dilemmas for these women were identified as an increase in workload and a multiplicity of additional jobs, and an intrusion of work into their private lives. In most cases, the question of where power and authority lay between the Senior Teacher and the General Manager was a constraint, and there were role tensions in their relationships with the Association.

The study argues that despite the dilemmas, tensions and constraints described above, these women managed to enact their leadership in ways that were mostly consistent with their personal theories of leadership. They used a variety of strategies in order to ensure that their leadership was consistent with the values they had about teacher support and their aspirations for young children and the kindergarten service.

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Introduction

Over the last few years there has been considerable interest in the concept of leadership in early childhood. Manuals on management and administration have included sections on leadership and the role of the director (Simons 1986; Jorde Bloom et al 1991; Hayden 1996); and textbooks on leadership have been published (Rodd 1994; 1998). Recently the American organisation the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) took a leap forward from the previous more prescriptive and often competency based material in commissioning *Leadership in Early Education and Care* (Kagan and Bowman 1997) which endeavours to provide a forum for the discussion of 'current understandings' of leadership in early childhood. In the preface, the authors say:

Leadership in early care and education has many facets, including and not limited to management and administration...At its core is a deep knowledge of the field, a willingness to take risks, and a breadth of vision and thinking that transcends individual programmes, services or organisations. Leadership in early care and education is innovative, but sensitive to history, diversity and context, and it is collaborative yet bold. (xi - xii)

This stance is new to the early childhood field which has historically tended to equate leadership with management, a problem that Kagan and Bowman acknowledge in asking for a wider definition of who are the leaders.

In their introduction to the book, Kagan and Bowman identify as an issue in leadership the slowness of the field in understanding and interpreting findings and theory from other fields. While acknowledging that in the past leadership theory may not have been appropriate to early childhood

because of its hierarchical, top down orientation they feel that the more modern leadership approaches

support collaborative leadership and respect the role of gender in leadership development; these are more in concert with early childhood principles and practices (5- 6).

Despite this statement, the references for the articles in this book are either from the early childhood field or from the field of management. Most often cited from management are Bennis (1993) *On becoming a leader*; Senge (1990) *The fifth discipline*; and Gardner (1995a) *Leading minds* and *On leadership* (1995b). Except for one mention of Sally Helgeson (1990) *The female advantage: women's ways of leadership*, there is no mention of the growing literature on women in leadership, either in business or in education. The use of literature and research based on men's experience is still prevalent.

Since the late 1980s, however, there has been a growing field of literature on women in leadership, both in management and in education. Some of this material has argued the case for a women's perspective on leadership (Blackmore 1989; Grundy 1993; Gosetti and Rusch 1995; Strachan 1993) and some of it has also researched how women lead (Shakeshaft 1989; Neville 1988; Court 1989; 1994; Helgeson 1990; Olsson 1996; Ozga 1993; Pringle 1996; Shakeshaft 1995; Hall 1996; Blackmore 1996). Essentially, both research and argument have promoted a flatter, less hierarchical structure, based on collaboration and power sharing. This is the style that early childhood writers recommend as appropriate for the profession (Kagan 1994; Espinosa 1997) but without using the research that has been done in other fields, as Kagan and Bowman acknowledge.

The New Zealand context

In the administration of early childhood services, the ideas of market managerialism that underpin the recent developments in school management systems have also underpinned early childhood systems. The vocabulary of inputs and outcomes, cost, efficiency and quality have become part of daily language and practice (Codd 1990). There has been little theorising on appropriate leadership for early childhood settings.

The Education Review Office, which has published several booklets on quality in various sectors of early childhood, talk of management and administration, rather than leadership. For instance, in *What Counts as Quality in Kindergartens* (ERO 1997) they define kindergarten Senior Teachers as 'managers of professional practice' rather than professional leaders. The *Desirable Objectives* (Ministry of Education 1996) and *Quality in Action* (Ministry of Education 1998) which are the guidelines for implementation of early childhood programmes refer to 'management and educators' throughout and write in the language of outcomes, thus begging the question of whether there should be leadership and, if so, what kind.

While there has been theorising in early childhood on the topic of leadership, there has been very little research on what early childhood practitioners see as appropriate leadership qualities. Nor is there research that describes how women lead in early childhood. In New Zealand, there has not been a study of educational leaders in early childhood for more than ten years (Meade 1985). Yet in that time the management structures have become stronger and leaders and managers have reported increased tensions and greatly increased workloads for them within all early childhood settings (Wylie 1993; Dalli 1993; Mitchell 1995; Davidson 1997a; 1997b).

A personal interest

I have been teaching courses in leadership, management and administration in early childhood since 1992. During that time I have been consistently frustrated at the small amount of research material that there is about leadership in early childhood, and the total lack of New Zealand research material. In addition, I was interested in the comments from many of my students (kindergarten Senior and Head Teachers and childcare supervisors) about their difficulties in carrying out leadership in the collaborative way that they insisted that they felt most comfortable with, in a hierarchical, line management environment. These women indicated that the accountability requirements of the Ministry of Education and of their employers meant that they were not supposed to

share their leadership role, and they found this very difficult.

In 1995, as part of my MEd Admin study, I attended a series of lectures by Marian Court on women in educational administration. I was introduced to the research in this field which suggested that there could be a style of leadership that many women preferred that was more collaborative than my students and the literature suggested. Furthermore, many early childhood leaders were not alone in finding working within a system that did not allow for shared leadership within its accountability processes. Many women leaders in education in particular felt that way.

When I came to develop the research proposal for my thesis, I was sure that I wanted to study leadership in early childhood. My first proposal included childcare, playcentre and kindergarten participants. However, it was pointed out to me that time and money constraints would make this difficult to carry out, and that such comparisons would add yet another variable to my study. Consequently I decided base my study within the kindergarten service. I come from a kindergarten background, am familiar with the structure and nature of kindergartens and have contacts within the organisation that made it possible to get started on the topic. I decided that this would be a qualitative study of a small group of Senior Teachers.

The study

This exploratory study sets out to add to the small body of research into leadership in early childhood, and to relate it to the larger body of research into women in leadership and particularly women in leadership in education. In particular, it focusses on early childhood leadership in the New Zealand context, examining professional leadership in the kindergarten movement.

There are two main aims for the study.

1. To study the constructions of leadership of a group of Senior Teachers in the kindergarten service.

2. To investigate the effects of the administrative changes in early childhood education since *Before Five* on the leadership and job experiences of these women.

From these aims, the following research questions were developed:

1. What perspectives on leadership and personal theories of leadership do a group of Senior Teachers have for themselves?
2. How do they work as leaders and how is their work as leaders perceived? Particularly, how do they utilise power and authority, and how do they handle communication and decision making?
3. What constraints/enabling factors have they experienced in being an educational leader in the kindergarten service since *Before Five*?
4. What other constraints (societal, personal) do they experience in this role?

Chapter One reviews the literature on leadership in early childhood, investigating its origins and the influences on thinking within the field. It also reviews theory and research on women in educational leadership, and investigates research on ways in which women leaders cope in a New Right context. Chapter Two discusses the New Zealand kindergarten context, detailing the philosophical origins of the movement and its position as a support for women and children. It analyses changes for the movement in relation to New Right attitudes to women and children and describes the effects that a managerial structure has had on the kindergarten service, both physically and philosophically.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used. A case study of six Senior Teachers was undertaken. All of the interviewees were volunteers. In addition to interviews with the six, they were asked to document their work for a week and to provide job descriptions and other relevant

material for discussion and analysis. In order to obtain a wider perspective on their work, interviews were also conducted with the General Managers with whom they worked, and one or more Head Teachers from within the group of kindergartens that they worked with.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present and discuss the results. Chapter Four analyses the perspectives on leadership that the Senior Teachers have for themselves. Chapter Five investigates how they work as leaders, using the material from the variety of sources described above to explore the ways in which their work is underpinned by their ideals. In particular, it investigates the ways in which power, decision making and communication are handled. Chapter Six examines the changes to the job that have occurred in the present New Right climate, explores the constraints, dilemmas and tensions of leadership for these Senior Teachers, and suggests reasons why they are able to carry out leadership in ways to which they are committed.

The study concludes with a summary of the results and a discussion of the pertinence of this study and other possible studies to early childhood research in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapter One

Leadership: A Literature Review

This chapter will review theory and research on leadership in early childhood. The ideas from this writing will be located within wider the context of leadership research and theory: both empirical research and theoretical ideas developed by critical theorists. In addition, relevant research on women in educational leadership will be reviewed, and the relationship between power, leadership theory and the neo liberal ideas of the New Right will be discussed. It will be argued that for early childhood, the principal influences on ideas about leadership come from industry and business. However, material on educational leadership and particularly women in educational leadership is also relevant. The chapter ends with a discussion of research into the dilemmas for women leading in a managerialist environment.

LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: INFLUENCES FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The dominant model of leadership in early childhood education has been influenced by traditional ideas about management and leadership, derived from empirical research in administrative theory within both industry and education.

During the 1920s, research into leadership attempted to identify the personality traits that explained what made a 'good leader'. The findings of this research dominated leadership theory until the 1950s. Watkins (1989:13) speculates that this has been because we all idolise the presumed

characteristics of leaders and because 'the approach has been nurtured by business magnates to justify their own position through myths and legends that endorse their prowess.'

The reviews of this research conducted by Stogdill in 1948 and 1970 (described in Owens 1991) concluded that the research had not identified any traits that were consistently identified with leadership. The conclusion was that the personal traits that lead to effective leadership vary with the situation and with the demands placed on the leader. Owens (1991:133-4) identifies three contingency variables identified by Stogdill:

the characteristics of the group being led (for example, maturity level, level of trust, cohesiveness), the nature of the group's task or mission (for example clarity of goals, complexity of tasks), and the psychological environment in which leadership is attempted (for example, levels of ambiguity, uncertainty, threat and conflict)... have an impact on the ability of individuals to lead effectively.

The behaviourist emphasis of the forties and fifties led to further study of what leaders do within given situations. Several rating scales were developed. These included Halpin's (Halpin 1966) LBDQ (Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire) which was used to measure leadership ideology and leadership style in the US air force. This questionnaire identified two major clusters of behaviour consideration, which included items related to warm, participative relations, and initiation of structure which related to task initiation and facilitation. There have been several instruments for choosing leaders and improving leadership skills that have arisen out of this and subsequent research conducted by Halpin and others as part of the Ohio State Leadership Studies. One of these is Blake and Mouton's (1980) Managerial Grid.

Since the 1960s a further series of contingency theories have been developed. These theories acknowledge that the effects of leadership behaviour and the situation and task are interdependent. Fiedler's Contingency Model (1967) is an attempt to synthesise trait theory and situational theory. His LPC (Least Preferred Co-worker) rating scale

identifies leaders who are 'task-motivated' and leaders who are 'relationship motivated'. The model of situational control that accompanies this is based on three features of a situation: leader-member relations, task structure and position power. Another variable is the nature of the situation: effective styles vary according to the degree of control inherent in the situation and the ambiguity of the task.

There has been considerable research into the field of leadership training using this theory, where it is alleged that results show that training can affect the leader's situational control. The ideas have been used in leadership training in education, although Owens (1991) comments that while Fiedler's perception of principals is that they have high position power in a situation where the tasks (the delivery of the curriculum) are highly structured, in fact modern school principals have many situations, such as ensuring funding and developing a school curriculum that is conducive to learning, that are 'ill structured' and this theory is not helpful in providing a model for practice in such situations.

A more complex theory is Reddin's (1971) 3D theory of leadership, which adds to the 'relationships' and 'tasks' dimensions an 'effectiveness' dimension. This is a measure of the extent to which the leader achieves the goals for which s/he is responsible. Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) situational theory of leadership is similar. The ability to carry out work related tasks is related to a maturity factor, composed of 'the skill and willingness to set high but realistic goals', and 'the skill and willingness to take responsibility for the achievement of these goals'. Commenting on this theory, Owens says:

Essentially, Situational Leadership Theory contends that (1) the maturity level of organisational participants can be increased over time, and (2) as the maturity level of participants increases, the effective leadership style will be characterised by a reduction in task-oriented behaviour and by an increase in relationships-oriented behaviour. (Owens 1991: 155-6).

Yet another contingency theory is Vroom and Yetton's (1973) Normative Decision Theory which identifies five leadership styles on a continuum of autocratic, consultative and group and relates these to seven situation

issues. It does not assume that there is any 'best way' to make a decision - the method will depend on situational factors.

Writers about leadership in early childhood acknowledge that these theories have influenced thinking about leadership and management within the sector (Simons 1986; Jorde Bloom, Sheerer & Britz 1991; Rodd 1994; 1998; Kagan 1994; Hayden 1996). For example, Simons (1986) uses Likert (1967), Blake and Mouton (1969) and Vroom and Yetton (1973) in her description of ways of looking at leadership and group processes.

Hayden (1996), in a chapter on management strategies, uses McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y. In addition, when discussing the difficulties of working with staff with different training levels, she quotes Blanchard, Zigarmi and Zigarmi (1987): 'there is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals' (108). She uses Blanchard's ideas of situational leadership as a basis for a system of management that relates management strategies to staff's developmental levels. This idea is particularly attractive to early childhood teachers, as over the last 10-15 years 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' has been the basis for children's learning programmes, especially in the United States. Teachers' developmental levels as a basis for action also feature in early childhood material on professional development (Katz 1995; Vander Ven 1988).

Jillian Rodd (1998) refers to Hersey and Blanchard (1988) in her references, and uses Neugebauer's (1985) reworking of Reddin in her discussion of leadership; and Paula Jorde Bloom, in reconceptualising leadership styles for early childhood as task-oriented, people oriented and transactional, says:

The work of Blake and Mouton (1969) ... Hersey and Blanchard (1982) and Reddin (1970) are particularly helpful in understanding how different leadership styles can help directors to balance organisational and individual needs (Jorde Bloom, Sheerer & Britz 1991: 36).

Theories of leadership behaviour derived from this empirical research have, however, only limited use in early childhood. In early childhood, both leaders and followers are mostly women, but the leadership research

on which these ideas are based has been carried out by men on groups that consist principally of men. Jill Blackmore (1989: 99-102) writing on women in educational leadership, points out that in education the ideas of leadership are derived from a 'masculinist construct' derived principally from trait theory. Theorists and researchers have assumed from the literature on leadership that the traits of leaders such as aggressiveness, forcefulness, competitiveness and independence 'are universal across time, context and gendered subject'. She says that the literature on women in management, too, focuses on the characteristics of aggressive/dominance, emotional control/sound judgment and self confidence and self esteem, and women are not regarded as suitable leaders if they lack these traits.

Writing in an early childhood context, Simons (1986: 101) agrees with this argument, pointing out as well that that the line of thinking that describes a leader as a person who has 'skills and knowledge together with some personal magnetism', is not useful because it implies that leadership cannot be learned. Further, the research has seldom been carried out on people involved in education. More recently, Kagan (1994: 51) goes on to say that for early childhood the idea of the leader as 'the single archetypal hero who miraculously manages to save the group and propel it to new heights' is not helpful. She says:

Such traditional conceptualisations ignore the constructs of multiple, shared or joint leadership that are now emerging in contemporary theory and that are present in many early care and education settings that have been conventionally led by women.

POWER, VISION, CULTURE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Early childhood writers on leadership have also been influenced by some of the ideas of critical theory. For critical theorists, discussions of leadership imply concerns about power. Foster (1989: 184) sees leadership as critical reflection and says that power 'must be a dominant concern of leadership. ... leaders who have vision and spirit can share power'.

Important concepts and considerations in such leadership theory are the relationship between leadership and the culture of the institution and the importance of an educational vision in transformative leadership.

Shirley Grundy (1993) theorising about women's leadership from a critical theory viewpoint, divides leadership practices into technical action, practical action and emancipatory praxis. The differences between these practices are typified by the way in which power is regarded. Technical action uses the bureaucratic language of outcomes, goals, implementation strategies and skills development. Principal interest is however, in 'control and the unequal distribution of power within the institutional setting' (168).

Practical action is exemplified by staff involvement, long term goals, shared leadership and facilitation. Grundy says:

Goals will be formulated within consideration of the 'Good' of the client group for which the institution is responsible. Judgment will clearly be central to the determination of that 'Good'. Moreover, educational plans will not simply be concerned with outcomes, but will also entail a concern for the learning processes by clients, and indeed for the quality of the decision making processes of the staff as a whole. The educational leader will, therefore, become a facilitator of the deliberating process rather than a designer of plans... The division of labour between the developer of action plans and the practitioner who enacts the plans will not be as distinct. (169).

In examining the meaning of emancipatory praxis, Grundy says that the ideas for practical action will still hold, but 'judgment' and decisions about what is appropriate will be looked at within a 'socially critical framework'. She provides ideas that are useful in a discussion of power relations, asserting that 'symmetrical communication' is essential to the equalisation of such relations. She suggests that symmetrical communication can be promoted by the development of group processes, including acknowledging unequal patterns of communication particularly those based on gender and status; developing a common group language based on shared meanings; and by sharing the responsibility for group organisation.

Jillian Rodd (1998), writing about leadership in centres, has the clearest use of ideas similar to these. She suggests that women use power differently, preferring 'power to' rather than 'power over'. She writes of the need for trust, collaboration and empowerment in a multifaceted early childhood environment. Rodd uses Sergiovanni's (1990) concepts of 'empowerment, enablement and enhancement' in order to define the way in which early childhood leaders should work. Following Sergiovanni, she defines these concepts:

- Empowerment - where authority and obligation are shared by the leader to result in increased responsibility and accountability throughout the group;
- Enablement - where the leader provides the means and opportunities for and eliminates obstacles to individual growth and development;
- Enhancement - where leader and follower roles are interwoven to produce increased commitment and extraordinary performance. (Rodd 1998: 8)

Rodd suggests that these concepts should affect the work environment and set 'the tone and psychological climate which is the hallmark of a quality programme'. She also suggests that a centre's culture and values are related to the need for a particular leadership style and proposes the development of a 'vision' to underpin a centre philosophy. Sergiovanni's (1990) hierarchy of 'ideas and ideals' of vision, covenant, mission, goals and objectives are recommended to guide centre development.

For other early childhood writers on leadership, such ideas have been modified by a view that cultural and symbolic leadership takes place at the level of a professional or governing body rather than that of the individual centre. Jorde Bloom (1996) while still writing about traits and dispositions in leadership, describes transformational leadership. She says 'leaders within this perspective are viewed as social architects of their organisations who create and maintain values' thus linking transformative leadership to an organisational rather than a centre level. And Hayden (1996: 88) says:

Organisational directors, university academics, community group directors, Association executives and other professionals are more well placed, have more time, and frequently have, as part of their mandate, the responsibilities associated with

cultural leadership.

Vision and culture are not seen as important for individual centre staff to develop. They are seen as related to public leadership:

Managers ... construct a vision of the ideal situation, and inspire others to work towards it. They give public airing to this vision in a way which makes staff members feel proud and privileged to be part of their organisation and of the goals to which it strives.

Most ideas about vision in American early childhood writing, however, come from a different source from education. Sharon Kagan and Michelle Neuman (1997), who have developed ideas of conceptual leadership that include visionary leadership, and Linda Espinosa (1997) who writes about vision and courage as important personal attributes of leadership are again principally influenced by ideas from outside education. There are no educationalists, and no women except Rodd on their reference lists or in their discussion. Senge (1990), who writes from a business perspective, and Howard Gardner (1995b) are their principal references for ideas on leadership and vision. For Americans in early childhood, there are reasons for the emphasis on business ideas. The writing about leadership comes from the perspective of childcare as a business, and writers need to straddle the gulf between running a business and providing quality educational programmes for children.

However, Rodd (1998) points out that working conditions for early childhood leaders are unusual and complex. They work directly with parents and children from many different backgrounds; they work in conditions of 'considerable autonomy and isolation' where they may have to exercise their professional judgment quickly. They are often responsible to management committees who have little or no educational knowledge or management experience; and they can come to management positions at a young age, when they are still in what Katz (1995) describes as 'survival mode'.

In New Zealand, for Senior Teachers in the kindergarten service, it will become evident that some of the above conditions manifest themselves.

All kindergarten teachers have a similar training, gained from a College of Education or accredited private provider. But their profession consists principally of women; they work in conditions of considerable complexity, with voluntary management committees of varying expertise, they can be in a position of isolation, working on their own or in small groups, and they often have very little control over the policies that they are asked to implement. Their situational control is limited, and features of leadership behaviour that are not what they regard as their 'style' may be required from them. In addition, they work at an 'organisational' level, not a centre level and are have the symbolic standing as professional leaders in their organisation that Hayden, Jorde Bloom and Neuman (previously cited) say that visionary leadership should lie.

WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

As we have seen, theories of leadership style and behaviour are historically based on a view of organisations and relationships that originates in what Shakeshaft (1989: 147) calls 'male based knowledge'. Women are invisible because male behaviour is seen as the norm and women's behaviour an 'add-on' (Gossetti & Rusch 1995). Organisations are seen as hierarchical, and leadership behaviour is based on 'rationality, individuality and moral principles' (Blackmore 1989: 95). Appropriate leadership behaviour is still often seen (especially by lay people who administer schools) as characterised by what Blackmore calls the masculinist traits of 'aggressiveness, forcefulness, competitiveness and independence' (ibid: 100).

Nevertheless, some recent research undertaken in schools has indicated that there is a female culture of leadership and management (Shakeshaft 1989; Neville 1988; Court 1994; Strachan 1993a; 1998; Hall 1996; 1997). Shakeshaft likens this culture to Gilligan's (1982) Ethic of Caring. She describes this as having the perspective of the morality of response and care, which emphasises maintaining relationships and promoting the welfare of others, whereas the male administrative world has the

perspective of the morality of justice, which emphasises individualism, duty and rules. The women administrators in the schools in Shakeshaft's research regarded relationships to others as central to their actions. They communicated more, motivated more and spent more time with marginal teachers and students; morale was higher and relations with parents were more favourable. A school climate was developed that was conducive to learning; their style was more democratic and participatory and encouraged inclusiveness; and they encouraged a broad view of the curriculum and the whole child. In addition, they showed a greater knowledge of teaching techniques and spent time helping new teachers. Building community was part of their style too: they involved themselves with staff and students. On a more personal level, however, a feeling of marginality overlaid their daily life: they always felt that they were on display to the male world. In addition, the line separating the public from the private world was blurred.

Shakeshaft points out also that the characteristics of women's ways of leadership that she found fits in with the ideas of how to run successful schools. She is supported in this by Sergiovanni (1992a) who acknowledges a debt to the research on women as educational leaders in his ideas.

Valerie Hall (1996), researching women in leadership in English schools, found that they favoured 'power for rather than power over': that is, power to empower or shared power, particularly with senior colleagues. Typically, they saw power as the ability to make things happen. They also preferred development goals and aimed to create organisational cultures characterised by trust, openness, involvement and a sense of self worth. They showed a commitment to children as well as to education, and had made lifestyle choices that had enabled them to combine their work and their private lives. Nevertheless they were:

committed to the belief that sharing leadership still required them to take the lead when appropriate ... Their actions for these purposes were collaborative rather than directive but ... included clarifying the direction and ensuring people were reminded of where they were going (Hall 1996: 192).

These findings about women in educational leadership are supported by research in New Zealand. From her study of 16 successful women in education, Neville (1988) has a similar list of leadership characteristics that include power sharing and empowering others, courage and risk taking, emphasis on the educative function, an ability to cope with trivia and a history of capable classroom action. Court (1994) found that the group of leading women in education whom she studied had a holistic, affiliative approach to leadership. They emphasised building relationships, shared decision making and the empowerment of others. They built learning environments through teamwork and open communication, and they emphasised their role in instructional leadership.

Court also also points out that women face contradictory expectations in leadership and suggests that these may result from a stereotype of women as nurturant and relationship oriented:

They are surrounded by expectations that they will fill nurturant rather than authoritative leadership roles... yet they are also expected to lead. Their leadership is expected to employ consultation and democratic decision making strategies, yet these ways of working can often be interpreted as the leader 'not having a mind of her own' - perhaps she can't make up her mind? (Court 1994: 41)

Neville (1988) Court (1989) and Strachan (1993b) have also commented on the interweaving of women's personal and professional lives. The dilemmas that ensue from balancing expectations of career with those of wife and mother are particularly evident in this research.

Relevant to studies on women in educational leadership is one early childhood study. Jillian Rodd and Margaret Clyde, researching in Victoria, Australia, studied early childhood co-ordinators' perceptions and understandings of 'the attributes, roles and responsibilities that they consider to be associated with leadership in the early childhood profession' (Rodd 1996: 121). The research consisted initially of a questionnaire sent to childcare coordinators, and later of 100 structured interviews of experienced, trained coordinators. They report that

In addition to being kind, patient, warm, nurturant and so on, effective leaders were perceived ... to be goal oriented, having a

planning orientation, assertive, proactive, professionally confident, visionary, influential and a mentor or guide (122).

In relation to early childhood in particular, the interviewees considered that the most important skills were

to develop good working relationships with all concerned within the centre, to acknowledge staff strengths and provide constructive feedback, to assist less qualified staff, assist in resolving staff disagreements and to participate in but not dominate decision making. In relation to parents, ... it was essential to be responsive to parents' needs and to be able to articulate in everyday and convincing language the philosophy, aims, program and benefits of childcare... to communicate one's own strengths and vision (ibid).

Rodd and Clyde identified the following dimensions of leadership from their research:

- being a guide to children and staff;
- acting like a professional;
- being a good communicator;
- being able to meet people's needs;
- being a multifaceted and flexible person;
- taking responsibility; and
- being visionary. (p 123)

It is interesting to note, however, that they relate their findings to Howard Gardner's (1995: 124 -4) conceptualisation of leadership as 'the ability ... to markedly influence the significant behaviours, thoughts and feelings of a significant number of people' rather than to those of women in education. Rodd and Clyde also report that the women were reluctant to talk about their leadership ideas. They considered that the conceptualisation of leadership in early childhood was as yet 'simplistic and naive'.

These findings are echoed by in a study done in New Zealand. Ann Hatherly (1997: 51- 52), studying the organisational culture of a childcare centre, found that the director saw leadership as

focussed on systems and a belief in nurturing people, rather than on pedagogical leadership... 'good' leadership was about being supportive and approachable rather than pushing out the boundaries of expectations.

These ideas echo the findings about women leaders in education reported

above, although on a less complex level. Emphasis is on stereotypical nurturant personal and professional relationships as described by Court (1994). There is no mention of the emphasis on improving teaching and learning or supporting teachers in their teaching, as described by Shakeshaft (1989) and Hall (1996) in particular. Leadership is perceived generally, rather than in an educational context.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN A MANAGERIALIST CONTEXT

Although the kindergarten service is staffed principally by women, it exists within the managerial, gendered context of the New Right management which will be described in the next chapter. In particular, Ministry of Education and Education Review Office requirements about management systems and accountability of Boards and Management Committees have an effect on the responsibilities of senior staff. Consequently, theorising and research about the effects of managerialism on women in educational leadership is relevant to Senior Teachers.

While it is acknowledged that women in educational management are not a homogeneous group (Adler et al 1993; Ozga 1993; Hall 1996) feminist management styles are seen by some writers as antagonistic to linear management and the New Right ideology. In particular, Adler, Laney and Packer (1993:135) see an inherent contradiction between 'maintaining feminist principles and holding a powerful position in a linear hierarchy'.

Furthermore, Strachan (1995a: 223), talking about leadership style and the culture that leaders are expected to work in, asks whether managerialism and ideas about the delivery of social justice as described above are compatible. She goes on to say that those who wish to practice alternative forms of leadership to managerialism, including feminist leadership, may find their leadership agenda compromised and their position untenable because they have come from a position of advocating for women's 'beliefs, values and attitudes' and this can lead to their being concerned with an emancipatory agenda.

Concern has also been expressed about the extent to which the present managerialist focus in educational administration disempowers women. Ozga and Walker (1996: 37- 38) point out in reference to the discourses of Human Resource Management and Total Quality Management

although they seem to stress group work, cohesiveness and collaboration, their origins do not lie in any recognition of disempowerment, but in the entrepreneurialism of the 1980s. .. Tensions between individuality and teamwork are resolved by a strong corporate culture in pursuit of its mission ... strong culture/cohesion is achieved through a set of managerially sanctioned values .

Blackmore (1995:49), asserts that while the ethic of care described earlier, and the attendant style and characteristics, have been largely accepted as an appropriate basis for educational administration, there are still problems. The style that women use and their values to do with communication and decision making have, in some devolved school systems, meant that there is a polarisation between the financial and policy responsibilities of management, and the teaching and teacher supervision responsibilities. Work to do with teaching and teachers is seen as 'soft' and the province of women. She refers to this as the 'deprofessionalisation of teaching' and says that this can mean that collaborative leaders, especially if they are women, can be seen as powerless. And Craig Prichard, researching in the further education sector in the UK, found that women essentially became middle managers. Here they were able to use their skills in team leadership, but they struggled with the idea that 'real' management was to do with economic efficiency and strategic planning, often trying to use two competing discourses at once. He calls this the feminisation of educational management, warning that there is:

a shift in managerial discourse from bureaucratic paternalism... to team based 'empowerment' and facilitation regimes which distribute responsibility for outcomes 'downward' but retain tight central control of resources (Prichard 1998: 22).

The competing discourses of marketisation and educational practice (Peters and Marshall 1996; Blackmore 1996) make for tensions in educational leadership. Jill Blackmore points out that on the one hand, there are the collaborative ideals that educational leaders are expected to work from, and on the other hand there are the ideas of competition and

control that pervade the market philosophy. Describing the experiences of the women in schools in her research, she says:

A market orientation intervened not only in important collaborative relationships based on shared experience, resources and information, but it actively undermined key principles of professional development based in collegiality, trust and open communication (324).

Summarising the findings of her research on the topic, Hall echoes Grundy's (1993) position:

Gender thus becomes entwined with critical theories of education and leadership that condemn educational management practice that controls rather than liberates and prioritises efficiency and means over ethics and morals. Such leadership is seen by many as antipathetic to educational values and an attempt to replace them with the values of the marketplace which encourage technicist, rational solutions to human problems. (Hall 1997:321).

In a recent New Zealand study, Strachan (1998:2) researched three feminist secondary school woman principals. She explored how they managed to remain student focussed in a neo liberal, education context with 'increased financial, accountability and marketing responsibilities'. She found that they managed this by both 'resisting and appropriating the opportunities and demands created by the Reforms'. While some aspects of the neo liberal ideas, such as student focus, fitted with their leadership ideas, others, such as a shift to managerialism, did not. Within their varying school contexts, the women had different discourses of leadership and different personal value systems. However, they all espoused the perspective of the ethic of care, supporting students, the community and the staff. The intertwined themes of their responses to neo liberalism were those of resistance, uneasy agreement, and appropriation. Strachan says that these responses caused tensions and contradictions for them.

As we shall see in this research, there are very similar dilemmas for Senior Teachers to those described by Strachan and Blackmore respectively. One question that this research poses is how the Senior Teachers experience the constraints of the present managerialist system.

SUMMARY

Theories of leadership and notions about leadership practice in early childhood have until recently been influenced principally by ideas that have been developed from industry rather than education and from research carried out on men. Transformational leadership, vision and symbolic leadership are only newly discovered as are ideas about gender influences on leadership. As a consequence, the limited research into leadership in this field draws on ideas from outside education rather than those related specifically to education or to women in leadership. In addition, although there is research that investigates the constraints that women principals experience in working in a New Right, managerialist environment there are very few findings that describe the effect on leaders in early childhood and in kindergarten in particular. The next chapter will contextualise this study within the kindergarten movement and present government policies and position the Senior Teachers within this setting.

Chapter Two

The Kindergarten Service in New Zealand: the Context for the Study

Organisations should be studied in context. Foster (1989) points out that both the internal politics of an organisation and its relationship with the environment are important, particularly in relation to influence and control and the negotiation of the use of resources. This chapter contextualises the kindergarten movement, describing its origins and development, and highlighting its philosophy and administration. The tensions that have arisen through government definitions of the role of kindergartens and consequent funding regimes are also described and analysed. The second part of the chapter looks more closely at the kindergarten associations and the way in which the administrative and funding changes have impacted on their administration, and more particularly on the Senior Teachers' jobs.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FREE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT

The beginnings

The first recorded free kindergarten in New Zealand opened in 1889 in Dunedin as a philanthropic charity. Further kindergartens opened in Christchurch and Auckland in the following 20 years. Government funding began in 1894, and by 1914 the government was providing a subsidy of two pounds per child (May 1997a: 77). Initially kindergartens were a philanthropic childcare service for the poor where women had to

work on order to survive, but by the end of the 19th century the emphasis had shifted to the ideal of 'sacred motherhood'. The kindergarten movement supported and extended to the working class, the middle class idea that childrearing was valuable, both at home and in kindergartens. The teachers, and especially their trainers, were women who were liberal for their time and active supporters of education for women. Helen May says

The kindergarten sought to transcend the liberal code of a public and private dichotomy: the kindergarten became an extension of the home, but in the public arena (May 1997a: 75).

The number of kindergartens grew under a voluntary management model. They were funded with capitation grants, voluntary donations and fundraising activities until after World War Two. The Bailey Report (1947) recommended that preschool education should be funded and controlled by the State, saying that 'the voluntary principle is generally repugnant as it carries overtones of charity' (quoted in May 1997a: 212). The Report saw kindergartens (and playcentres) as part of a national system that would support childrearing. However, the opposition to complete government funding by the Kindergarten Association and the Playcentre Association, both of whom resisted the loss of control over such things as programmes and staffing that government funding would mean, led to a compromise whereby there was some state funding for both teaching and teacher training. In the case of the kindergartens, this funding was channelled through the Kindergarten Associations. In addition, the establishment of a preschool section in the Department of Education gave some control over the use of the money. Helen May says:

Early childhood services were situated amidst a complex interface of beliefs: welfare and employment policies which assumed that men would be breadwinners and women homemakers; progressive education policies which valued playful learning experiences for children outside the home; and pronatalist views which sought to encourage women to value childrearing and rear more children (May 1997a: 212).

The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Preschool Education (the Hill Report 1971: 73) stated that the time for direct state control of preschool services had passed. Instead, noting that the government already

paid the salaries and training allowances of the kindergarten teachers as well as providing subsidies for building sites and equipment and an allowance to kindergarten associations, it recommended that the present system of voluntary administration continue, thus allowing for a variety of programmes (such as playcentres and family playgroups) to be funded. The Hill Report saw the role of the preschool centre to be in supporting parents, because they lacked 'the knowledge, the wherewithal and the time' to provide 'a rich developmental environment for their children'; it also saw time away from children as supporting the quality of the parent-child relationship. The committee said:

It is not a case of usurping the functions of the parents. It is a matter of providing a service which is an extension of the home, which involves the parents and which supports them in providing the conditions which provide growth (Hill Report 1971: 27).

Helen May (1990; 1997b) sees the Hill Report as 'further institutionalising' kindergartens and playcentres, to the exclusion of childcare. It allowed the government to support the services which promoted families with women at home rearing children and it legitimated and funded these services because they fitted within the patriarchal assumptions of society. Anne Meade (1990: 41) relates this to the State seeing its role as that of nurturance and education, rather than economic support and consequent funded childcare.

Education to be More and Before Five

The Fourth Labour Government (1984-90) sought to dispense with the education and care dichotomy. The Minister of Education, the Rt Hon Russell Marshall, had the linking of care and education on his agenda, and the control of child care was moved from the Social Welfare Department to the Education Department. An Early Childhood Division was set up in the Department of Education, which administered all early childhood services. When the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon David Lange, became Minister of Education in 1987, he convened the Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group (the Meade Committee). Anne Meade, the chairperson, writing about the work of this committee, sees its report *Education to be More* (1988) as exhibiting a policy shift that benefited

women and children, from a government that had articulated commitment to this in their manifesto (Meade 1990).

The Meade Report saw early childhood education as having features that were in the interests of both the children and the caregivers, especially women. It supported diversity in the provision of early childhood services. The government's role was seen as helping to meet the costs of early childhood education, and as working to raise standards of care and education. It identified the cause of the low status, funding and wages in early childhood as being the 'high involvement of women' (Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group 1988:32). It recommended increased equity of access and equity of funding for early childhood services and identified kindergartens as being the only service that was 'reasonably funded' (43). The intention was eventually to fund all services at the same rate as kindergartens (Meade 1990; Mitchell 1994; 1995; Davidson 1997b). The structure of administering bodies was to be similar to that recommended for primary and secondary schools in the Picot Report, with Boards of Trustees drawn from the community of the service being responsible for administering early childhood settings, and with charters based on government policy and regulations, but allowing local communities a chance to write policy that they regarded as important to them.

Before Five (Lange 1988), the subsequent statement of administrative intent by the government did not follow up on all of these recommendations. Following representations from several parts of the sector, it acknowledged that

early childhood services are likely to continue with their present management structures ... The size, membership and election of committees will be determined by the service's proprietor, whanau or sponsoring group. (5)

For kindergartens, this meant that the structure of management by voluntary bodies continued.

Before Five differentiated between the responsibilities of management and professional staff. It gave management the responsibility for

broad policy objectives and the effective running of the service - they will be responsible for charters, for budgets and the spending of bulk funding grants, for property and for staffing matters ... The management will be responsible for the children's care and education needs. The management will have to demonstrate to the Ministry of Education that they have the ability to carry out what they have pledged in their charter; and they will have to have management-accountability procedures acceptable to the Ministry...

The Head Teacher, supervisor or co-ordinator is and will continue to be the professional leader of the early childhood service (Lange 1988:6).

For kindergartens, *Before Five* legitimated the existing systems. The system of local associations employing staff for their group of kindergartens and managing them through an association secretary and the Senior Teacher was left intact. Unlike the situation in schools, there are two layers of management in early childhood. Each Association has a Board, which has responsibilities similar to a Board of Trustees. In addition, each kindergarten has a management committee, made up principally of parents. Funding is made at the association level and is then apportioned to the kindergarten committees.

After Before Five

Dalli (1993) reports that a feeling of optimism prevailed in early childhood from 1988-90. It was felt that the whole sector was about to make a breakthrough in funding, training and pay rates, and in procedures that would lead to quality programmes in childcare as well as kindergartens (Dalli, 1993, May 1992, Meade 1990). However, the policies developed subsequent to the election of the National Government in 1990 undid many of these gains. The Treasury briefing document to the incoming government, while acknowledging that 'good quality preschool education and care aids socialisation and leads to better educational outcomes later in life' went on to say that while quality was desirable

many of the existing regulations are likely to raise the pay of preschool staff, largely at the expense of their clients and the taxpayer. By pushing up costs, excessive regulation discriminates against the poor (including those who would like to work) and ensures that many families who could benefit from preschools

do not have one available (NZ Treasury 1991: 8).

The perception of early childhood education in this document comes from a deficit model of education for the disadvantaged, to be achieved at minimum cost. Early childhood education for the economically disadvantaged was to be funded through individual subsidies, a New Right idea that will be discussed later in this chapter.

On receipt of this advice, the government stopped the gradual implementation of improved funding for kindergartens, halted the Per Session Unit Staffing Scheme (PSU) which was intended to place three teachers to 40 children in kindergartens, and changed the regulations to allow kindergartens to charge fees (Dalli 1993; Mitchell 1995). A series of reviews of early childhood services were implemented and the 1991 Budget brought in bulk funding for kindergartens at a capped 1991 level and removed the necessity for compulsory registration for kindergarten teachers, thus allowing kindergarten associations to employ staff with lower qualifications. The implications of this move were that that services would be self-managed and finally self funded and privatised. The ability of kindergartens to charge fees and the devolution of responsibility to associations meant that eventually the government could stop funding kindergartens altogether if they wished (Mitchell 1995: Davidson 1997b).

These changes were represented as bringing kindergartens in line with the rest of the early childhood services, which are bulk funded, and was justified on the grounds of equity and choice for early childhood families. Clare Wells (quoted in Dalli 1993) has, however, identified bulk funding as arising from Treasury's New Right agenda. Michael Apple describes this agenda as a conflict between property rights and person rights, where

the gains made by women and men in employment, health and safety, welfare programmes, affirmative action, legal rights and education must be rescinded since they are 'too expensive' both economically and ideologically (Apple 1991 :6 -7).

For the New Right, working within a neoliberal framework, it is sufficient to guarantee individual choice under a free market (Olssen and Morris

Matthews 1997). The quality of service, beyond a basic, regulatory level, is not necessarily a consideration and neither do the benefits to women, children and families outlined in the Meade Report. Mitchell (1995: 86) describes these changes as an 'agenda of privatisation.'

A survey of both staff and association chairpersons on the effects of bulk funding (Wylie 1993 :vi) found an increase in stress and workload for staff and voluntary personnel; pressure on kindergartens to keep their roll numbers up and to increase group size; more reliance on parents' financial contributions; a widening in the gap in resources for kindergartens in low income areas; and an emphasis by associations on individual kindergarten's ability to survive financially on their own. The report noted that despite concerns about bulk funding, associations had tried to adhere to the principle of 'free' kindergartens and had not imposed fees. To date, kindergartens have not cut salaries or used large numbers of untrained teachers, (Early Childhood Education Project 1996 Table:28), although they have used untrained relief staff. In general, they have tried to increase revenue by increasing session attendance, and through investments. Money is seldom available to build new kindergartens but is used for the extension and upkeep of the present buildings. Budget deficits and closures have been reported in lower socio economic areas (Dalli 1993; Mitchell 1995; Davidson 1997b).

Further reports on the impact of bulk funding were commissioned by the Ministry of Education and carried out by Ruth Houghton and Anthony Wilson from Otago University in 1991 and 1993. The second report noted that

autonomy and flexibility in management are believed to have increased for most associations as a result of bulk funding. The ability to plan expenditure and income increased for half the associations while the ability to maintain buildings decreased for nearly two thirds of associations (Houghton & Wilson 1993:19)¹

Staff morale was reported to have worsened. Houghton and Wilson also reported increased workloads for all staff - teaching and administrative - and for parent volunteers. Dougherty (1994) also reported that workloads

¹ Underlining in the original

for parents and staff had increased. Claire Davidson (1997b) comments that there was little evidence of the flexibility that the Government had anticipated from bulk funding. Davidson, a Senior Teacher, expressed concern from the perspective of the kindergarten service when she went on to say:

Yet advocates of the New Right ideology would have found some satisfaction at the 'progress' within the sector. Kindergartens' funding was now capped, limiting the State's input to the 1991 level of funding. ... Bulk funding had now devolved the responsibility for kindergarten provision to the kindergarten associations and the low level of the bulk grant would be likely to force them to charge fees, employ untrained staff, compete with other services and operate in a manner more like other fee charging services. ... The stage was set for the State to withdraw from responsibility in the early childhood sector. The market would then regulate the sector and dictate the quality of services provided (Davidson 1997b:18).

Bulk funding was frozen at the 1991 level until 1995 when kindergarten associations were offered either a new, slightly raised, rate or funding under the childcare quality funding rate which was lower but would allow them to open for longer and charge fees. This would effectively align kindergarten with childcare rather than allowing an alternative, sessional service. It was not an option that the kindergarten associations were happy with; they resisted (Davidson 1997b). Mitchell reported that by 1995, in addition to the above measures, associations were making ends meet by disbanding senior teachers and special needs positions, and not carrying out maintenance. There were further stress problems and problems in the recruitment and retention of staff. Mitchell, presenting the teacher union's viewpoint, said:

The goals of equitable funding under the *Before Five* provisions have been replaced by arguments for equal funding at the level of the lowest common denominator. So, the Ministry of Education ... writes: "the kindergarten sector seems to be advocating for a return to the former funding system where some services received preferential funding treatment from government. Under current policies the government buys educational hours of a particular quality from early childhood services and overall is neutral in terms of service type. (Mitchell 1995:87)

The coalition government of 1996: 'neutral funding'

The Ministry of Education (1996: 48) again endorsed this position in its briefing to the incoming coalition government in 1996. It acknowledged that early childhood education has a significant role to play in the later achievement of children and in the transmission of culture and language, but it expressed concern that 'moves to raise standards through regulation must be balanced to the extent to which they may also pose barriers to supply, participation and involvement' (35). With regard to kindergartens, it asserted that the higher funding historically received 'has an impact on parents using non-kindergarten services which must charge fees to remain viable' (ibid). It advocated 'a neutral funding regime for the whole early childhood sector through a universal formula that is linked with incentives for quality' (ibid). The implication in this document is that kindergartens should no longer see themselves as a free service, using trained staff to provide education for young children, a possibility that Carmen Dalli had warned about earlier (Dalli 1993). Davidson (1997b) expresses the kindergarten viewpoint on this well. She points out that kindergarten teachers see themselves as part of a quality free service supporting women and children, and supplementing the home, much as the Hill Report (op cit) saw kindergartens.

The kindergarten service is now seeing the consequences of its commitment to a wider range of educational services for under fives. In 1985-86, rather than to join with the other state sector teaching services by recommending a three year training for teachers for children from three to eight, as has been developed in other Western countries such as Australia, they chose, in conjunction with childcare representatives, to support the implementation the training scheme for a three year training for teachers of children from birth to five rather than from three to eight. This scheme was implemented by the government in 1987 (Early Childhood Group 1994). In the same year, the Kindergarten Teachers' Association joined with the Early Childhood Workers Union to form the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa in an attempt to raise the profile of early childhood care and education, and to raise the quality of services throughout the sector (May 1997b).

The kindergarten service feels that the effect of this commitment has been to lower their funding and limit the free education to which they are committed. This perspective was reinforced when the government took urgency early in 1997 to remove kindergarten teachers from the State Services Act. The responsibility for the negotiation of salaries and conditions is now devolved from the State Services Commission to individual kindergarten associations. Some of these associations have responsibility for only one or two kindergartens and their voluntary management committees have little experience in this field. Jenny Shipley, the then Minister for State Services, admitted that this move was intended to forestall attempts to include kindergarten teachers in the equal pay negotiations with primary and secondary teachers².

KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATIONS

It is within the context described above that Associations function and Senior Teachers work.

At the time that this research was carried out (1997) the administration of the kindergarten service was shared by two umbrella organisations: the New Zealand Kindergarten Association and the New Zealand Kindergarten Federation, which broke away in 1991 in a disagreement over the administration of bulk funding (Dalli 1993). The federation consisted of a loose coupling of four large Associations: Auckland, Central North Island, Waikato and Wellington. The Auckland Association has subsequently (1997) left the Federation and works on its own. All the other kindergarten associations belonged to the NZKA.

Each association is bulk funded by the government using a formula related to attendance. They are administered by voluntary committees which employ General Managers³ who hold the licence for the

² NZ Education Review, June 7, 1997.

³ Titles vary throughout the country from CEO to General Manager to Executive Officer to Administrator. The title 'General Manager' has been used throughout this thesis. Agreement about this was gained from associations who use different terminology.

kindergartens. The associations employ the Senior Teachers⁴.

The Senior Teacher scheme has been in place in various forms for more than 30 years. In 1981 it was renegotiated as a professional support scheme for areas that combined several Kindergarten Associations. It was renegotiated again as the Kindergarten Professional Support Scheme in 1988 and was reviewed in 1991 (NZ Kindergarten Assn 1994 : 4). Prior to this review, Senior Teachers worked across associations and worked in teams. For instance, a group of Senior Teachers worked together in the Manawatu, Wanganui and Taranaki Associations and another group in the Wellington, Wairarapa and Marlborough Associations.

In 1985 this Kindergarten Support Scheme was comprehensively evaluated for the Department of Education by NZCER. The research was carried out by Anne Meade. Although some the findings are not entirely relevant to this study, because the scheme has since been restructured, Meade's findings about factors that contributed to the scheme functioning well are of interest. She described these as

structural (optimum size and number of kindergartens per Senior Teacher, solo work or teamwork among Senior Teachers, stability of staff and/or Association and accommodation); personal qualities (a warm, approachable and tactful person who behaved in a professional manner); and relationships that were characterised by a cooperative democratic approach (Meade 1985: abstract).

The personal qualities that kindergarten staff praised also included fairness to staff; ability to keep confidentiality; behaving like a colleague rather than a 'boss person'; understanding of the teacher perspective; and being a good communicator. Meade noted that

The relationships that worked best were those based on democratic decision making rather than those based on hierarchical decision making. If all parties treated the others as experts in their own way with important input to contribute, then all got value from the relationships. Where any one person or group - be it Senior Teacher or EO or Association - attempted to control others and persuade them to their 'right' way, then friction arose and some of the tasks could not be carried out effectively. (Meade 1985: 21)

⁴ Titles vary here too. Two Associations use 'Managers of Professional Practice'. Again, agreement was sought on the use of 'Senior Teachers' to cover people in this position.

The main benefit of the scheme, for both kindergarten teachers and Associations, was seen as professional support for teachers. 'Snags' (sic) were time pressures, workload and professional isolation. Difficulties in relationships with the Associations were also mentioned: 'too much control' and 'caught in the middle' were phrases used by interviewees (15).

In 1991 the scheme was restructured and Senior Teachers are now employed by either one or two associations (Wylie 1993; NZKA Report 1994). Most Senior Teachers are either full time senior teachers, or teach half time in kindergartens. They work either on their own or in groups of up to four. Numbers vary as Kindergarten Associations restructure.

Senior Teachers' work

The job description (for both K3 and K4 positions) for senior teachers employed by the New Zealand Kindergarten Association gives as the primary objective 'the provision of high quality education in kindergartens through sound professional advice and support' (NZKA 1994 : 10, 13). Key tasks are related to the development and implementation of charters and policy, 'acquiring and disseminating and skills and knowledge' of learning and teaching, updating staff on government legislation and association bylaws, professional development plans, and teacher and centre development. The person specifications give as the principal attribute 'the ability to provide strong professional leadership' (16,18). A knowledge of early childhood philosophy, equity issues, the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi and commitment to early childhood are also required. The requirements for communication and decision making are spelt out as:

Ability to work with a team and display an awareness of and acknowledgement for individual members' professional and personal contributions, through listening, supporting and positive encouragement (16, 18).

The Senior Teacher should also be 'visionary and forward thinking' (17).

These requirements reflect contemporary ideas about leadership, described in the previous chapter. In particular, the importance of vision has been

identified for early childhood from mainstream leadership literature (Rodd 1998; Espinosa 1997; Kagan and Bowman 1997). The particular emphasis on personal as well as professional support is identified by Rodd and Clyde (Rodd 1996) as an important leadership component for the supervisors in their research.

Although there is no implicit mention in the job description of carrying out management tasks, in fact Senior Teachers have a role that is midway between the teachers and head teachers and the employing body. They tend to be seen by the kindergarten staff as representatives of the associations, and by the associations as their watchdogs. The NZKA Working Party (1994:40) identified weaknesses and difficulties in the scheme as a lack of support for senior teachers by management; a lack of clear guidelines on the {separate} roles of Senior Teachers and management; and 'a conflict about who Senior Teachers are supporting - is it teachers or management? (ibid).

Furthermore, the advent of bulk funding has increased Senior Teachers' workload (Wylie 1993; Wilson & Houghton 1995), with more administration and managerial work and more time spent advising head teachers on the management of change. Wylie (1993) reports an increase in administration and management tasks since the advent of bulk funding, charters and regulations and Wilson and Houghton report that

senior teachers were seen as becoming more involved in association management through increased planning and policy development. In addition, the pressures felt by teaching staff were believed to have a flow on impact on senior teachers (op cit:32).

For the senior teachers in some associations affiliated to the NZKF there have been changes in job descriptions that are more related to management than to professional leadership. There is a requirement for direct accountability for supporting Association policy, to ensure that kindergartens comply with relevant legislation and Association requirements and in report writing. This accountability is compatible with the Education Review Office requirements for Senior Teachers. They comment that Senior Teachers reports should do more than affirm what

teachers are doing. Rather, they should make judgments about the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the programme, thus becoming an explicit component of the monitoring and reporting process (Education Review Office 1997).

The trend to 'professional management' by a manager who has no background in early childhood has also occurred. Working with the Senior Teachers is a General Manager who is the licensee of the kindergartens. Among the key tasks for this job are consulting with senior teachers and regularly reviewing the scheme, informing the association about 'the management and operation of the scheme' and conducting 'regular meetings using democratic decision making process' so that 'informed and effective decisions will be made' (NZKA 1994: 20). One of the interesting issues that emerges in this research has been investigating where power lies in the relationship between the Senior Teachers and the General Managers.

KINDERGARTENS AND THE NEW RIGHT

The kindergarten service could be regarded as the guineapig for the government's implementation of managerialism in education. Boston et al (1996: 18 -19) distinguishes as principal influences on the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s public choice theory and agency theory, both of which assume that individuals are 'rational, self interested utility maximisers'. New Public Management, incorporates a form of managerialism that is based on the ideas of the scientific management or Taylorism, and proposes that there are generic skills that underpin all management tasks whether in the public or private sector (Boston et al 1996; Codd 1990). Boston identifies as characteristic of the New Public Management the following beliefs :

- * that there are not significant differences between public and private organisations therefore they can be managed in the same way;
- * a shift in accountability from input controls and bureaucratic procedures to outcome measures and performance targets;

- * the devolution of management control coupled with the development of improved reporting, monitoring and accountability;
- * a preference for private ownership and contestable provision;
- * the separation of policy and operations:
- * the development of strategic plans, performance agreements and mission statements and concern for corporate image⁵.

Wylie (1995:151) identifies 'the application (at school level) of the model of separation of policy and operations' as of particular relevance to the education sector. In kindergartens, the private, non-professional management structures were already in place before the 'reforms'. However, *Before Five* institutionalised this split. Successive governments have built on this, further separating professional leadership from management, and imposing on these structures an accountability system, based on charters and funding, that is onerous for a voluntary association. ERO (itself an accountability and audit agency within the model of the 'New Public Management' in education) regularly expresses concern in ERO Reports at the standard of administration in kindergarten associations. Furthermore, the charter system, which in early childhood is based on an imposed policy document (the *Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices* (1990)) has not involved the community as was intended, but is seen by centres (and associations) as a mechanism for Ministry control rather than an opportunity for all stakeholders to have input into the philosophy and practice of the early childhood setting (Smith & Farquhar 1994). Codd and Gordon (1991: 21) have commented that in the present climate, such policies have as one purpose

to shift the focus of legitimation problems away from central government. Thus it can be seen that the new administration structures produce a decentralisation of responsibility for resource allocation while maintaining centrally determined regulation of supply.

Wylie (1995) also identifies a model of private sector management as applicable within the framework of the 'New Public Management'. The model of management that the government has endorsed for kindergartens has all of the characteristics of this. The model is heavily

⁵ adapted from Boston (1996:26).

dependent on charter mission statements, policy statements and management plans. Documentation is continuous, with policy being constantly revised and yearly management plans being written. Control and support of this is the task of the Senior Teachers, and there is a strong demand for accountability, expressed in their generic job description. Furthermore, as has been outlined previously, with pay negotiations devolved to individual associations (1997), kindergartens able to charge fees (1992) and kindergarten teachers removed from the public service (1997), the way is open to privatisation of the service. The rationale for this is that childcare is private and a business, so kindergartens should follow suit, thus losing their status as a 'free' government funded service and becoming part of a contestable and competitive system of early childhood education.

There is a very real predicament here for Senior Teachers. As shown in Chapter One, they teach in a sector which has traditionally supported social justice and the rights of women and children. Under New Right reforms, however, they are seeing their jobs, employment conditions and accountabilities change, and their employers committed to a more managerial structure, based on neoliberal ideas. The ERO document, *What counts as quality in kindergartens* (1997) describes them as professional managers. Grace (1995: 45) points out that leadership is an elusive concept but management can be more easily commodified. Furthermore, he says that 'parents, teachers and governors' are likely to see leadership in terms of the new management conditions - in the kindergartens' case the language of outcomes, compliances, accountability, marketing and entrepreneurialism.

The questions of what the Senior Teachers' perspectives on leadership are, how they are able to carry them out, and what the dilemmas, constraints and tensions in the job are, should all be seen within the context of changes in society, and consequent changes in their organisation and workplace.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research study aims to develop a picture of the day to day work of a group of Senior Teachers. In addition it analyses the theories and constructions of leadership and leadership style that these women have for themselves; and investigates the reported effects of the administrative changes since *Before Five* (1988) on their jobs.

The questions that arise from the literature review are as follows. First, what are the personal theories and constructions that these women have about leadership? Second, how are these theories manifested in their work; particularly in the way that they and their colleagues talk about their work? Third, what are the dilemmas, tensions and constraints, both personal and professional, as described by Woods et al (1997) for these women working in kindergarten associations which have become increasingly managerial in administration and approach?

THEORETICAL APPROACHES UNDERPINNING THE METHODOLOGY

In a discussion of differences between qualitative and quantitative methods, Stake (1995) points out that one of the differences is that quantitative methods are used in an attempt to identify cause, whereas qualitative methods try to promote understanding. In the latter, the data should endeavour to describe how things are at a particular time. I wanted to study leadership within a particular organisational and policy context, and to understand as far as was possible what the practices of leadership are like for the women in my study, in their words and through their reported

experiences. I reviewed possible approaches that might be suitable, and decided that in order to obtain the data that I needed for this study I should look at qualitative rather than quantitative methods of research. Following Stake (1995: 37) I saw 'qualitative' methods as inquiry aimed at 'understanding the complex inter relationships' within a context. Stake points out that complex meaning and 'thick description' (Gronn 1982 after Ryle: see discussion under case study) can be expected in qualitative research, which should be contextualised, relatively non comparative and field oriented, with an acknowledgment that there is researcher/participant interaction.

Early childhood research methods

There has recently been criticism from within early childhood of the methods used by early childhood researchers. Tricia David (1996) and Joseph Tobin (1995) both trace the development of early childhood research methods from its beginnings in educational psychology and child development. David says that the research published in the major early childhood journals comes from a positivist paradigm, with an emphasis on methodological technique, significance, reliability, validity and rigour. She argues that more research should be done from within other paradigms (interpretivist, critical theorist and post modern) where other types of reality can be studied, and where 'to investigate the dynamics of social change and to reveal structural determinants and phenomena, located in their wider socio-historical context' is a legitimate field of study (David 1996: 4).

Tobin, writing from an American perspective, points out that even qualitative researchers in early childhood (such as Piaget and Paley) show a preference for first hand description, and for imposing a structure on the material that they collect, usually through case studies. Tobin advocates the use of poststructuralist approaches, which he defines as 'an umbrella term for loosely allied writings that seek to disestablish the positivism, optimism and systematicity of ...structuralist/modernist movements' (224). He puts in a plea for more suspicion on the part of the researcher about the meaning of words and actions, and 'cynicism about the claims of

ethnography and other naturalistic research methods' (225).

These articles helped me to look more closely at the basis of my research and to resist people in the field of early childhood who wanted to know what my research would mean to early childhood as a whole. I was also encouraged to go beyond my own background in psychology, with its history and training in quantitative methodology. An attempt has thus been made to break away from the quantitative base in early childhood that Tobin and David describe. The research is consequently exploratory, localised and specific. It attempts a qualitative inquiry into the 'world' of a group of Senior Teachers, within the context of their particular employing associations.

Feminist ideas about research

In addition, I was influenced by feminist ideas about research and in particular about case study research. Shulamit Reinharz (1992:171) suggests that 'feminist interest in case studies stems from a desire to document aspects of women's lives and achievements'. The purpose is not to provide material for generalisations but to document the variety of women's experiences and to 'put women on the map of social life' (174). Referring in particular to the study of women's organisations, she points out that feminist studies in this field are done principally in order to discover whether the organisations that come from outside the male dominated paradigm of organisational theory have similar characteristics to those within it. It seemed to me that the research that I was beginning fitted in with both of these ideas in that it was research on a previously undocumented group of women (kindergarten Senior Teachers) working in educational organisations where theories of how they should be administered are dominated by ideas developed by men writing for businesses (Blackmore 1989); and the practice of the New Public Management in New Zealand (Boston et al 1996).

Feminist writers also question the whole suggestion of impartiality, and the possibility that one's own ideas and life experiences can be kept outside the research. Alison Jones (1992) points out that the researcher is not

impartial and should explicitly position herself, noting her own interests and beliefs. I was aware, as I have explained in the Introduction, that my association with kindergartens (since I joined the staff of the Wellington Kindergarten College in 1974) was one reason why I had chosen to do my research in this field. I support their stand for a free service and am concerned that in losing their right to compulsory Teacher Registration and being forced to leave the State Service they could cease to be the benchmark that gives negotiating power to other less well positioned early childhood services. In the light of feminist ideas, I felt that my understanding of and position in respect to the kindergarten service would not compromise my research.

Case study research

In the field of educational administration, there has been considerable criticism of case studies of managers and leaders, particularly time and motion studies, which merely describe what happens and do not attempt to analyse the purpose of the actions. Peter Gronn (1982 after Ryle) makes a distinction between 'thin' description, which merely describes visible action, and 'thick' description, which attempts to find the reasons for the action. He alleges that one of the ways in which to make description thicker is to record conversation 'on the job' and to discuss it later with the speaker (in his research, the principal). Wolcott's (1973) study, *The Man in the Principal's Office*, which has become the benchmark for such studies and later studies such as Valerie Hall's (1996) study of women principals in the United Kingdom and Jane Strachan's (1997) study of women principals in co-educational schools in New Zealand, employed extensive shadowing of the participants as a basic data collection method, complemented by extensive interviewing and document collection.

I was not able, for reasons described later in this chapter, to execute a full case study. Nevertheless, I was influenced by these ideas and spent some time in the interviews discussing reasons for the actions of the Senior Teachers in order to develop a thicker description of their actions for later analysis. I also used multiple methods of data collection, as will be described and explained.

Interviewing as case study data gathering method

Semi structured interviewing can be regarded as an appropriate way of gathering case study data, principally because it can provide an in depth picture of the workings of a group of people and gives an opportunity to explore different perspectives (Drever 1995; Mininchello et al 1996). Powney and Watts (1987:5) argue that interviewing is a legitimate way of gathering information 'about people's knowledge, beliefs and attitudes'.

Stake (1995:64) regards interviews as 'the main road to multiple realities' as they tap into the unique experiences and stories of each interviewee. He suggests that targeted interviews with a range of involved informants is an excellent way to collect insights and information. In addition, Reinharz (1992: 20) asserts that women interviewing women in open ended interviews is desirable because it allows women to speak in their own voices and to become actively involved in 'constructing data about their own lives'. I decided that I would use interviews as my principal way of collecting data, and by interviewing people with different perspectives on the same events (Senior Teachers, General Managers and Head Teachers) could tap into how the Associations worked, and how the role of the Senior Teacher and their enactment of that role was perceived by a range of people.

Issues related to case study design

Merriam (1988: 10) suggests that case study design is used in order to achieve 'insight, discovery and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing' and Walker (1993: 165- 166) defines case study as 'the examination of an instance in action', pointing out that case studies 'have in common some commitment to the idiosyncratic and the particular as legitimate in themselves'. Such definitions raise issues to do with reliability and validity.

As a consequence of the definition above, Walker (1993) does not see the ability to replicate a study (which is a criterion for quantitative research) as an issue for case study research. He passes the responsibility for reliability

to the audience, pointing out that where there are multiple representations, there can be multiple interpretations. He sees replicability as related to clear, explicit procedures in research rather than to results. Merriam (1988: 173) states that transferability of results is not an issue for case study because

one selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of many.

In his discussion of validity, Walker (1993: 179) asserts that face validity is significant. The researcher should 'constantly attempt to portray the world as it appears to the people in it'. Patti Lather (1986), while recognising the importance of triangulation of data, also states that face validity is important in establishing the trustworthiness of data and should be attained by referring back to the subjects and discussing the findings with them, aiming for 'that click of recognition' (Reason & Rowan 1981, quoted in Lather 1986: 271).

Walker (1993: 185) points out that the personal relationships which underlie trust and consequently validity in case study research, take time to build. However, he suggests that the formulation of a 'democratic ethic' where 'method and procedures are explicit and visible' can make the research more credible for the participants, and lead to a shorter timeframe for the fieldwork. This perspective fits with feminist ideas of participant research and of openness in the research process, where the process is described and agreed to, and interviewees' described experiences are believed (Oakley 1981; Reinharz 1992).

The ways in which I attempted to include these perspectives in my research will be discussed in the following sections.

RESEARCH METHODS

The context for this study

The context for this study is what Smith (quoted in Stake 1995) calls a

'bounded system' That is, it takes place within an organisation (the kindergarten service) that has an integrated system and 'working parts' and can be regarded as a single case. However, although the research is influenced by the principles of case study, naturalistic, observational fieldwork was not attempted. This was not possible, because of funding and time constraints. The grant that I had from the then Palmerston North College of Education was sufficiently generous to pay for travel, transcription of tapes and some release time. It did not allow for long periods of time to be spent tracking the participants in their work. Consequently, extensive interviewing and collection of supplementary documentation took place.

The participants

This research study uses as its principal data, interview material from semi structured interviews with six Senior Teachers in six different Kindergarten Associations.

Choosing the participants

The researcher asked two key people who had knowledge of the Senior Teacher community to suggest names of leaders within this group. The purpose of studying leadership within the kindergarten movement, within the present administrative framework, was explained. This study is small and thus limited in generalisability: its intention is to describe and promote understanding of leadership within a particular framework, the kindergarten service, rather than to identify causes. As Senior Teachers vary in age, career and experience, and work in a variety of conditions, a similar group was preferred for this study. It was made clear to the advisers that a spread in terms of size of association and length of time in the job was wanted. The first adviser named five people and the second person agreed and added a sixth name.

The Senior Teachers

The possible participants were telephoned. The aims of the research and their part in it were explained. All six Senior Teachers who were approached accepted.

The six Senior Teachers who were interviewed were all women. None were Maori. Two worked on their own in small associations and four in groups of Senior Teachers in larger Associations. Two were from Kindergarten Associations affiliated to the NZ Kindergarten Federation and four from Associations affiliated to the NZ Free Kindergarten Association. Both rural and urban associations were included in the sample. The participants were in the age range of 37 to 53 years. Continuous length of time in the job varied from 2 years to 9 years. Three had spent all of their teaching life in the kindergarten service but all had had time out of the service, either to have children or in order to pursue other occupations. Two had also worked in special education, and three had worked as a Senior Teacher in the early 1980s when the job was different. One had subsequently worked as an Education Officer in the Department of Education and for the Early Childhood Development Unit before returning to the kindergarten service.

All were trained, registered kindergarten teachers. One also had her Advanced Diploma in Teaching, one had several management papers and one had a postgraduate degree. All worked with a group of 13 or more kindergartens, which meant that they were responsible for the professional support, and supervision of at least 40 staff. They had other responsibilities within the whole group of kindergartens in their Association, principally concerning professional development, staffing and advocacy

Ethical considerations

Walker (1993: 173) identifies as relevant to case study research, questions about (i) the ownership of and access to the data, (ii) the obligations that the researcher has to the participants, the sponsor and fellow professionals. For this research, obligations to the participants are particularly important because of the small size of the group from which they were drawn and the reported administrative difficulties that the kindergarten service has had in recent years (described in the previous chapter).

In a field where there are less than 40 staff for the whole of New Zealand, anonymity is difficult to guarantee. Nevertheless, every attempt has been made to ensure that interviewees' responses are confidential and their anonymity preserved. All names of participants and associations have been altered in this report, and associations have been described in general terms only so that they and their employees are not easily identified. Personal data which might have made them easily recognised has been excluded, and the material has not been written up case by case for the same reason. Participants were also notified of their right to withdraw at any time. The Massey University Ethical Guidelines were adhered to.

After the Senior Teachers had been contacted and had expressed their interest, a letter was written to each Association President asking for permission to carry out the research. An information sheet was included, setting out the purpose of the research and describing what would be wanted from the Association staff. When permission to carry on was received, a letter went to all interviewees, requesting their participation, emphasising that this was voluntary and outlining their part in the research. An information sheet and a one page list of areas to be explored in the interview were also included. On the day that the interview took place, a consent form was read and signed by each interviewee. Copies of these documents are in Appendices One and Two.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by a contracted transcriber who was aware of the necessity for confidentiality. Transcriptions were sent to the interviewees for corrections and comment. At the end of the research, the tape and transcription were returned to the interviewees.

Validity

There has been criticism of data in researching women in educational leadership because much of it is based on interview data with the participants alone and may describe the aspirations of the women rather than the way in which they work (Strachan 1995b, Hall 1996). Consequently, several additional data gathering instruments were used in

order to provide the data source corroboration (Stake 1995) that contributes to validity. Eisner describes this as 'a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (Eisner 1991: 110). In order to provide a thicker picture of their work, Senior Teachers were asked to keep a critical event log of their work for a week and this was used as a basis of discussion and a springboard for identifying and describing important aspects of their work during the interview (see below). Additional documentation included job descriptions, Association strategic plans and annual reports, ERO assurance audits on the Kindergarten Association, and any material related to their work, such as copies of material that they had developed for professional support and development, that the interviewees wished to present. Some of this documentation was discussed but, in addition, it was analysed to give the researcher a better picture of the context in which the Senior Teachers worked.

The Senior Teacher job descriptions, and the critical event logs recorded in the week before the interview were used as a basis for discussion about the Senior Teachers' involvement in communication and decision making within the group that they worked with in the office (the General Manager, the other Senior Teachers and any office staff). In addition, the log was used to demonstrate their involvement with kindergartens. They were asked to give examples of their involvement in these facets of their work. The question of power and authority were also highlighted by examples drawn from their work which were discussed in the interview, as were the effects of the changes to the kindergarten service, i.e since the publication of *Before Five* and particularly since the introduction of bulk funding.

The above material, however, is entirely based on the perceptions and experiences of the Senior Teachers. In order to provide additional triangulation, further data were collected in interviews with the General Managers with whom the Senior teachers worked, and at least one Head Teacher from the kindergartens she was responsible for. The same ethical procedures were carried out for this group. In all, 21 people were interviewed.

Data collection

Pilot interviews

The interviewing for this research was carried out by the researcher. I have had some experience of interviewing, having been employed and trained at one stage to develop and carry out semi structured interviews for a commercial firm, and I spent some time reading about interviewing methods, in order to update my knowledge.

Initial interviews were carried out with two former Senior Teachers before the main research was commenced. These interviews were recorded and then discussed with the interviewee. This process gave me an opportunity to alter my interview schedule, where the questions were not exploring the topics that were discussed in sufficient detail, and to fine tune my interview techniques.

Field focus

Elliot Eisner (1991) identifies being field focussed as an important component of qualitative research, and Stake (1995) comments on the importance of carrying out fieldwork in a naturalistic environment. Consequently the interviews were carried out either in the Association offices or in the kindergartens where the Head Teachers taught. This was an attempt to work within the setting that the participants worked. It gave the interviewees chances to find and give to the interviewer material that they thought was relevant, and it gave the interviewer an opportunity to observe the setting in which the interviewees worked.

Senior teacher interviews

The Senior Teachers were interviewed in loosely structured, respondent interviews of up to one and a half hours. Powney & Watts (1987:17) identify the characteristics of respondent interviews as being based on the intentions of the interviewer. There are a set of questions that should be answered, even if the structure of the interview is loose. When the format of the interviews was discussed on the phone with the

interviewees, they tended to treat the research as a professional task, to be carried out to the best of their ability, and asked what the question would be about 'so that I can think about it before I come to the interview'. They also showed awareness that, with the one interview each that the interviewer was travelling to carry out, time was limited, even if further dialogue could take place at a later date. In consequence, before the interview all interviewees received a short list of topics that would be covered. (Appendix Two) Interviews were nevertheless spontaneous with quite wide ranging discussions. No-one came with prepared answers.

Several writers assert that the leadership style of women is based on their early experiences as girls. They are seen as nurturant, better listeners and better at personal relationships (Blackmore 1995; Shakeshaft 1995; Hall 1996). In addition, Valerie Hall asserts that it is impossible to separate out the life experiences of school leaders from their ideas and the way in which they act. However, because this research had a limited timeframe and limited funds, the early life of the participants was not investigated. The researcher felt that it was not a topic that could be broached at a single interview with people who were effectively strangers.

In the interviews with the Senior Teachers, topics discussed included the interviewees' recent personal and work history, their ideas about leadership and their perceptions of the ways in which they worked. Interview questions about leadership were based around three main lines of investigation: the effects of managerialism on kindergarten professional leadership, the perceptions of the use of power and authority by these women, and the style and characteristics of leadership that these women saw as appropriate in their job.

As we have seen in the literature review, the kindergarten service has had to accommodate itself to the government's managerialist agenda over the last decade. Included in this agenda has been greater emphasis on management practices. The pilot interviewees, not surprisingly, had difficulty in differentiating between management and leadership. While questions and data collection concentrated on what the Senior Teachers

did each day, an attempt was made to identify why they did these things. The underlying question for the researcher was to discover what effect the growing managerialism in the kindergarten service had had on internal working relations, both within the Head Office 'team' and in the Senior Teachers' relationship with kindergarten staff. I also hoped to discover whether the Senior Teachers had any difficulty in reconciling managerialism with the traditional values and ideals of early childhood which are closely related to shared leadership and collaboration.

In addition, an attempt was made to identify the ways in which power was 'dealt with' within organisations. Following Foster, Grace (1995: 55) says 'the educative leader attempts to establish the conditions for dialogue, participation and respect for persons and their ideals' and Shakeshaft (1995) argues that the basis of the difference between the leadership style of women as a group and men as a group can be found in the language used by women administrators. It is the language of *power with* rather than *power over*. Consequently, questions on power and decision making were based around trying to discover what access there was (Senior Teachers and/or other staff) to 'powerful information'; whether staff had the opportunity to debate policy and practice, and what the conditions were for such dialogue. Further questions about open communication, shared decision making and working together to share responsibilities were based on ideas from Grundy (1993), Court (1994) and Hall (1996).

A further line of questioning was intended to investigate whether the opinions and action of these women as leaders fitted in with a feminist perspective as described in chapter one. Questions intended to investigate a feminist perspective included those that explored the perceptions of the Senior Teachers about their commitment to improving learning and teaching, the ways in which they built relationships within their team and the connection between their public and private lives (Shakeshaft 1989). In addition, the ideas of Shirley Grundy (1993: 169) about 'practical educational leaders' (informed by praxis, see Chapter Two) inspired the questions that both the Senior Teachers and Head Teachers were asked about the role of the Senior Teacher in this relationship (Appendix Two).

General manager interviews

As mentioned previously, other interviews were carried out within the Association. Initially it had been intended that one of these interviews should be carried out with a member of the Association Board, preferably the President. However, it transpired that the Associations felt that the General Manager was the person who worked most closely with the Senior Teacher and would be the most suitable person to interview. For five Associations, interviews were carried out with the General Managers/CEOs. In one case, however, where the General Manager was new, the president of the Association was interviewed but this interview was later not used in the main analysis because the material that it contained was not as closely related to the daily work of the Senior Teacher as that of the other interviews.

There was a variation in the background and length of time that the General Managers had been in the job. Only one General Manager had been working for a Kindergarten Association for more than 3 years. She did not come from an educational background but it was evident from her responses that she had developed considerable understanding of the field and a close relationship with her Senior Teacher who had also been in the position for some time. While the others had all been working in some education related field at some time before they came to the kindergarten service, their involvement varied. Two were ex teachers who had subsequently worked in administration outside teaching, and the other two had been involved in administration within the education field. All had tertiary qualifications, ranging from diplomas in teaching and in management, to degrees in history and geography. One general manager was an accountant, and all except one were women.

The interviews with the General Managers focussed particularly on decision making and communication within the structure of the Association, and the use of power and authority in relation to the work of the Senior Teacher. Some of the questions asked them to outline what happened in this respect, and then to identify what changes they would

like. This made it possible to discuss why they felt that the present system needed change. They were also asked general questions about their perceptions of leadership in early childhood, and what characteristics they thought made a good professional leader and Senior Teacher (Appendix 2B).

Head teacher interviews

A Head Teacher or group of Head Teachers who worked with the Senior Teacher were also interviewed. The Senior Teachers made the initial approach to the Head Teachers who were part of their 'group'. While it is acknowledged that it is likely that the Senior Teachers chose Head Teachers with whom they had a good relationship, these interviews focussed on the work that the Senior Teacher did with these participants (Appendix 2C). They were not asked how well the job was done, although two groups volunteered that in their opinion 'their' Senior Teacher was good. One Head Teacher, however, volunteered the comment that in her opinion the Senior Teacher team (with the exception of 'her' Senior Teacher) were of no use whatsoever.

In all, nine Head Teachers were interviewed, in six interviews. Two of these interviews took place in kindergartens and four in the Association offices. No one seemed to be intimidated by being interviewed at the offices. The association inservice courses were run from these offices and the Head Teachers were familiar with them.

All but one of the Head Teachers were mature women (over 35) and two were in their fifties. The age range was 28 to 55. Four of the women had been teaching for more than 20 years, three for more than 10 years and two for less than five years. All had been Head Teachers for the majority of their teaching careers. Only two had been Head Teachers for less than two years. They showed a wealth of knowledge about the kindergarten service and the changes that had taken place over the last decade and were willing informants on their relationship with the Senior Teacher.

Interviewing as data gathering

Feminist writers emphasise that it should be acknowledged that a relationship builds up between the researcher and the researched (Oakley 1981; Riddell 1989; Reinharz 1992; Jones 1992). However, some feminist writers warn of the difficulties in interviewing from a feminist perspective. In particular, Anne Oakley points out that it is more likely that the interviewee will speak freely and the quality of the data will be higher if the interview is non hierarchical, and 'the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship' (Oakley 1981:41). Sheila Riddell also warns of the possibility of the material in the interviews being used in arguments that are eventually to the detriment of the group who are being interviewed.

With this in mind, the researcher attempted to set up discussion, both within the interviews and when the transcripts were sent to the participants to be read. They were invited to comment or add to what they had said. However, although there was some dialogue during the interviews, particularly when the researcher attempted to relate her experiences to those of the interviewee, or to go beyond the parameters of the initial questions, reaction was reserved. With the exception of two of the participants, the interviewees seemed to be socialised into the accepted conventions of a research interview, where the interviewer is seen as neutral, and mostly as a recorder rather than a participant. Possibly this was related to the early childhood perceptions of research as quantitative, mentioned earlier. In addition, there could have been unexpressed concerns about what use could be made of the report, particularly with such a small number of Senior Teachers from which the participants were drawn.

All of the interviews were returned to the researcher with a signed note agreeing that the transcript was an accurate record of the interview. Some interviewees made minor corrections. However, these reasons may explain why attempts to involve the participants in a dialogue about their interview transcript met with failure. Only two of the twenty one people interviewed commented at length on the transcript, and only one

extended her ideas further.

Analysis

1, *Senior Teachers*

The transcripts of the interview material were read several times, then sorted, using the method described by Middleton (1988). They were colour coded into categories that arose out of the data and from the reading that had preceded the decisions about what questions to ask. Material was then sorted by using the cut and paste facility on the computer. As the sorting took place, other categories and themes became evident and were included in the analysis.

The themes and categories that arose were:

- *personal information
 - career trajectories
 - personal constraints
 - training and support;

- * leadership perceptions:
 - style, characteristics and skills;

- * kindergarten commitment:
 - value, vision
 - change/issues;

- * culture :
 - communication,
 - decision making,
 - power and authority;

- * external and contractual obligations:
 - legislative responsibilities
 - accountability
 - ethical dilemmas.

In addition to analysing material according to the ideas and opinions of the participants, attention was paid to finding concrete examples of incidents that illustrated the ideas and opinions expressed in the interview. This was related to the research question that asked how Senior Teachers' personal theories of leadership affected their work; it was also another way of ensuring validity, as described earlier in the chapter. The resultant material was re-refined into sub themes. This material was reread in conjunction with the weekly log, the job description and other material that had been collected in order to obtain a deeper and more reliable picture of how the Senior Teachers worked. Refining of the data and these categories continued for some months as my reading and thinking refined the analysis.

2. The General Managers

The oral transcripts were analysed in the same way, using the same themes, but I looked in particular for examples and opinions that were related to the work of the Senior Teacher. There was, however, an unexpected extra category in this data set that concerned the role and responsibilities of the General Manager within the Association. This material was also reread in conjunction with the above material collected from the Senior Teachers.

3. The Head Teachers

These interviews concentrated almost entirely on the role of the Senior Teachers in relation to kindergarten staff. Analysis was carried out in the same way. These transcripts too were read in conjunction with the above data. It gave a deeper and more comprehensive picture of the work of the Senior Teacher, picking up on different and more personal aspects of their responsibilities.

An analytical diary

Throughout this process an analytical diary was kept. Notes were made on the emergence of themes and on possible reasons for findings. Unresolved issues that came to light during the reading were recorded,

and notes were made about possible clarifications. The diary was used as a medium for modifying, revision and expanding ideas and explanations.

SUMMARY

In summary, the twofold intention of the fieldwork was to investigate the ideas about leadership of a group of six Senior Teachers and to explore the extent to which they were able to carry these out. A qualitative approach was taken, with loosely structured, respondent interviewing as the principal form of data gathering. This was supplemented with a log of a week's work kept by the Senior Teachers and interviews with the General Managers and Head Teachers with whom the Senior Teachers worked. Additional documentation about the Association and the work of the Senior Teachers was also collected.

Interview data were transcribed and sorted into themes. The data were then read in conjunction with the additional documentation. The themes and categories that merged from this analysis have been used to organise the three following chapters that discuss and present the data from the research.

Chapter Four

What is a Leader Like? Espoused Theories of Leadership

This chapter will examine the personal theories of leadership of this group of Senior Teachers. Findings are based solely on the data from interviews with the six Senior Teachers. Material from the other interviewees and other material gathered will be considered in later chapters.

In the interests of confidentiality it is not proposed to describe the ideas of each Senior Teacher separately. From the data, the features that they considered most important emerged. These ideas have been developed into a composite picture of their personal theories of leadership. These have been presented and discussed in relation to the literature on leadership, both for women and for early childhood.

There are two principal sections to this chapter. The first details the characteristics that the Senior Teachers considered were most important for themselves, and for leaders in early childhood. The second recounts and discusses their ideas about charismatic leadership and the importance of gender in leadership.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER

In this study, these Senior Teachers identified the following characteristics as important for an early childhood leader:

- being a consultative leader
- sharing power

- being a good communicator
- a supporter of teachers and promoter of good teaching
- commitment to children and to the ethos of the service
- having a vision.

A consultative leader

Research on women in educational leadership suggests that women as a group lead in a less hierarchical way (Shakeshaft 1989; Ozga 1993; Shakeshaft 1995; Hall 1996). In addition, research regarding women who run organisations suggests that while there is considerable diversity in the way in which they lead, the majority see leadership as consultative and interactive. Pringle and Collins (1996:419) reported from a large survey of women leaders in New Zealand that

at least three quarters of all the organisations were not hierarchical and there was resistance to power differentiation with leadership defined by most in terms of interaction and consultation.

while Valentine (1995) found that in her study of women in a women's organisation that there was minimal hierarchy and flattened hierarchical structures. Instead, interactions were strongly focussed on relationships

The Senior Teachers in this study saw themselves as within this paradigm. They valued consultation and supportive action as important for their leadership. For example, Brenda⁶ did not see herself as a hierarchical leader:

I think I work in a very consultative way....I'm not a person who goes in dogmatic, this is the way things are, I've never been that way, I'm very open... I think now what actually made me move into the leadership role, it's because I enjoy the challenge, I enjoy working with people but I don't see that I'm into hierarchical leadership....I think people feel put upon that people don't listen to them, I mean I know that there are some situations where you do have to go in, but I think my style is still consultative.⁷

⁶ Names of the participants have been changed in order to preserve anonymity.

⁷ Tape 16:42-43

Christine identified the importance for her of involvement in and ownership of action:

A lot of women in organisations are renowned for their consultative methods. I feel that its really important to have people on board and to have people involved and feel ownership of what's going on... I really admire the skills of Helen May and Margaret Carr, they way they can include everyone in and yet come up with something that can be acceptable to all. Its a real talent, making everyone feel that involvement.⁸

In her study of Senior Teachers, Meade (1985) identified 'democratic decision making rather than hierarchical decision making' as the best working relationships for Senior Teachers and kindergarten staff. In the comments of this group of Senior Teachers, these ideas, which are part of a tradition of consultation and collaboration within early childhood, can be seen to underpin their work. However, the nature of the Senior Teacher's job is such that they visit each kindergarten on average four times a year although, as we shall see in the next chapter, they attempt to keep in close contact with 'their' kindergartens. In consequence, opportunities for shared leadership are limited to the group that they work with on a daily basis. This may be why the emphasis was on consultation rather than collaboration. The distinction will be explored in the next chapter.

Sharing power

Valerie Hall says of the school leaders she studied:

Their work as individuals was based on their belief in nurturing others' power by becoming a role model of how they wanted to work with others (Hall 1996: 123).

This philosophy was evident in these women's comments about their approaches. Dorothy harked back to her kindergarten experience when she said:

I'm really a team player and I think that's been my strength and what's helped me in leadership as well. I like sharing

⁸ Tape 7:39

*absolutely everything. When I was working in a kindergarten, I look back now and I didn't really have the expectation that the Head Teacher should have everything under control... I always felt that you did the jobs that came along and everyone worked on everything together... I think I try to be the sort of leader who works with people where they are at.*⁹

Jennifer was very clear about how power and leadership were related for her:

*I've always endeavoured, any power I have, to share that power, by providing the opportunities for people to develop and take leadership roles that are mine to share or give away... why keep it all here? And why not allow the skills of people around me to develop? It makes my job much easier.*¹⁰

In relation to keeping people informed, Christine commented that 'information is power'. She went on to outline the advantages for her of working in a leadership team of four Senior Teachers:

*The first one has to be the sounding board thing. That you can put your ideas to other people and hear what their responses are. And why they think what they think. Very often it can back up and support, make you feel more confident about what you are doing. Other times it makes you question what you are doing and at times change direction because of that. And it means that you can utilise the various team members' strengths within the team.*¹¹

However, although these Senior Teachers were committed to sharing power, they were, as the above extracts show, prepared to take the lead in developing ideas. Hall (1996) reported that the women in her study, though committed to sharing power, were aware that they were also the leaders. She relates this to their sense of responsibility to their vision for

⁹ Tape 1 :42

¹⁰ Tape 10: 22

¹¹ Tape 7:40

the school. The women in this study were similarly committed to their organisation, as will be described later in this chapter.

Power sharing and empowering others has featured as a characteristics of leadership in several studies of women in educational leadership (Neville 1988; Court 1994; Hall 1996). Furthermore, Grundy (1993) asserts that the equalisation of power relations through two way communication, developed through improvement of reflective group process and the encouragement of a common language can lead to emancipatory praxis. In early childhood, however, although theoretical writers say that power sharing is fundamental, (Kagan 1994; Rodd 1998), the coordinators in Rodd and Clyde's research (reported in Rodd 1996) did not mention this as important. Instead, they identified taking responsibility within a framework of good working relationships as an important dimension. Again, the uneven qualifications within childcare centres previously outlined may be responsible for this finding. This constraint is not applicable to the present group of Senior Teachers because all teachers in kindergartens have similar training to diploma level, Although aware of where power was located (see chapters 5 and 6) this group were theoretically committed to power sharing.

Being a good communicator

There was agreement among these Senior Teachers that being a good communicator and a good listener was essential for their leadership. Margaret described communication as 'lending a sympathetic ear' and Robyn related listening skills to understanding of the teachers' job pressure. Describing what what was needed for a Senior Teacher, she said:

And someone who can really listen. And be aware of the stresses and strains out there, its very easy to forget the strains of having ninety children and parents a day coming through your centre.¹²

In addition, a relationship between communication and empowerment was identified. Jennifer distinguished some of the characteristics of a leader in early childhood as

good communication skills, written, verbal, listening, all of the

¹² Tape 13:11

things that facilitate. They need to have the ability to be objective... You need to have the ability to support people to find their own solutions rather than running in like a rescuer.¹³

As has been described, Grundy (1993) identifies symmetrical communication as essential for the equalisation of power relations. This is consistent with Jennifer's unvarying attitude to power sharing and communication.

However, Jennifer took a situational view of communication for herself, identifying different communication styles for different occasions. She said:

I believe that I do vary my leadership style depending on the skill and experience of the people I'm working with. I mean, with some Head Teachers I'm very much low communication, I let them get on with it.... I give them information and encouragement on what they're doing and encourage them to be self managing and self reflective. People who are maybe not so confident or experienced or who are experiencing difficulties, I'll then move into more high communication/high direction, or the telling type .¹⁴

Jennifer had taken several leadership courses at a nearby College of Education. She indicated that these ideas had been discussed then. They can be identified as coming from Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) Situational Theory which uses a criterion of maturity of either the group or the individual in relation to the task to determine the behaviour of the leader. Such theories have been criticised by Blackmore and others because they come from masculinist, business oriented constructs.

The use of Hersey and Blanchard by early childhood writers was mentioned in Chapter One. Situational Theory is an attractive idea for early childhood because it fits in with ideas about development and maturity derived from human development studies and from a Piagetian

¹³ Tape 10:21

¹⁴ Tape 10:22

perspective which are used to explain the way in which teachers progress (ie Katz 1995; Vander Ven 1988). In addition, situational theory is used in early childhood manuals on leadership and management (Jorde Bloom, Sheerer & Britz 1991; Hayden 1996) to identify appropriate leadership styles for centre directors in relation to the development level of the centre's organisational climate. Rodd too, suggests that the ability to lead can be related to a particular time in life, a particular group or situation (Rodd 1998). Although Jennifer applied this form of analysis to her interactions with colleagues, none of the other five respondents did. They were less prepared to analyse their approach to communication.

A supporter of teachers and and promoter of good teaching

Brenda identified supporting teachers as the most important part of her job. Robyn, Margaret and Jennifer too articulated their leadership ideas by describing their supporting role with teachers.

Robyn believed in supportive, facilitative action:

I try to be a supportive leader. I don't believe in autocratic leaders who go in and say, you will do this and you will do that. I think you are far better to work alongside a teacher and support them through.... I don't think being supportive means doing for a person, but giving them access to what skills they need or what resources they need to go on and do whatever it is.¹⁵

Christine believed that educational leaders should promote good teaching:

They should promote the importance of reflecting and questioning. Looking at what you are doing and why you are doing it and how you are doing it, and can you do it better? Is that what people want you to do? I think they should promote, should disseminate, information about teaching. ¹⁶

while Margaret, reflecting on her leadership role with teachers, epitomised it as

keep them abreast [of events] keep them involved, keep them interested... even if they are failing dreadfully, I always try to find

¹⁵ Tape 13:37

¹⁶ Tape 7:39

*some areas that they are measuring up well in.*¹⁷

Jennifer believed that leaders should be good practitioners as well, preferably with recent experience::

*I believe people in leadership {should} have a good base, practical, hands on: I believe I have a distinct advantage to have recency, in terms of hands on. And that is something that I would aspire to, that you could go back and actually work with children and then come back to the job.*¹⁸

The ideas that emerged about 'being supportive' may have their basis in nurturance, as Rodd (1996) asserts, but they are also based on a theory of teaching described earlier that suggests that people will find their own way if they are supported and able to feel confident in their teaching. In addition, Shakeshaft (1995) postulates from her summary of research into women in other educational spheres that women do not get into teaching as a way to a powerful position. Instead, they make a choice and are motivated to teach. These women saw teaching as important in their lives and their skills in supporting staff as a major part of their leadership. As can be seen from the quotes above, they saw the support principally as intended to improve teaching. Instructional leadership has been identified as a strength for women in educational leadership (Shakeshaft 1989; Hall 1996).

Commitment to children and to the ethos of the service

The literature on women leaders and administrators in schools suggests that they remain committed to children and to education (Neville 1988; Shakeshaft 1989; Court 1994; Hall 1996; Strachan 1997). This aspect of the Senior Teachers' thinking came through strongly. They were committed to both the education of young children and to the kindergarten ethos. Christine said:

There needs to be some form of freely accessible high quality early childhood education for children that they can attend at no cost

¹⁷ Tape 4:42

¹⁸ Tape 10:27

*and have access to the experiences they are entitled to.*¹⁹

Robyn highlighted commitment to all children:

*I think you need to be a strong advocate for children and be quite passionate about it. I love that age of children. And I like the fact that we cater for all children and it doesn't matter what socio economic background they come from...*²⁰

Jennifer described her beliefs as 'energy and commitment and passion, and belief in what's right for kids'. She identified the rewards of the job:

*To go out into the kindergartens to see the development of children and to see children explore and create and discover and just be confident people, you know, that's what I'm here for, children.*²¹

Margaret saw the professional aspects of kindergarten as important for children:

*I value the opportunity to be part of children's growth.. The purpose built buildings, the equipment, the trained teachers, the wonderful range of communities you work with. We all bring strengths to it.*²²

Dorothy identified the importance to children and families of the kindergarten community:

I loved the work when I was hands on in kindergarten. In spite of the difficulties and the stresses and the pressures....To me, its that inclusive nature. I see the kindergarten service as being there for the whole gamut, those people who have never taken an interest, never paid a bean for it, but their children have had wonderful experiences in kindergarten...While it has been forced into the business world, I just see the wonderful things that we've achieved at that volunteer level and the amount of energy that some communities have been prepared to put in for all of

19 Tape 7:22

20 Tape 13:27

21 Tape 10:27

22 Tape 4:24

*the years.*²³

These findings relate to the previous section on supporting teaching and teachers. The commitment to children underpins the work of these Senior Teachers.

Having a vision

All of the Senior Teachers said that they thought that leaders should be visionary. Christine identified the need to be aware of and reflect on issues for kindergartens:

*I think you need to be innovative, to be able to look at the big picture rather than deal with a single issue at a time. You have to bear in mind the philosophical base that you are coming from. And you need to strive to think: 'why am I doing this? And whose benefit am I doing it for?'*²⁴

She went on to identify a vision where funding allowed for smaller group size, better teacher/child ratios and more equity in access and opportunity, which she felt are being limited by the amount that families were able to pay in donations.

'A vision for kindergartens' was mostly seen as staying within the present parameters of the kindergarten service, rather than branching out into childcare. However, everyone saw as part of the vision the provision of extra educational services for young children. Margaret said:

*I would like to see us offering a wider range of services. I don't mean all day care, I mean looking at extension programmes for children. Current working hours but using the expertise of the staff.*²⁵

And Robyn saw an inclusive philosophy with better provision for children with special needs as the principal component of her vision.

²³ Tape 1:30

²⁴ Tape 7:25

²⁵ Tape 4:45

Jennifer saw as a part of her vision better programmes for younger children, now that waiting lists are shorter and children begin at a younger age:

Two and a half to three and a half, they're an entirely different group and {we need} skills development and opportunities for children to work with those very young children so that children are supported in an appropriate way rather than, Oh God, they're not toilet trained.²⁶

Dorothy, whose commitment to the kindergarten community was evident throughout her interview, summed up the feelings of all the Senior Teachers when she said that it was difficult to have a vision in beleaguered times:

I'm hoping that kindergartens will stay. My vision is that they will be able to rise up to the challenge that's with them in 1997. The numbers in many of their communities are declining. We don't have long waiting lists. My vision that is that those doors will stay open, that in every kindergarten community, we might actually be doing different things but we will still be the free kindergarten movement, we will have responded to the needs of the community. We may have less non contact time than we have now {but} to me it is important that it is still a free service.²⁷

The emphasis on educational programmes within a free service, for which families had only to pay a 'donation' was stronger than an emphasis on a particular philosophy or on the importance of sessional care. With the development of the national curriculum, *Te Whaariki*, (1996) a unique philosophy of teaching for kindergartens has become less easy to differentiate. However, the traditional importance that kindergartens put on trained teachers was evident.

Sharing the vision is a dimension of visionary leadership (Senge 1990; Kagan and Neuman 1997). These Senior Teachers understood that that a vision needs to be communicated. They said that they talked to teachers

²⁶ Tape 10:28

²⁷ Tape 1:23

about this when they visited. Christine said:

I talk with teachers frequently about where we think we are going or where we think we will be in five years..²⁸

while Jennifer described a more formal consultation:

We have talked about where we are going a lot with {the General Manager} and our Te Whaariki contract, and amongst ourselves. Its something we are continually talking about at our management meetings. We also have an Association forum, we meet together every month.²⁹

Vision is seen as an important component of leadership in early childhood, underpinning planning and decision making (Kagan 1994; Kagan and Neuman 1997; Espinosa 1997; Rodd 1998). The vision of these Senior Teachers mirrored the changes that are taking place within the kindergarten service and within society, as more parents work longer hours and the demand for childcare as opposed to kindergartens, whose hours are shorter, rises. Demographic changes have also led to younger children entering sessions. However, although Hayden (1996) locates the place for vision in early childhood at the organisational level where Senior Teachers work, the Senior Teachers were aware that they did not have the power to develop their vision. Decisions about policy are made by Boards, and beyond them by the State, and Senior Teachers have to convince Boards that their vision is appropriate.

Discussion

The ideas of this group about leadership parallel the findings of Shakeshaft (1989, 1995) Adler, Laney and Packer (1993), Hall (1996), Neville (1988) Court (1989). They showed a strong commitment to children, to teaching and to the service in which they taught; they valued power sharing and consultative leadership and emphasised communication and listening skills. Their perspective was that of working for the welfare of others and they saw understanding and promoting education as more important to their leadership than management skills, which were only

²⁸ Tape 7:22

²⁹ Tape 10:45

mentioned by one Senior Teacher. All participants thus agreed that they had a professional leadership role where the kindergartens were concerned.

Jillian Rodd identifies a picture emerging from research about women leaders which she says is particularly important for early childhood:

strong leadership within a collaborative framework... Leadership is exercised in a climate of reciprocal relationships where the leader seeks to act with others rather than assert power over others. {The} approach to power is based on collaboration, inclusion and consensus building. ... Participation and shared decision making is emphasised, and leadership becomes a holistic, inclusive and empowering process(Rodd 1988:11).

Women's leadership style is seen by Rodd as more concerned with maintaining group function rather than power and authority. In addition, she says that having a vision, caring behaviour, acting collaboratively and building trust and openness are important. The ideas that these Senior Teachers had for themselves are consistent with Rodd's aspirations.

However, although they had been sent a summary of the interview questions in advance (see Appendix 2A), there was a reluctance amongst some to discuss their ideas about leadership in a general way, although they were able to describe how they enacted the role. Rodd (1996) noted that this was true also for early childhood centre directors in Victoria and theorised that this was because leadership was a concept that was not really clear to the participants in their study. In this study, participants varied from being mostly very articulate and clear in their ideas, to hesitant and inclined to answer in an anecdotal way rather than describing abstract principles.

The participants in Rodd and Clyde's research, described in Chapter Two, identified the following characteristics of leaders in early childhood:

- being a guide to children and staff,
- acting like a professional,
- being a good communicator,
- being able to meet people's needs,

- being a multifaceted and flexible person,
- taking responsibility, and
- being visionary (Rodd 1996:123).

The participants in their research were directors of childcare centres who worked in centres daily with the same staff and closely with parents, which would have made them very aware of such day to day essentials as meeting the needs of parents and children.

The group that were studied in the present research, however, do not work in centres, but in a more supervisory role, removed from the daily contact with teaching and from centre concerns. Some of their ideas are similar to those found by Rodd and Clyde. There is the same commitment to the profession and to developing a vision for it, to being a guide and support for staff, to skills in communication and in participative decision making. There was no mention, however, of the nurturant personal attributes that Rodd notes as underpinning to their study.

These Senior Teachers appear to be more overtly committed to teaching, than the directors in Rodd & Clyde's research. Traditionally, childcare staff (who were surveyed in the above project) have found it difficult to identify themselves as teachers, because they also value the care aspect of their work (Smith 1998). Kindergarten teachers, however, are used to regarding themselves as teachers. Moreover, until recently, teaching in early childhood was seen from a Piagetian point of view, where teachers respond to children by providing materials that help children to find their own solutions. Consequently they see the concepts of 'support,' 'guidance' and 'providing experiences' as within the parameters of teaching, for adults as well as children. Only lately, with the resurgence of Vygotskian ideas, have they been encouraged to see their personal teaching role as more interactional. They are also familiar with ideas of reflective practice which feature in training and professional development in the New Zealand context. These Senior Teachers saw themselves as teachers rather than managers.

In addition, this group saw consultative leadership, in a system with a flat hierarchy, as more essential than the group that Rodd and Clyde surveyed. All kindergarten teachers are teacher trained with a three year training or its equivalent, so that there are not such problems of uneven knowledge and skill which lead to the considerable power imbalances among staff as exist in childcare (Kagan 1994; Hayden 1996; Rodd 1998). Furthermore, the kindergarten movement comes from an educational background rather than the small business background that characterises childcare and this tends to influence the way in which leadership is conceptualised. Jorde Bloom (1992; 1996); and Hayden (1996) are examples of writers on early childhood leadership who attempt to marry the two sectors.

PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

In the previous section, the characteristics of leadership that this group of Senior Teachers considered important for themselves as leaders were identified. In this section two perspectives of their ideas on leadership will be discussed: are leaders born or made? and is there a women's style of leadership?

Leaders - born or made?

Writers on early childhood management and leadership assert that leadership skills can be learned (Jorde Bloom et al 1991; Jorde Bloom 1992; 1997 Hayden 1996; Rodd 1998; Kagan 1994). There was agreement among this group that leadership skills could be learned through experience. Brenda saw her experience in community work as important in preparing her for her later roles as a leader. She said:

I came to this job from the role of Head Teacher, but when I was at home with my family, I had become very involved in the community and had taken on some leadership roles to the point of being involved in the local school committee. Being chairperson of the local school committee, and heavily involved in Plunket. So I felt that I brought some of those skills from there into this role as well.³⁰

³⁰ Tape 16:4

Brenda felt that leaders picked up a model that suited them and modified it over time with reflective practice.

All of the group agreed that some leadership skills such as communication and facilitation could be taught. Dorothy also saw management skills as important learning for leaders, but she related this to supporting her vision:

I think we need to be a lot more aware of quality management practices in terms of administration. I would never have said that a few years ago but I can see that now. There's that huge issue of management of personnel, so its all that personnel type stuff of mediation and conflict resolution and communication style but then there's all that visionary stuff as well. Like its being able to be seen as an inspirational person but then being in touch with the day to day issues as well.³¹

However, Christine, Robyn and Jennifer thought that there was more to leadership than skills. Christine felt that there had to be something 'there' before leadership skills that had been taught could be implemented:

Oh, you can be taught to communicate in a certain way, and to facilitate and counsel, but ... you have either got the, the something, the spark, inside you, or not.³²

Robyn, who asserted that she was not a born leader, said:

You can see in some children, the born leader {who} has got everybody organised around him...I do think that some people have those inherent skills but I do think that they are also skills that you can acquire along the way.³³

Thus it can be seen that, although they did not apply it to themselves, the idea that a leader has charisma and a leadership personality is still prevalent in this group. This view has been identified as a masculinist construct from work on trait theory (Blackmore 1989; Olssen 1996 see

³¹ Tape 1:43

³² Tape 7:39

³³ Tape 13:53

literature review.) Furthermore, Blackmore (1996) points out that the managerialist orientation in the present education system means that charismatic leaders from the model of 'rationality, control and authority' are once again seen as appropriate. She asserts that this is not a model that women have traditionally favoured. Kagan (1994) however denies that ideas related to charisma and control are useful in early childhood, where ideas of working cooperatively have a long history for both adults and children. She feels that these cooperative ideals should overlay the small business background, where leadership ideas are based on male model., It seems, however, from the data collected in this study, that the gendered discourse of 'charismatic' is still prevalent among the participants.

Jennifer, who, as has been described, had attended leadership courses, had a different perspective on what made a leader. In addition to 'personality', and learnt skills, she identified values as important. She said:

I think personality and attitude has got a lot to do with it, and your own values and beliefs about issues to do with power and stuff like that, those are things that come from in here. But actually having the book learning helps to understand and modify things. But its the attitudes and values that actually allow you to make changes.³⁴

In education and in industry, vision and values are identified as important for leaders, especially during any change process (Senge 1990; Sergiovanni 1990; 1992a; 1992b; Hall 1996). As has been described, ideas of values and vision are also gaining credence in early childhood, particularly as the sector is restructured along managerialist lines.

Leadership as gendered

When asked whether they thought that women led in a different way from men, these women tended to avoid the question, on the grounds that they had only ever worked with women or at least in an organisation that was a women dominated culture. Working in a world that is primarily a women's world seemed to have shielded them from

³⁴ Tape 10:28

identifying the contrasts in working style between men and women that have been noted in other places (Shakeshaft 1989; Helgeson 1990; Adler, Laney & Packer 1993; Davidson & Bourke 1994; Court 1994; 1996; Hall 1996).

Robyn saw women as communicating more freely. Talking about her work within a culture dominated by women, she said:

Teachers are valued and their opinions are valued and they are given lots of opportunities and responsibilities and they know that our door is always open, and I honestly feel that they feel quite happy to pop in and even see [the General Manager].³⁵

As has been noted previously, collaboration is highly valued in early childhood.

However, Jennifer summed up the general feeling when she said:

To me, its not so much a gender thing as an attitude and values thing. I've worked with women in leadership who play boys games better than the boys, and I've worked with women who have been so gentle and non directive that they are ineffective. So its attitude rather than gender.³⁶

There is a denial in this comment from Jennifer that attitude to power and power dynamics could be related to gender. Jennifer worked in the most managerial of structures and seems, on this point, to have accepted the dominant discourse about leadership and gender. Pringle and Collins (1996: 419), however, report in their New Zealand study that while there is diversity in organisations run by women, the majority (two thirds) showed 'resistance to power differentiation, with leadership defined in terms of interaction and consultation'. Similarly, many studies on women in education have found that ideas about power sharing are particularly prevalent among women leaders (see literature review).

However, women leaders were seen as having a better understanding of women's issues. Dorothy said:

³⁵ Tape 13:50

³⁶ Tape 10:31

I find that the male Board members have quite a different approach. They don't think that we need to pay so much attention to such things as family leave, sick leave, that's going to be such an issue in the contract. Even if both parents are out working its usually the women who will stay at home with the sick children. And the hours of work, you know, you need to be home even when your children are teenagers. Get into the real world, everyone's got to get into the real world now, is what the male Board members say, why should any teacher ask for leave for anything now, I mean if they have got a job, they have got a job. Whereas the women have got more understanding of personal issues.³⁷

For these male employers, the private world is seen as of less importance to working women than their job. Shakeshaft (1989) comments on this, and Court (1996) adds that nurturing is seen as the lowest status job in the labour market, and is thus not valued highly. Maddock and Parkin describe the attitude expressed in the employers' statement as 'gender blind'. They say:

a gender blindness to the reality of women's lives is to ignore the fact that domestic responsibilities and social realities do affect the choices that women can make... [B]y ignoring reality, they encourage women to aspire to a superwomen status... without providing support or flexibility.... Those that deny the difference that gender makes to a person's life are naive and ostrich like in their belief in their belief that patriarchal relationships will disappear overnight. Such an attitude illustrates the convenience of the attitude of 'sameness' (Maddock & Parkin 1994: 35).

Early childhood is very well aware of the effects of gender in employment. It is a feminised profession, associated with motherhood and caring and grounded in the work of women. Pay is low and support for women is a primary concern. Joce Nuttall (1992: 12) describes early childhood services, including kindergartens, as 'women supporting women'. Writing about the kindergarten service, Judith Duncan (1996: 163) points out that the discourse of 'for the sake of the children' which 'conjures up image of a teacher/worker who selflessly does what s/he does for the sake of the

³⁷ Tape 1:43-44

children rather than from any desire for monetary gain or personal satisfaction' can effectively be used by employers to negate attempts at better pay and conditions. The competing ideas of 'gender blind' governance with a socialist feminist profession valuing all spheres of women's life are very clear in this description.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings from the ideas about leadership in early childhood of this group of Senior Teachers. Similarities were found to the ideas in research and theory about leadership in this sphere, particularly when they spoke about communication, power sharing and consultation. However, these women were more committed to supporting teachers and promoting teaching. In this, they more resembled women leaders in school research on leadership.

While some of the group felt that leaders could be born not made, all were sure that the skills that were needed by leaders could be taught. The experience of working in a profession that consists mainly of women made them unsure whether leadership style was gendered; however, the competing discourses of gender blind management and a gender oriented profession were evident.

In order to develop a better picture of their leadership behaviour, the Senior Teachers were asked to elaborate on how they carried out their leadership ideas within their job framework. The next chapter will consider the ways in which they execute their leadership. In particular, the ways that they carry out their ideas on consultative leadership, communication and decision making, and support for teachers and the promotion of teaching, will be investigated.

Chapter Five

Enacting Leadership: The Experience of the Senior Teacher

Government requirements for kindergartens have altered considerably since the implementation of *Before Five* in 1989. The advent of bulk funding in 1992 in particular made kindergartens into big business, where some associations have an annual income of \$5,000,000 or more. In addition, the development of management practices and accountability procedures in the school sector has filtered down to early childhood, encouraged by the publication by ERO of *What Counts as Quality in Kindergartens* (1997) and its perspective on appropriate practices in kindergartens.

Chapter Two described the context of this study, and previous research into the effects of these changes on the kindergarten service (Wylie 1992; Wylie 1993; Houghton & Wilson 1993; Dalli 1993; Dougherty 1994; NZKA 1994; Mitchell 1995; Davidson 1997a, 1997b). In each of these reports, comment about Senior Teachers was limited to one or two paragraphs which remarked on the increased workload and the push for accountability that they were experiencing. This chapter will expand on these findings by examining the leadership of this group of Senior Teachers and the extent to which their capacity to lead in the ways that they think are most appropriate is affected by the environment in which they work. How they enact leadership will be examined, and in particular their ability to execute their ideas about consultation, power sharing, communication and teacher support will be discussed.

The data used for this chapter come from material furnished to the researcher by the Senior Teachers and the General Managers. This

included job descriptions, Annual Reports, Professional Development materials and the log of events that the Senior Teachers were asked to keep for a week. The interviews with General Managers, Senior Teachers and Head Teachers have also contributed to the analysis.

The job description

Before the leadership practice of these Senior Teachers is examined, there follows a brief description of the job description to which they work.

The job description is important in understanding the context of the Senior Teachers work. All the job descriptions identify professional development, support and advice to staff, management and families/whanau as a key task. The generic NZFKA K3³⁸ Senior Teacher job description (on which five of these job descriptions is based) gives it as the primary objective:

to ensure the provision of high quality education in kindergartens through sound professional advice and support.

The key tasks identify professional support and advice, helping staff develop a professional development plan, responsibility for and commitment to equity, gathering and disseminating information on policy, advising on programme and resource development, carrying out induction, developing and maintaining links between teachers and the Association and between the kindergartens and the wider community, and professional leadership. Other tasks included assisting kindergartens with charter development and helping in the development of the Senior Teacher budget.

For Margaret and Dorothy, who worked on their own, the job description was a combination of the K3 and K4 descriptions, with key tasks also including specified administration tasks and responsibility for a budget. In both cases they were directly responsible to the Management Board of the Kindergarten Association. Brenda, Christine and Robyn were responsible to the K4 and to the General Manager, a new development, the implications of which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

³⁸ The K3 Senior Teacher position is held by Senior Teachers working alone and Senior Teachers who are part of a team. A head of the team is a K4 Senior Teacher.

The sixth job description (Jennifer's) was couched in different language. Whereas the other job descriptions described key tasks and expected outcomes, this one was described in accountabilities. The headings for these were professional development; management; administration; professional leadership; liaison with support services; curriculum knowledge and expertise; and personal professional development. There were two significant differences from the other job descriptions. First, in a direct accountability to support Association policy, to ensure that 'kindergartens comply with relevant legislation and Association requirements' and in report writing related to this objective. Second, Jennifer was accountable to the General Manager, not to the head of the Senior Teacher team, with an accountability to 'empower and assist (i) teaching teams to work independently and (ii) kindergartens to develop self management practices'.

It can thus be seen that the emphasis in five of these job descriptions was on advice and support, with compliance and accountability not emphasised. For Jennifer, however, compliance and accountability were at the forefront of the job description. Codd (1998: 5) comments that the language of such job descriptions, containing directives about 'planning, reviewing, internal monitoring and external reporting' as well as outcomes and key tasks with performance indicators implies that quality programmes can be developed through monitoring. He questions whether such a system, based on ideas of economic rationalism, is appropriate for education.

We now turn to an analysis of the ways in which these Senior Teachers practised their leadership.

CONSULTATIVE LEADERSHIP

In the months previous to these interviews, the new *Desirable Objectives* for Early Childhood centres had been published in the Early Childhood Ministry newsletter, *Pito Pito Korero*. One of the requirements listed

under the section on being a good employer is to develop an appraisal scheme related to professional development. It was consequently not surprising that, when asked about consultation, the General Managers, the Senior Teachers and the Head Teachers all talked about how the appraisal scheme was progressing.

All saw the appraisal scheme as a classic example of how consultation worked in their setting. Christine described the process in her association:

It started when we spoke in a staff meeting last year and said, is this document meeting your needs: ie is it pinpointing areas of professional development? And teachers said no, it isn't. So we [the Senior Teacher team] started to do quite a bit of research, and went through different models of appraisal, particularly focussing in education related ones... and came up with a very broad general draft that went to what's called the Senior Teacher Advisory Committee (STAC). This is an elected group of teacher representatives from all areas of the association. We discussed it with them. Amended it a bit. Next this draft was the focus of the next regional staff meetings which we conduct with the teachers. Went through the process, explained what we were doing and gave them the information. Asked them to feed back to their STAC representatives and they brought [the feedback] to the next meeting. Then we made a few more amendments. And [the General Manager] got copies of everything all the way through. And it went to Council a few weeks ago and got approved. [but] its taken a long time. It was basically a twelve month process.³⁹

The Head Teacher who was interviewed, and who was a member of the STAC group, agreed that this was what had happened and felt that teachers had found the process satisfactory. The Senior Teacher team had been prepared to listen, answer questions and make alterations where there was concern from the kindergarten staff. The emphasis had been on using the process to develop a scheme that everyone found satisfactory.

³⁹ Tape 7: 30

Robyn also described a long consultation process intended to develop consensus:

Teachers were very resistant to any form of appraisal ... it took us nearly a year of liaising with teachers and running workshops and fine tuning to get something everyone was happy with, so they have, they feel a sense of ownership of the appraisal process. {The K4} went and did an appraisal paper and sort of drove the process, but the teachers were very much part of it and critiqued everything, and we took on board any comments, rehashed the document. And in the end the teachers were very satisfied with what they had...{some of them} were somewhat reluctant, but when we did an evaluation they have written back and said it was a marvellous opportunity to reflect on their own practice, which they haven't had in the past.⁴⁰

Dorothy was just beginning on this development. She described difficulties in getting the Association to understand what she wanted, and she also described difficulties with the teachers.

I have found, in working with a self review process and with teacher appraisal that teachers don't trust each other... I think its the nature of kindergarten and the way people work in teams and know each other, know each other's strengths and weaknesses really well. And sometimes they get criticism mixed with appraisal ...I think people know their own weaknesses and know their colleagues know their weaknesses and they find that threatening. I'm hoping that training and understanding and being really able to get people to take responsibility for their own professional growth and not see it as a negative thing but as a developmental thing is what I'm hoping.⁴¹

Dorothy had been very articulate in her desire for consensus and collaboration. However, her recognition of a lack of trust within teams had led her to realise that achieving these aims was going to be difficult. Trust has been identified as an important component of relationships in

⁴⁰ Tape 13: 14

⁴¹ Tape 1: 12

shared leadership situations, and for working collaboratively (Hargreaves 1994). Stoll and Fink (1995: 109 following Covey) say 'since humans are interdependent, trust is the highest form of human motivation'. However, Codd (1998:10) questions whether trust is possible in the present New Right environment, with its emphasis on professional accountability systems, where 'surveillance is seen as the best way to maximise performance'. In the situation that Dorothy described, teacher appraisal was seen as supervision and thus threatening, so there was no trust in the process and consequently a lessening of trust in each other.

SHARING POWER

The Senior Teachers work in two different settings. One is the office setting and the other is the setting of the kindergartens. The office contains the Senior Teachers, the General Manager and whatever support staff as are employed, such as a financial manager (usually part time), office manager and receptionist. This depends on the size of the Association.

For these Senior Teachers, power sharing was most apparent within this office setting, where they worked with other senior staff. There were mechanisms within the office context for communication and decision making that varied from the informal for small associations to the more formal for the larger offices. However, all but one were characterised by an expressed commitment to shared decision making, either within the Senior Teacher team or within the whole group, including the General Manager.

The two Senior Teachers who worked with just a General Manager tended to meet with them regularly but informally. Margaret, who had worked on her own with the same General Manager for more than ten years said: 'Well, she's just through the wall. It's no problem'. They were separated by a half-glass wall.

Within the larger associations, systems were more formalised. The management teams had regular (usually weekly) meetings where matters were discussed and decisions made. Jennifer's General Manager described the system for making decisions about professional matters for her association office:

We have regular meetings, management meetings. I go into professional practice meetings, not as the chairperson but as a team member. We have a senior manager for professional practice.... So I go in there and she chairs the meeting and we work through a range of professional issues.... There's been all sorts of things that we've worked through and I'm part of that process. If anybody had a concern about a particular process or an individual in a kindergarten that would be discussed confidentially and we would give professional advice and support to each other. So that's a kind of peer support process...{Decisions are made} by consensus in general but if its to do with professional practice, like training and professional development and curriculum issues, the Senior Manager of Professional Practice would have the last word on that... I can override her, but it would be extraordinary for me to override her on one of those matters.⁴²

Jennifer saw this group as having reached a maturity in decision making that did not require voting on issues. She related this to the time that they had been working together, the systems that had been established, and the trust that had developed between them, particularly since a human relations consultant had been contracted to work with them regularly:

I see that there's a maturity that's been reached in terms of decision making and the way we work together, we just commented on it recently....There's a sort of trusting developing {so that} its actually safe to ask for opinions and ideas and there's no hidden agenda. And it takes time you know to do that.⁴³

When talking about sharing power generally, Christine had identified the

⁴² Tape 11:9

⁴³ Tape 10:13

sounding board effect of collecting opinions and the use of everybody's strengths as important. When talking about decision making within the Senior Teacher group, she said:

We invariably come to consensus. Invariably, and it might take us a while. There are times when we think differently on issues...Our approaches, our philosophies are different. But, I don't know, its like any relationship, you have to work at it and talk it through until you reach a point where either you can see and go along with the team or we take it and discuss it with {the General Manager} who is like the next sounding board...We say, we are not quite sure what we are going to do about this, there is this point of view and that point of view and these are the arguments. This gives us a different perspective, we are not asking for a decision.⁴⁴

She identified as important in supporting this the process the fact that the team had been together for about three years, and some of them had known each other for much longer than that. She too saw this as developing trust. Her General Manager agreed, saying:

I've had to work at that. There was a lot of distrust at the beginning... I think I was seen as... 'Is this the new broom to sweep clean?' My communication is so much better in the last twelve months than it was in the first twelve months that I was in office because I think we've learnt to trust each other. I mean we had a situation a couple of weeks ago where there was a debate here about an issue. And they sat round the table and whereas a year ago they would have been quite tense, they were quite relaxed about the situation and told me what they thought.⁴⁵

Both personal trust, and trust in processes, as described by Hargreaves (1994:252) are identified as important in power sharing. Hargreaves points out that trust can be 'an outcome of meaningful relationships or a condition of their existence'. In the examples quoted above the

⁴⁴ Tape 7:7

⁴⁵ Tape 8:14

development of personal trust through time is seen as a precursor to trust in processes.

In the association in which Brenda worked, however, the K4 Senior Teacher and the General Manager were not managing to work together, and this affected the office culture. The General Manager said:

There are tensions, and I am very aware of them because at the staffing meeting where they report I was continually questioning them - I wasn't doing it to be nasty, I just thought they needed to have more accountability. The K4 Senior Teacher has a very unfortunate manner about her... She doesn't have a lot of people skills, she's very defensive, she's very aggressive... I consider that the management group for this association is the four Senior Teachers plus my office manager plus myself... So we have moved to a weekly meeting on a Monday morning where we raise issues, set the scene for the week, discuss what's happened last week. Now the K4 resisted that because she saw it as a removal of her power. But I needed to have that input from the other three.

Meade (1985: 21) commented that where there was an imbalance in relationships within the kindergarten association management, 'friction arose and some of the tasks could not be carried out effectively'. This account suggests that this is still the case.

In contrast, however, although Brenda described the same system for team meetings, she did not allude to this disagreement. She described the group contract, the sharing of responsibilities and resultant discussions within the Senior Teacher team, but when it came to sharing power, she said:

We have one K4 who is the leader of our team, but I think the team works very co-operatively and supportively together. But I guess its like any leadership situation, the buck stops with her.⁴⁶

Although the General Manager had worked for other educational organisations, she was an accountant and saw her support as within the

⁴⁶ Tape 16:19

commercial world. Her emphasis on professional accountability and the Senior Teachers' emphasis on supporting staff were causing difficulties. Codd (1998: 10) describes this type of managerial control with its emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, as 'devaluing personal trust' and doubts whether it has value in education, where professional responsibility is regarded as very important.

Discussion

For all of these Senior Teachers, including Brenda, commitment to power sharing was possible within the defined group of senior staff. The dynamics of group of senior staff have been described by Hall. She found that their ideas about empowerment were derived from their own success. Hall says:

Their approach to working with groups such as governors and senior colleagues ... derived from their expressed commitment to collaboration and power sharing as the most effective strategy. (Hall 1996: 142)

while Valentine (1995) identifies the relationships within the workplaces of the women that she studied as being characterised by supportive relationships. Meetings were used to build cohesion, and there was consensual decision making, with very few votes or formal decision making processes. Essentially, power in decision making was shared. Within these groups, power was handled in a similar way, among colleagues whom they trusted.

A GOOD COMMUNICATOR

When asked about communication, Senior Teachers identified mechanisms for disseminating information, rather than talking about their skills or style. The ways in which Senior Teachers attempt to communicate can only be inferred from the practices that they saw as important. These were staff meetings, the use of faxes and methods for individual communication.

The staff meeting cycle was described by all Senior Teachers. It varied

from association to association but essentially consisted of a combination of large meetings, some with the association or its representative present, and smaller meetings which the Senior Teachers ran. Dorothy described a typical pattern. She met with all the teachers and Association representatives once a term and with her Head Teachers once a term. In addition, there were cluster meetings where the kindergarten teachers met together to talk about whatever topic they felt needed discussion. Dorothy did not attend these meetings, regarding them as an opportunity for the kindergarten teachers to be responsible for their own development. She showed an awareness of the need for small groups to meet together, and described the system in a way that was consistent with her position on power sharing and on encouraging people to be responsible for the development of their own teaching. She said:

They don't have to go with their team. They usually split up and there are pluses for them in that. In that they meet with other teams, with fresh faces and they find that really supportive, just sharing with each other on that collegial basis and talking over common issues. And because in the large meeting, with 43 of them its really hard for them to have a lot of dialogue with each other.⁴⁷

Margaret too described liaison meetings with the staff where she had tried to encourage more free communication and more input into decision making by the teachers;

We have broken up into a little bit of a workshop thing and we break into groups and we brainstorm and we feed back and all those sorts of things that you do. And people feel more comfortable about speaking up and so we do have a really good debate about issues. A lot of laughter which is really good. Healthy. And at our last liaison meeting staff came up with things I really hadn't expected them to come up with. Good ideas.[about how to meet community needs]⁴⁸

Robyn too commented on the size of staff meetings, with more than sixty

⁴⁷ Tape 1:16

⁴⁸ Tape 4: 28

on the staff, but said that it was a chance for teachers to 'renew friendships'. She too described meetings of about 20 teachers who had the opportunity to get together on a particular occasion.

Every Senior Teacher also described the fax system, which all kindergarten associations in this group had installed and which was used extensively for the General Managers and the Senior Teachers to send messages about policy and procedures to kindergartens. Dorothy described her part in this as this as 'plugging into the association memos'. The Head Teachers saw this as useful one way communication, and tended to use the fax for administrative jobs such as putting in the weekly attendance and staffing returns. They seldom initiated an exchange on the fax unless it was to make an enquiry about some procedure.

The Senior Teachers' commitment to keeping in touch personally and nurturing relationships was evident. Christine, Jennifer, Dorothy and Brenda had cellphones, which they regarded as essential for keeping in touch. Dorothy said:

I think my answerphone system works really well and the office have purchased a cellphone which I use mostly now....And I have a white board here so the office always know where I am. If the teachers ring in here, I will be at a kindergarten somewhere. I'm never far away. I think the phone is a really good link for me, because one visit a term is not enough to really know what is going on.⁴⁹

The Head Teachers were less sure that the telephone was sufficient. One said, about Dorothy's system:

It used to be a much more visiting role. She's less accessible to us: its often the answerphone again {but} sometimes you need her right there.⁵⁰

The Head Teachers who worked with Christine also talked about her accessibility which was made easier by her living in the same part of the

⁴⁹ Tape 1:14

⁵⁰ Tape 3: 19

city:

My Senior Teacher pops in regularly to the kindergarten, averaging about once a fortnight... If I need her advice she's there, and she comes with things and information as well... she'll just pop in and pass information on. And we have her phone number, we can ring her any time at home. Its an open line of communication, she's very accessible.⁵¹

Jennifer, who had been in the job for about a year, said:

I suppose that initially it was a thing of inviting staff to contact me rather than waiting for me to make a visit. Because that can only happen three times a year. More if identified by them. But I find as I get to know people better, people will ask for help when they need it.

She also made opportunities for people to talk to her:

If I haven't heard from somebody I'll run a check, how's it all going. Like I was visiting one of the kindergartens in {town} and I took the opportunity while I was there to drop into the other one, to drop in their magazines, but really to catch up. Last week I dropped things all along my route.⁵²

However, opportunities for in depth, face to face discussion and communication were seen as fleeting by the two Head Teachers in Jennifer's group who were interviewed. They lived in a town an hour and a half's drive from the Association headquarters. While they agreed that 'if we're having a hard time, she's always there for us to ring', they also said that the distance was very isolating, despite Jennifer's best efforts. It was not difficult to get an answer to a query, but they felt very much on their own, personally and professionally, and supported each other.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS

When they talked about the ways in which they supported teachers, the

⁵¹ Tape 9: 12

⁵² Tape 10: 20

Senior Teachers described two aspects of support. These were their work in visiting kindergartens, and the provision of professional development.

Visiting kindergartens

As we have seen, each Senior Teacher had between fifteen and seventeen kindergartens to work with. This meant that they had from 45 and 55 teachers, mostly full time, whose support and guidance they were responsible for. All of them said that they tried to visit all of their kindergartens once a term (three or four times a year). In the week studied, all of the Senior Teachers except one visited a kindergarten for a long visit (8.30am to 2pm with a lunchtime meeting). As well, there were visits to kindergartens who had put in urgent requests or who needed follow up work. These tended to be encouraged as it kept the Senior Teachers in contact with the staff and as we have seen, were regarded as enhancing communication. For many of the Senior Teachers, this meant considerable travelling, either within a city or between towns. Some of them were provided with work cars while others used their own and were paid an allowance. The time on the road and the extra work, sometimes in the evenings, tended to mean long days or sometimes an overnight stay for some of them.

'Support' was seen as being aware of the organisational culture of each centre and the needs, both personal and professional, of the staff. Thus, visiting kindergartens was seen as important. Dorothy said:

I see the support part of me as being in tune with their work sites. Being in tune with them so far as their needs in each work site goes so that I'm able to communicate very clearly to the teachers' employers, the Management Board. And then, knowing them well as individuals and where they are at in their career: in their centre and in the larger picture of where they are going.⁵³

Professional support when visiting as described by the Senior Teachers was enacted through a range of tasks and functions. These included working on the *Revised Desirable Objectives*; working with centres on their implementation of *Te Whaariki*; advising on management plans;

⁵³ Tape 1: 7

playground development; advice and guidance programmes for teacher registration; helping to liaise with the Special Education Service and prepare IEPs⁵⁴ ; and matters concerning the involvement of parents. There were also incidents that could not be predicted but required immediate attention and money. Dorothy described an episode:

Because of the behaviour of one of the children in their centre, {the teachers} were under pressure from parents to have that child removed. And they felt really torn because they were having trouble managing the behaviour of the child, they were being hurt and other children were being hurt. And so they talked to me about it and I saw the support as me going to see them, sitting down and talking to them, hearing their point of view, offering to meet with the parent, and then also to provide a tutor to come and observe in the programme, a tutor that we had used as a behaviour management facilitator... What we found was that really what special education services was providing wasn't quite enough so I was able to offer to bring this tutor in, to pay for that and for her to work with them in a very specific programme... And this week I was able to follow up to see how it went.⁵⁵

Margaret described a dramatic incident:

A child escaped over the fence, and it was into no man's land at the back of the kindergarten, there wasn't any housing, its just sort of bush and so forth... And the parents were very upset as you can imagine, and the decision was mine alone, I rang our maintenance person and said, get round here smartly. The very next day the builder was around there erecting a high fence. And I had to say to the Board, I have taken this initiative, its happened and you've got a bill coming.⁵⁶

The constraints of bulk funding, however, were seen as making for difficulties in supporting kindergarten staff. Robyn said:

⁵⁴ Individual Educational Programmes

⁵⁵ Tape 1:7 .

⁵⁶ Tape 4:22

[Our role] is in supporting teachers to have to live within the constraints of bulk funding, like your attendances. You know, I can remember as a teacher a Senior Teacher coming out and saying, this session is too unsettled, you don't take any more new children for the rest of the term. And you could run it at 35 and no-one was going to come in and rap you over the knuckles. We went on the needs of the community and the children. And now its all dollar funded really... Getting in right on three, to have forty odd just threes is quite horrendous. We talk about the child's sense of belonging, and I have seen increased numbers of children having to go to their locker to get their cuddie or their teddy to come and sit on the mat, whose needs are we meeting?⁵⁷

Head Teachers saw the support role in a similar way. The Head Teachers who worked with Christine saw the role of the Senior Teachers in relation to them as

Professional support and advice, leadership. To pass on information regarding policies and legislation which are going to affect the kindergarten; to help with programme planning. And inservice, they're quite good at running inservice courses. They're good at resources, and I like the way they've developed an information checklist... Their newsletters keep us in touch with what's going on....They've helped me with a lot of bicultural things and they help with Special Needs. They come in with IEPs and at helping in situations we're not too familiar with. And they were good with ERO, they helped us to get ready.⁵⁸

However, the accountability emphasis, described earlier in Jennifer's job description, meant that she saw her responsibilities differently:

I have fifteen kindergartens, well I have a management function in those, and that's looking at any issues of compliance, looking at Desirable Objectives and Practices. and licenses... At their meeting Association bylaws, the Regulations and DOPs.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Tape 13:35

⁵⁸ Tape 9:9

⁵⁹ The Desirable Objectives and Practices for Chartered Early Childhood Services

..There's the professional development and there's the compliance angle.⁶⁰

The Head Teachers who worked with her saw her role in a similar way, but they also saw her as a support person. Speaking generally about Senior Teachers, they said:

They have kindergartens under their jurisdiction. And they check on us, to see that we're up with the regulations, that we do what we have to do, that we're carrying out the wishes of the Association.... And they're a support person as well... If we need someone to question on policies or just check out what we are doing, Jennifer's there for that, and also if we're having a hard time, she's always there for us to ring.⁶¹

Most comments about how support was enacted described the provision of professional support rather than personal support. Meade (1985: 85) identified personal support as a component of the Senior Teacher job that took 'a considerable amount of time', but this aspect was not so evident in this research. No one described an episode where the support they had given was principally personal. Jennifer's association had a separate system for personal support for teachers where teachers could nominate who they would like support from. Jennifer talked about her role in this network, which had been set up by the association to give staff 'a listening ear' when they wanted to talk about issues.

Now that's something I do outside this role, and its really interesting, I've had several contacts from people who, I'm their manager but they've clearly identified that they want to talk to me as their peer support contact, they have chosen me because they know me.⁶²

While this could have been seen by staff as a dilemma, the Head Teachers interviewed were confident that Jennifer's professionalism and personal characteristics, along with her experience in counselling, made her an appropriate person to confide in. She saw no dilemma either and felt that

⁶⁰ Tape 10:18

⁶¹ Tape 12: 3-4

⁶² Tape 10:20

she was able to separate the roles of manager and personal support person. There are links here to Shakeshaft's (1989) findings that effective women leaders see relationship building as important and to Court's (1994) discussion of the importance of affiliation.

Professional development

Professional development was identified in the job description as part of the professional support that Senior Teachers were to provide. As has been described earlier in this chapter, all associations were in the process of developing an appraisal process, which was intended to supplement or replace the present system where the professional development needs of staff were initially identified either through a needs analysis based on job description, or through the appraisal and self review process.

Typical of the process used for identifying professional development needs when this research took place was the following description from Brenda:

{Teachers} go through a needs analysis themselves in November and they identify to their job description, what their strengths are, what they would like for their needs for professional development for the following year and then they come back to their team and their team sit down and say, this is what we have identified for our kindergarten. Then they send that form in to us, and I would open my discussion with them by talking about it.⁶³

Most of the Senior Teachers bought in professional development courses, although they took workshops themselves as well. Staff were supported to go to *Te Whaariki* courses run by professional development providers and in some associations they were supported to do Higher and Advanced Diploma Studies and to attend Teacher Refresher Course Committee courses. The smaller associations tended to range widely in their search for courses, using local providers such as the Hospital Board and private consultants who ran courses on topics such as stress management and communication. The payment of relievers and registration costs were born by the Senior Teacher's professional development fund.

⁶³ Tape 16:16

The Senior Teachers took their responsibilities as professional development providers and facilitators very seriously as part of their professional support role. Dorothy said:

I found when I first came into this job, people expected me to say, you should do this, and you should go to that course, and this is the course that's right for you, and I have tried to move away from that. And say to them, I have got the money, you let me know what you would like to do and I'll try to help you do it. I tried to move away from the situation where 'Dorothy says you have to' and 'Dorothy said we should'. So I do try, but when it comes to the crunch, yes, I do have to make some decisions.⁶⁴

The perception of this system from the Head Teachers was mostly positive. Head Teachers saw the Senior Teachers as having a key role in their entitlement to professional development, though they were clear that the choice they had about whether they availed themselves of courses in the kindergarten holidays was limited to what courses they went to, not whether they participated. One said:

And we have a professional development week, in the next break ...by choice. You choose which, what you want to go to.⁶⁵

However, in one Association concern was expressed that although the teachers were notified of courses and, if they applied, would probably be funded, little or no energy was spent in matching people up with courses, so that the very keen did better out of the system. This Association did not have an appraisal scheme in place.⁶⁶

As well as using outside providers, Senior Teachers ran their own courses. Jennifer's association which covered a large geographical area ran a four day residential course for new Head Teachers in the holidays, but with a follow up as well. Jennifer described it:

Just looking at things like leadership, strategy, planning, time

⁶⁴ Tape 1:19

⁶⁵ Tape 12: 5

⁶⁶ Tape 18

management, stress management, max communication, I mean that's a really intensive four days. After that four days people identify an area for development where they go away and develop a project. Six months down the track they come back in and we have another one day of training and we cover things like risk management, code of ethics... and at the end of the year they come and present their project that they have developed to the group that they did their training with.⁶⁷

The Head Teacher who had attended this leadership course said that she found the content worthwhile. It had also helped her to set up a support network with the other nine new Head Teachers and to get to know the Association people, who were centred in another town an hour's drive away. In Christine's Association, a similar but less intensive course taken by the Senior Teachers was available for all Head Teachers, and workshops on topics such as special education, time management and curriculum were also taken by Senior Teachers. In Robyn's association, a system that encouraged staff to identify their own strengths and knowledge and share it through leading workshops at area meetings had been instituted.

The General Managers, too, agreed that both staff support and professional development were part of the Senior Teachers job, but they tended to see this as part of a larger responsibility. One said:

I see that they are there for professional leadership and in saying that I include things like they need to be up to date on recent developments, they need to be able to provide information. they need to be aware of legislation changes, so that their role is very much professional leadership for the teaching staff. I also see that they have a role in providing professional development and that is to provide training courses.⁶⁸

There was thus agreement between the Head Teachers, Senior Teachers and General Managers that the Senior Teachers were committed to professional development as part of their leadership role. Shakeshaft

⁶⁷ Tape 10: 16

⁶⁸ Tape 17:9

(1989) found that promoting good teaching was important for women leaders in schools. Hall too (1996) found that the women school leaders in her study considered it important to provide opportunities for professional development. Other writers such as Hargreaves (1994) identify professional development as crucial to teacher improvement.

In 1985, Meade did not identify professional development as important for Senior Teachers. However, since then there has been commitment to improved teaching and learning within the early childhood field, especially since the development of the curriculum *Te Whaariki* (1996) the Early Childhood Regulations and the *Desirable Objectives* (1996), which were mentioned by several interviewees. In addition, Ministry professional development contracts have emphasised the development of quality programmes in centres through professional development. All of these factors have meant a greater emphasis on professional development for the Senior Teachers' leadership.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the findings of this study concerning the way that the Senior Teachers were able to carry out their leadership ideas in relation to consultative leadership, power sharing, communication and teacher support. For both power sharing and consultative leadership, the component of personal trust was important. Power sharing was found to be easier to carry out among a group of senior staff, where trust had built up. The multi sited, often geographically distant nature of kindergartens within an association made power sharing between Senior Teachers and staff more difficult, though consultative leadership was carried out in this situation and valued by the participants.

Teacher support included personal and professional support. There was more evidence of professional support, both within the kindergartens and through professional development. With one exception, the Head Teachers considered that the Senior Teachers were supportive and helpful

in this role, particularly in professional matters.

Research on leaders in education has identified constraints, dilemmas and tensions for them in carrying out their job (Strachan 1999; Blackmore 1996). In addition research on the kindergarten service in the 1990s has identified recent changes that have had an effect on the Senior Teachers' job (Wilson & Houghton 1995; Wylie 1992; 1993; Mitchell 1995; Davidson 1997a 1997b). Chapter Six will investigate these changes within the context of a neoliberal environment.

Chapter Six

Dilemmas, Tensions and Constraints

Research into kindergartens has identified changes in the Senior Teachers job, particularly since 1992 (Wylie 1993; Wilson and Houghton 1995). Essentially, the changes have been identified as an increased workload and an increased involvement in association management, and policy development and the problem of who Senior Teachers are supporting - teachers or management.

Several researchers have identified dilemmas for educational leaders arising from the effects of neo liberalism (Grace 1995; Woods et al 1997; Blackmore 1996; Strachan 1999). Woods et al differentiate between *dilemmas*, where people have choice but the options are evenly balanced and can be resolved by professional action; *tensions*, where choice is limited, the effects are often personal, and the resolution is often strategic or political; and *constraints*, where the structure limits or negates choice. They point out that the same experience may have different outcomes for different people, but feel that there has been an increase in 'the nature and source of dilemmas for teachers' (p 15). They follow Andy Hargreaves (1994) in asserting that the push to make educational institutions more like businesses has led to dilemmas for teachers resulting from restructuring. Included in these are concerns about the direction that teaching is taking, and an intensification of work and work overload.

Despite their commitment to leadership, the Senior Teachers in this research also found that were dilemmas, constraints and tensions in enacting their leadership in the ways that they wanted. These were both personal and professional. They were: (i) balancing their personal and

professional life (dilemma); (ii) increased professional workload (dilemma); (iii) support versus compliance and accountability (tension); and (iv) the source of power and authority (constraint). This chapter will identify and analyse these dilemmas, tensions and constraints and briefly investigate the coping strategies that these women exercised in order to lead in a way that fitted in with the ideas about leadership that they had for themselves.

(i) BALANCING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

For reasons outlined in Chapter 3, the Senior Teachers were not asked about their early life. They were asked to talk about their working life and their careers and to comment on the relationship between their private life and their working life. The relationship between the Senior Teachers' home circumstances and their work will be discussed first, as it begins a picture of their life circumstances which are relevant to their ideas on leadership.

Children and families

Court (1996) reviews the origins of the idea of a split between the public world of work and the private sphere of family responsibility. She traces the valuing of work over family through nineteenth century philosophy and practice, where women were regarded as chattels in law. She goes on to say:

In our country a particularly influential discourse of femininity was imported in the nineteenth century with settlers from Britain. In this 'cult of domesticity' ..the biological determinism of ancient thinking persists. Women are constructed as 'naturally' suited to the primary roles of mothers and wives within dependent and privatised heterosexual relationships with men (p 144).

The literature on women in schools argues that women leave teaching to bring up children (reviewed in Bethell 1998). However, Hall's (1996) study found that women principals in England made lifestyle choices that made it possible to combine their family life and their work. Of this group, five Senior Teachers had been married, one twice. Margaret, Brenda, Dorothy

and Robyn had children, all of whom were now either late teenagers or adults. Robyn had trained when her children were at primary school, but the three who were already teaching before marriage and children had had time out when the children were small and had returned to teaching through relieving. Margaret, who had four children described a typically ad hoc pattern:

There was a lot of individual day relieving from the {name} association, then I did my playcentre training and was involved with playcentre for seven years. When I came back to teaching, I came back because I had a real interest in special needs. So I came back to the IHC and was director of their preschool. I found it really stressful, though worthwhile, and after a year I applied for a job in a kindergarten.⁶⁹

In all three cases, the husbands were said to be 'supportive' and had had jobs, such as country school teaching, farming and working from home, that allowed them to be available when the children were younger, especially after school and overnight. The Senior Teachers with children all commented that it would have been very difficult to have returned to work without some support at home. Dorothy, who worked for an Association that was partly rural, explained:

In the early days of this job when I was learning and my family was younger, I could not have managed this job without the support that I got from my husband, who took over and still does now really all of the cooking at home during the week, and being there when the children got home... As the children got older, they took more responsibility,⁷⁰

But there was still a personal toll. Dorothy went on to say:

I felt the personal toll, because I had to be away from home, that was very difficult for me. I hadn't been in the workforce a lot, {since the children were born} and it was an opportunity I wanted to have, but I felt really guilty at first about being away from home at night,.. but then the kids got used to it and I felt

⁶⁹ Tape 4:4

⁷⁰ Tape 1:39

quite put out when I came home and they didn't care whether you were there or not. You know?⁷¹

Despite the cost described above, commitment to their own children seemed not to be a charge that caused them to feel that the responsibility was an oppression, as described by Adler, Laney and Packer (1993). Again, this may be because their commitment to and enjoyment of young children made them prepared to devote time to them. Adler, Laney and Packer say however, that for some women, the combination of caring for children and a job is seen as a positive choice, and this seemed to be the case for these women. Robyn commented that she did not really approve of very young children being in childcare, but no-one else commented on this aspect of choice. However, it seems reasonable to argue that their training, with its emphasis on attachment theory, the development of young children and the importance of family life, and the perspective of kindergartens as supplementing the family, as described in Chapter Two, may have suggested to them that it may have been inappropriate to return to work when the children were very small.

Personal effects of the increasing workload

As with many teachers, not just women teachers, the line between their public life and private life was not always maintained. All reported that they attended meetings at night and saw that as part of the job, and there was awareness that the job was not able to be contained within the work hours. They showed the effects of the extra work for Senior Teachers identified by Wylie (1993); and Wilson and Houghton (1995). Margaret reported:

Work have got me a laptop which is wonderful, and I have quite a number of night meetings. ⁷²

and Christine, who described herself as 'single' also found that her working life and her expectations for herself spilled over into her private life:

Five years I juggled doing my Masters at nights and weekends

⁷¹ Tape 1:39

⁷² Tape 4:11

and my union involvement and my Senior Teacher {work} during the day... I do have quite a few night time meetings, and of course workshop writing up and submissions I do at home. But I try to make sure that there is some give and take there.⁷³

There were dilemmas related to the necessity to keep up to date and the dual home/work responsibilities. Brenda identified these for her:

I know I wouldn't have looked at this job if my family wasn't older...I do have a very supportive partner but I think that you take a lot of things home in your head. You do take a lot of paper work things home, and reading. Last term was horrific, I was doing two AST⁷⁴ papers, I was also too involved in the marketing working party, I had some kindergartens with problems and I was probably for 5 or 6 weeks working 7 days a week...{We} decided we'd have a couple of weekends away and I wasn't taking it with me, it was a real conscious effort.⁷⁵

Dorothy specified these dilemmas as related to her professionalism and the standards that she set for herself:

I like to keep the channels open and when you're talking about your personal life, I know my family have found that difficult, like my husband will be really grumpy when people are ringing me at home, because he thinks I have done my 40 hours... Probably my main stress is the expectations I put on myself.⁷⁶

Jennifer agreed:

Visiting a kindergarten, I like them to have received my report within a week. That's not something put on me by management, that's something I've set for me. So I tend to do a lot outside of normal working hours... And sometimes I take people home with me in my mind⁷⁷

⁷³ Tape 7:37

⁷⁴ Advanced Studies for Teachers. Higher and Advanced Diplomas.

⁷⁵ Tape 16:40-41

⁷⁶ Tape 1:40

⁷⁷ Tape 10:6

She went on to say:

I think my inability to leave my work behind cost me a marriage. I'm not sure what caused what. Whether the state of the marriage caused the work to be all consuming or whether the work... but I have learnt and I do protect my personal life. And [the General Manager] is really good at encouraging us with self care. And my partner works in a totally unrelated field and I mean we have an excellent life.⁷⁸

Balancing work and home is identified as difficult for women in many studies. (Valentine 1995; Court 1989; 1996;) For these women too, there was an issue in balancing the two spheres of work and home: their professionalism meant that they had high expectations of themselves at work, but they attempted to separate this work from their home lives. However, a cost, in health and personal relationships had been experienced when this 'line' was not maintained.

(ii) BALANCING THE CHANGING PROFESSIONAL WORKLOAD

Ministry requirements

The advent of bulk funding, Ministry accountabilities such as the nine plus twelve rule⁷⁹, policy writing and subsequent management plans that have arisen from Charter requirements and the *Desirable Objectives and Practices* (DOPS) have increased the workload for everyone in early childhood. One General Manager described the effects of bulk funding as:

This Association's probably moved from having a Treasurer with two hundred thousand a year that she was managing ... in a small office down the road, to a six million dollar business with the management and administrative responsibilities that have occurred with that. And the government with the bulk funding system have never addressed the cost of the administration. ⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Tape 10:23

⁷⁹This is a Ministry mechanism for ensuring that centres are not funded for children who are on the role but not attending. Centres are required to take the children off the role after a certain length of time regardless of the reason for absence or the possibility of their returning.

⁸⁰ Tape 11:23

Jennifer reflected on the changes to the job since 1981 when she was previously a Senior Teacher:

I was very much a resource and support person. The visits were not particularly in depth but very much focussing in the good things that people were doing. Very much a summary, hey, I had a neat time, lots of warm fuzzies. I'd always have a car full of goodies and I'd take things to people. Like a milk run and it was generally two visits a day.... But now, because of the level of compliance that kindergartens have to reach and maintain for funding and to do the jobs that there are to do and the outside influences, [these] have changed the nature of the job. I mean kindergartens weren't licensed in 1981, they are now, and we have to meet DOPs to get funding. The Ministry have been doing spot checks for compliance, four of my kindergartens have been done in the last fortnight... I didn't have a management function or really a decision making function. Anything at that level was done by the Association hierarchy... More responsibility is being delegated now.⁸¹

A considerable amount of Senior Teachers' committee work was to do with policy writing. Policy committees tended to consist of a mix of association and professional members, but Senior Teachers were often also members of a subcommittee that developed the policy. There was usually wide consultation with the kindergarten staff, but because of the isolation of kindergartens, this consultation was almost always by fax or mail. However, Head Teachers were in no doubt that they had an opportunity for input and were able to describe the system. Jennifer described her involvement:

Our policy and information book, its not a user friendly document. It has everything in it, from the Association bylaws, the Regulations, the DOPs, the Constitution and all of the Association policies in and behind the DOPs. Now that is currently being reviewed and rewritten, and each of us have been allocated responsibilities for certain policies, for the reforming

⁸¹ Tape 10: 6

*and rewriting of. And then we will report back to our management team which is basically everyone here in this office, and then we will consult more widely, plus in doing that we have asked teachers to give their ideas and input too. But... we have been given the responsibility to reorganise and rehash the various policies.*⁸²

These proposed policies would then go to the Board for discussion and ratification. The workload of these committees took up considerable time each week: time that the Senior Teachers felt could have been better spent supporting kindergartens out in the field.

A wider range of responsibilities

Other Senior Teachers confirmed that the work was now more varied. In addition to the seventeen kindergartens and 46 full time staff that she was responsible for supporting and providing professional development for, Brenda outlined the following as part of her job:

*I have responsibility for the visitors who come in... that can mean a lot of toing and froing with travel agents. I am on the advisory committee for the College of Education Te Whaariki Contract and I have a shared role with two of my colleagues for the Association library for children with special needs. And I have responsibility for any information that comes though about purchasing resources for our teachers. I have been involved in going to the staffing committee meetings and they meet once a fortnight...[The K4] and I formulated a sickness policy and that goes to staffing, most policies go to staffing first... The job has got bigger and bigger because of things like ERO and the Crown Health and now the revised DOPs*⁸³

Christine was on the following Association subcommittees: policy review, constitution review, finance, and advocacy and communication. With the advent of the *Revised Desirable Objectives and Practices*, the policy review committee for this Association was involved in updating policies that had

⁸² Tape 10:21

⁸³ Tape 16:8

not been updated since 1991. In addition, she had done a series of lectures on the kindergarten movement at the College of Education, and was on the College of Education advisory committee. Robyn and Jennifer had a similar range of responsibilities. Jennifer was also involved in a large project:

We were lucky enough to be able to access \$33,000 for developing parenting resources for parents of young children in {town}. It is real money, so we have been able to upgrade and access parenting resources in each kindergarten. I mean each kindergarten has had a fourteen inch video purchased for them, video tapes, books and {name} has done a series of parenting workshops for parents. We are putting together tutor training for volunteers at present.⁸⁴

Time to do all of these jobs successfully was identified by all of the Senior Teachers as being a problem for them. Although they worked long hours, with one or two evening meetings a week, they did not feel that they had time to do the job properly. Moreover, unlike the women in Helgeson's (1990) and Neville's (1988) studies, they did not find trivia easy to deal with. They complained about the incessant telephone calls and the mail, principally because although they felt that the other professional responsibilities were important, their direct involvement with kindergartens suffered as a consequence of the extra work.

Two of the General Managers had a different perspective, however. They saw Senior Teachers as part of management, and felt that if they increased their hours of work and gave up the extra weeks of kindergarten holidays, they would not feel that they were over worked. One said:

Well, I don't think that any of them are actually overworked. I think they are inefficient workers. When I point out to them that I only get four weeks leave a year in total they say 'Oh, but you don't face the stresses we do'. I think that we all face stress and this is one of the problems... Similarly I think that if they really sat down and thought it through and used some of that quality time that you have in the term break to get on and do some of

⁸⁴ Tape 10: 10

*their preparation and planning, I think that there would be a lot less highs and lows.*⁸⁵

This statement mirrors the reactions reported by Woods et al (1997:7) where 'the official answer is not to lighten the load, but to express concern that teachers are not working hard enough and to suggest lengthening the work day and week'. Woods sees this as part of the intensification of teaching life.

Head Teachers too acknowledged that the Senior Teacher job had become much bigger since bulk funding and since the Ministry of Education had asked for more policy and accountability documentation from early childhood organisations. They too saw this as being to the detriment of the support role. One Head Teacher who had worked in various kindergartens for more than 10 years and whose Senior Teacher worked on her own said:

*I think it used to be a lot more of a visiting role, and hands on thing. And I see it now as a hugely administrative role, with not so much contact with the kindergartens. Now I mean physical contact, not contact on the phone... And probably because of that workload she's a little bit less accessible to us.*⁸⁶

Marketing and advocacy

In addition to the above workload, marketing and advocacy were acknowledged as a new development for kindergartens. For two of the associations, staff retention and recruitment were a problem: for one because it covered a large area with many small towns which were not seen by teachers as good places to live; and for the other because the nearby city association paid teachers considerably above the award wage. In both of these associations, Senior Teachers were involved in visiting Colleges of Education on recruitment drives, and Head Teachers were aware that staff recruitment was an important aspect of the Senior Teachers' job.

The main focus, however, was on marketing the service to local and

⁸⁵ Tape 8:30

⁸⁶ Tape 3:19

national organisations and to families. The range of services now available to families and the growing number of working women was seen as limiting the need for sessional care and education in some areas. Associations were grappling with this. Senior Teachers and General Managers talked about the need for a 'market image' which identified kindergartens and by implication the purveyors of a quality programme. Related to this was the issue of whether kindergartens should change their session times, or whether they should change direction. One General Manager said:

We have one kindergarten that is struggling. They have got eleven competitors out there. Now we need to decide whether we want to stay in that environment. If we do, then we are going to have to change what we are doing. If we don't, lets get out of it, we'll go somewhere else and look at our opportunities there. We need to survey not only our current users but also our non users and find out why they aren't enrolling. {In this area} the demographics have changed, there are no young families coming up. So let's cut our losses and leave.⁸⁷

Marketing was no longer a small operation. Christine described her involvement with a marketing survey:

This year our focus has been with setting up this survey. Its based on interviews and there's been about ninety interviews. And they've been with targeted kindergartens within the Association with five parents whose children have been recently admitted. And a committee member and the chairperson and the Head Teacher of those kindergartens, and also we interviewed a whole host of people called agency representatives, specifically early childhood people with the Ministry, the ECDU,⁸⁸ Special Education Service and those types of agencies. And politicians and some community leaders, which have included GPs, Plunket Nurses and that type of people. {The purpose of this} has been to develop a marketing strategy by ascertaining what people's perceptions are and what their knowledge base is about

⁸⁷ Tape 17: 41

⁸⁸ Early Childhood Development Unit

*kindergartens. What information we need to be supplying and to whom and ... whether people are happy with the service.*⁸⁹

Marketing was identified by the women in Strachan's (1997) research as a dilemma, because it introduces an element of competition into relationships between schools and this is not seen as desirable when collaboration is valued. Early childhood values collaboration (Kagan 1994; Mitchell 1995; Early Childhood Education Project 1996) and the time spent on marketing projects was regarded rather uneasily by the women who talked about them. Again, they were taken away from a focus on teaching and learning.

(iii) SUPPORT VERSUS COMPLIANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Whereas issues of personal and professional life and changing professional workload were seen by the Senior Teachers as 'dilemmas', the issue of support versus compliance and accountability was a 'tension' because choice was limited by outside factors, and resolution of this issue was not possible without role tension.

Since the earlier Senior Teacher schemes were set up there has been a shift from support to compliance and accountability in the jobs of Senior Teachers. This shift has increased since the 1994 Report on the Senior Teacher Scheme which is the basis for the job descriptions of five of these Senior Teachers. The more recent Education Review Office publication *What counts as quality in kindergartens* (1997:20) says that Senior Teachers fulfil two functions:

They provide advisory support and guidance to the teaching staff..{and} they also provide professional support and guidance to the employers. They report on the quality of the programmes being offered in the kindergartens ... and are involved in staffing matters as the professional advisor. They help ensure that association policy is being implemented and legal requirements and contractual undertakings are being met. Senior teachers are, therefore, delegated the responsibility for the management of the

⁸⁹ Tape 7:17

education programmes delivered by kindergartens.

Recent Education Review Office reports follow up on this position, commenting on the level of reporting to the Association. One 1998 report had the following to say about the Senior Teachers' reports:

The Senior Teachers offer guidance and support to teachers. Senior Teachers write reports following observation of the programmes in action... They are almost exclusively affirming of what teachers are doing, often repetitive over time and lack analysis and judgments about the quality of teaching and the programme delivered. The purpose of these reports needs to be clarified by the Senior Teachers and the Association so that they become effective components of the monitoring and reporting process.⁹⁰

Support versus report

The Senior Teachers in this group, with the exception of Jennifer, found it difficult to reconcile the roles of support to staff and accountability to the Association implicit in these statements. They saw their role of supporting teachers being undermined by the requirement that they should report to the Association.

Nevertheless, the visits that the Senior Teachers made to kindergartens had elements of both support and accountability. The Senior Teachers were also asked to monitor and report on material to do with compliance, with health and safety issues, the regulations and with follow up from ERO visits. Margaret described a recent visit as follows:

I visited a kindergarten yesterday. Part of what I do is observing how the children interact and the flow and the layout and all that general stuff. How the teachers interact with each other and the parents, and safety issues and a whole range of things. So I make a report on that and make recommendations, perhaps on how things could be better managed. There might be a curriculum issue or I might notice that the evacuation plan isn't on the wall and that's an Association requirement, those sorts of things. I check their rolls, make sure that they are looking at the 9+12 rule and maintaining it and keeping their records of that. I do a roll revision... and make notes of how many children will

⁹⁰ Wellington Free Kindergarten Assn Accountability Review Report p 5

go to school in terms three and four and whether they can sustain the numbers numbers at the moment. So I guess that all of that is support for the teachers and it is also feedback for them.

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Although Margaret saw this visit as support, it also has elements of compliance in the roll checking, the emphasis on health and safety issues and particularly in the report that is written and filed with the Association office. She has redefined 'support' to include elements of compliance and accountability over which she has little control.

Her General Manager, who worked closely with her in this small Association, saw Margaret's visits similarly, and acknowledged that the redefinition of responsibilities was a tension for Margaret. She saw the ongoing tension within a wider context.

Well, I see her as being able to go into a kindergarten, to be able to assess how the team are working together, the way in which the programme is being presented... She also is able to assess the playground equipment resources, that type of thing. So it's a fairly extensive brief that she has when she goes to each kindergarten. And then of course she has the individual discussions with staff as to how they are going, and also looking at their professional development, if there is training that is required. And that can often be picked up by going round looking at the kindergarten and how its functioning.⁹²

The feedback I'm getting from my board is that they're wanting more formal reports, on each kindergarten, on the staff, as opposed to the verbal reports we have relied on... Margaret wears a very difficult hat, where often she's seen as a confidante of the teachers and they see her as a sounding board and speak to her on confidential matters. And she had the problem of, should that information be passed back to the Board because it could directly affect that teacher's performance, so I think that's a very difficult line for a Senior Teacher to work with.⁹³

⁹¹ Tape 4:16

⁹² Tape 5:5

⁹³ Tape 5:12

The Senior Teachers all asserted that the staff saw the reports before they went any further and so long as they were open with staff in what they wrote, it was legitimate to file this sort of report. However, opinions about whether they should be involved in compliance and accountability checking varied. Brenda identified this as a change in her role in the two years that she had been there. Previously she had reported solely to the K4 Senior Teacher; now she was being asked to report on these matters directly to the General Manager (who is the licensee) and she felt concerned that this was an addition to her responsibilities and an ethical dilemma. The General Manager acknowledged the dilemma and expressed it as she saw it:

They are trying to be supportive of their staff but we are asking them to, to take some really firm management decisions here and they are caught in between... I would like to see them still provide professional support (but) I would like to see them reporting in detail. They report but it is wishy washy, it's got no substance to it. Like, I read a report that comes in and it says, I have asked the staff to remove the swing because it's not safe. Now, I read that report and I think, well, have they removed it?⁹⁴

While acknowledging that Brenda 'is working really hard and doing a wonderful job in her area' this General Manager also expressed her concern that the feedback in the written reports from this group of Senior Teachers often gave very little idea about whether there were quality programmes in the kindergartens. For some of the Senior Teachers in this Association, it seemed that the response to a request for accountability had been to provide generalities only. She maintained that the response to her request for more detail had been to say 'you employ a Senior Teacher team, that is enough'. The General Manager, however, asserted that she had delegated authority from the Council for disciplinary measures:

but the Senior Teachers need to do my investigation work for me... In one particular case I said to the K4, I want you to go out, speak to the teachers involved and prepare a report and she was

⁹⁴ Tape 17:12

reluctant. And I said, 'Look, I don't care, either do it tonight or you can do it first thing in the morning'.⁹⁵

Jennifer, however, pointed out that she had accountabilities in her job description and investigating compliance was one of them. She felt that there was no problem so long as the kindergarten staff were aware of what she had said. The Head Teachers interviewed from her group of kindergartens agreed; they felt that she was professional and scrupulous and was able to treat 'mistakes as learning opportunities'. Jennifer's General Manager, to whom she was responsible, took this view of the Senior Teacher responsibilities with kindergartens:

So far as I'm concerned, their responsibility over their role is to manage the professional practice within each of the kindergartens they are responsible for. So they do not have to report back to me and ask what they should do in given circumstances, unless it is something outside of policy... If a {Senior Teacher} goes into a kindergarten and sees an inappropriate learning environment for children, she is able to deal with that directly. And she can give a lawful instruction as it were to the staff that they will change... But they don't have to come back to me and say 'Gosh, they're using stencils and working their way through the autumn leaves, do you want to do something about it?' As far as I'm concerned it's a professional matter... They can't fire anyone but they can give them warnings. {But} the principle that we work on is really, you should try not to get to the stage when people get written warnings and those kind of things... I see {their} responsibility to try and work through and address those issues before they get to that.⁹⁶

This statement is in line with Jennifer's job description, which has as one of her accountabilities 'to provide professional management for the staff of kindergartens within an allocated geographical area.' She had considerable freedom to act within her role as professional manager, a role that was essentially middle management. The language used in this

⁹⁵ Tape 17:16

⁹⁶ Tape 11 pp 6-7.

comment places Jennifer in a management role rather than as a professional leader, a shift from the way in which the job was envisaged previously.

However, while it was acknowledged that there could be a tension between supporting staff and reporting on them, confidence in the professionalism of the Senior Teacher was mostly seen by Head Teachers as transcending the demands of the Association. Particularly, Jennifer's Head Teachers felt that they could rely on her to support them even though they were aware that she was reporting to the Board about them. Again there was transparency in the process as she did not report on anything that she had not discussed with them first. Moreover, the element of trust, discussed in the previous chapter, was a factor here. Jennifer's Head Teachers trusted her to support them, even personally, as was outlined in the previous chapter.

The Association staffing committee was closely related to the kindergarten support role: all of the Senior Teachers but one were on the staffing committee, as were two of the Head Teachers interviewed. There were also association members and NZEI⁹⁷ representatives. This committee had a varying range of responsibilities, depending on the Association. These could include granting long term leave, receiving reports on kindergartens, approving appointment from the recommendation of the appointment committee, teacher registration and disciplinary matters. The issue of reports on kindergartens came up in this context. Requirements varied from full reporting, discussed with the kindergarten staff beforehand, to generalities and scant record keeping. Sometimes the staffing committee directed the Senior Teachers to take an action, but although the Senior Teacher did not have voting rights, this was not a contentious issue. Senior Teachers asserted that there had never been a vote and decision making was generally by consensus. Disciplinary matters, however, were identified as an area for role conflict for Christine, Dorothy, Robyn and Brenda. On one hand, they they considered their role as support for staff and this made reporting for disciplinary matters problematic. On the other hand they were committed to getting the best

⁹⁷ New Zealand Educational Institute, the teachers' professional association.

deal for children, which made the situation an ethical dilemma as well as a tension.

(iv) THE SOURCE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

In addition to the 'tensions' discussed in this section, the Senior Teachers experienced 'constraints': situations in which they had little or no choice,

The context for the Senior Teachers' relationships with the Association lies in the designated responsibilities of the General Managers. All of the General Managers were the licensees of the kindergartens, but the range of their responsibilities varied. One, who worked for a large Association, described the job as follows:

I am essentially the Chief Executive of the organisation. I give policy advice to the Board, and I am responsible for the total management of the Association. And we have a six million dollar budget, most of that is teachers salaries but nevertheless its a large budget... I have formal written delegation for responsibility for all employment related issues. So that the governing Board of this Association is my employer and pays me and I'm delegated the authority to employ everyone else, so I'm the employer of all of the management and administrative staff and the teachers.⁹⁸

The General Manager of a smaller Association who had only part time office staff described her responsibilities more closely:

The day to day management of the Association. I'm also involved in the subcommittees of the Board. I'm required to attend all Board meetings, council meetings, and record those, and also provide reports. So I'm involved with the staffing subcommittee, the maintenance subcommittee, I'm the EEO⁹⁹ officer, on the policy subcommittee. A lot of policies I will draft, for a starting point for the subcommittees.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Tape 11:3

⁹⁹ Equal Employment Opportunities

¹⁰⁰ Tape 5:2

Boards have a high turnover, so the General Manager can be the stable person with the institutional knowledge. Robyn was able to sympathise with her General Manager's frustration about this turnover, while she saw that it left the General Manager with power: She said:

{The General Manager} becomes frustrated at having to be pushing the Board along to get them up to par with all the information that you take on board. You get in your Board and a few of them leave and then you have got new members. And its all that inducting and all that information they have to take in so that they can make the decisions and really they look towards {the General Manager} for guidance.... But they have the ultimate responsibility and the votes.¹⁰¹

There were differing perceptions by participants of the relationship between the Association and the Senior Teachers. These depended on both the job descriptions of the Senior Teachers and the delegated responsibilities of the General Managers. For one of the larger Associations and both of the smaller Associations, the Senior Teacher team reported directly to the Association. Concerning the division of responsibilities between her and the Senior Teacher (Margaret) in relation to the Boards her General Manager went on to say:

Don't know if it has really been clearly defined. {Margaret} would have the responsibility or authority to deal with issues with teachers and make recommendations... In some ways her position is quite difficult because she's sort of middle management with no real power or authority, with the Association being the employer of staff and she has the delegated authority to manage. I do have more delegated responsibility for maintenance side... I wouldn't see that I had more power than {Margaret} or I had power over her. I see us working in a joint relationship. ¹⁰²

For the other Associations, however, the role of the Senior Teacher was

¹⁰¹ Tape 13:24

¹⁰² Tape 5:11

more clearly defined, though in some cases this had taken time to establish. Christine's General Manager who had been in the job since 1995, and had begun with a large, well established Senior Teacher team observed:

Senior Teachers have to accept the fact that the reality of today is that they report to a manager, they don't report to parents. And so that was a learning curve, we had to move through that... we had little games played where they ambushed me from time to time at the Council meeting. And the Council had to {learn to} say no, that is a matter for the General Manager. That is now accepted, I mean they now use that ability, of me standing between them and the Council, to give them the freedom to manage in the way they want.¹⁰³

The Head Teachers, however, were all aware that in the final analysis the power lay with the General Manager, principally because he or she was the licensee. A typical response was:

Even though she's an employee, she's the licensee. It gives her the responsibility and it certainly gives her the power. But she doesn't use that power in slamming down on you about issues or whatever... she certainly puts out memos and things. If something comes up that she hasn't liked, you certainly know she hasn't liked it... I don't know that the Senior Teachers have power, in any way, I think they are called upon within the organisation to have a lot of input into whether this should happen or that should happen. So maybe they do have that sort of power, a sort of consultative power.¹⁰⁴

Senior Teachers working on their own, regularly attending Board meetings were very aware of the perceptions of the staff and the problem that the Senior Teachers faced. Margaret said:

{Teachers'} perception is that I am an extension of the Board. And I have to agree that at times, yes I am. And at times I feel very strongly that I am a teacher and I'm on their side, but its very

¹⁰³ Tape 8:6

¹⁰⁴ Tape 18:9

hard because I'm a party to all deliberations. I see where they're coming from on a financial basis. That bulk funding is difficult.

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Dorothy identified a difficulty between her responsibilities to the Association and her responsibilities to the teachers, but had no doubt about where she stood:

Making the decision to put 45 children on the roll in the kindergarten, I do not agree with that. I opposed it at the time. I see that {the Board's} responsibility is to make that decision and go with it and then I have to work with it, but I'm not going to agree with it... I have always made it clear to this Board here, ever since I have been in the job, that I'm a teacher first. And I think for them its a bit of a dilemma because they see it as, Dorothy is going to side with the teachers, it doesn't matter what.¹⁰⁶

She felt that it was important to support teachers, sometimes against management:

I really value the diversity of the teachers I work with. And I think its a real privilege to get involved with so much of their personal and private lives. They have to share things with me that they might never choose to share, except for my position... I do get over zealous about teachers' issues, and I try to keep that perspective with the management. The frustration that I sometimes feel in working with the voluntary management system means that I sometimes appear to be quite a bolshie leader to the Management Board.¹⁰⁷

Christine also saw the Association as a source of conflict for her:

{Some of them} are in real conflict with the philosophy of kindergarten which, although we have been kicked out of the State Service, is to provide this wonderful free service that is accessible to everybody. And some of them can't see that fee charging and things like that are completely opposed to where we

¹⁰⁵ Tape 4:26

¹⁰⁶ Tape 1: 31

¹⁰⁷ Tape 1: 43

*have come from.*¹⁰⁸

Head Teachers' contact with the Association varied, depending on their inclination and the nature and extent of the Association. Although Association meetings were public, few Head Teachers had attended. For them there was usually one large yearly meeting which Association representatives attended and where they might be able to put their point of view. Some of the Head Teachers were on Association subcommittees. In consequence, for most kindergarten teachers 'The Association' was a shadowy body of employers. The General Manager and the Senior Teachers were the people whose role they understood.

Despite Margaret's perception, the Head Teachers tended to see the Senior Teacher as 'their' representative to the Association. While they were aware that she did not have a vote they felt that she could be relied on to put the professional point of view. One Head Teacher who worked with Margaret described it as:

*working with the Board and being able to show that kindergartens are really important and what their needs are.*¹⁰⁹

All of these observations highlight a philosophical divide between the teaching profession and the Association Board. Both Senior Teachers and Head Teachers saw a necessity for teachers to be represented before the Board, who were not, in the main, regarded as sympathetic to the ideals of the kindergarten movement. This constraint in relationships with the Association is not new. In her review of the Senior Teacher scheme, Anne Meade (1985:42) found that relationships with the Association were often regarded as 'constraining' either because the communication systems were not working or because the association members needed 'educating' about kindergarten requirements. However, the role of the Association has changed since the Meade review. The advent of bulk funding and the excluding of kindergarten teachers from the State Service has given the Boards more financial responsibility and more control over staffing and job contracts. In addition, they work within a very confined budget, and

¹⁰⁸ Tape 7:17

¹⁰⁹ Tape 3:33

are themselves constrained by Ministry requirements.

The role of the General Manager has also changed since that review. For four of the larger associations, the General Manager was the representative of the association, and the Senior Teacher team was responsible to that person rather than directly to the association. With the exception of Jennifer, this devolution of control to a manager who had the interests of the Board foremost was seen as a constraint for the Senior Teachers working in these associations,

COPING STRATEGIES: A BALANCING ACT

The effects on education of neo liberalism and the New Public Management have been discussed in Chapter Two (Blackmore 1996; Boston et al 1996; Wylie 1995). Boston and Wylie both identify increased reporting and monitoring and the formal devolution of control from Board to management as important features of this shift. Blackmore argues that for educational leaders, there is a tension between the collaborative style that is regarded as appropriate, and the climate of competition and control that has developed. The, dilemmas, tensions and constraints that were evident for this group of Senior Teachers mirror to the above findings. In most cases, they found their relationships with the Association through the General Manager a constraint, and they found a role tension between support and reporting. In addition, there were dilemmas in an increase in workload and in the types of jobs that were done, and in an encroachment of work on to their private life. The enactment of their preferred leadership ways is thus overlain by the demands of neo liberalism and the New Public Management and we should ask how they coped with these

Both Blackmore (1996: 346-8) and Strachan (1999:132-5) have investigated the ways in which groups of women leaders in schools cope in this situation. Blackmore says that for her group the coping mechanisms were related to managing their own and others' emotions: she epitomises the reactions as resistance, controlling, distancing; and exit. Strachan describes

interconnected themes of resistance, agreement and appropriation. For Strachan, 'resistance' includes speaking out on important issues, continuing to use 'inclusive models of decision making' and 'resisting pressure to involve themselves in managerial tasks that took them away from what they personally and professionally enjoyed doing'. 'Agreement' denoted agreeing with all or some of the philosophy of the reforms and acting accordingly; and 'appropriation' conveyed the idea of using opportunities offered by the reforms to further their own agendas. Strachan points out that identical ways of behaving may have their origins in the women's different philosophies and personalities. The women in her study each had their own ways of keeping focussed on children.

All of the Senior Teachers in this study described their commitment to children, support of teaching and learning, and affiliation to the kindergarten movement. Each of them was aware that trying to fulfil their leadership objectives meant a balancing act between their ideals and the demands of the Association and the Ministry expressed through the General Manager.

Each achieved some sort of balance, but in different ways.

Dorothy, who worked on her own in extreme isolation and had had many years' experience in the job, concentrated hard on supporting staff to the best of her ability. She saw herself as providing personal and professional support and representing the staff perspective to the Association. She epitomised herself as 'a bolshie leader'. Blackmore (1996) and Strachan (1999) would both regard her principal coping strategy as resistance. But there were elements of appropriation in her thoughts and actions too. She worked hard at understanding and acquainting herself with systems and ways of working in the New Public Management world. She was the only one who explicitly mentioned a need to understand management systems. Dorothy expressed her strong commitment to the ideals of kindergartens, to children in a free service and to teaching on several occasions.

Margaret had worked with her General Manager for over ten years. They trusted each other, and complemented each others' work, much in the

way that Meade described in her 1985 research. Though she worked on her own and was professionally isolated, this trust made her work easier, particularly in coping with the extra workload, some parts of which they tended to share. She was very aware of her Janus (facing both ways) position in supporting and reporting to the Association on kindergarten staff and resisted as far as she felt able, though less strongly than Dorothy. Again, her commitment to the ideals of kindergarten and to the best deal for children kept her going

Brenda concentrated on working within the Senior Teacher group where she felt that the relationships could be trusted. She too was resisting the accountability aspect of reporting. Outside of the Senior Teacher group there was a lack of trust evident, both with the General Manager and in relationships with the kindergartens, though this distrust did not extend to her. Brenda, however, denied that there was a problem and distanced herself from the power struggle that was going on, devoting as much time and energy as she could to her work with kindergartens. But although Brenda was personally seen as a competent support person by her Head Teacher and by the General Manager, the lack of a collaborative, trusting relationship within the office made for difficulties. Brenda coped by both resisting and distancing herself from the problems.

Christine too put emphasis on working within the Senior Teacher group where there was trust. The strength of this group had made it possible so far to resist the demands of the Association that they should write detailed reports on kindergarten visits. Her Head Teachers were particularly appreciative of her work with them but she also worked hard on a number of extra tasks. Resistance was the keynote of her coping strategy.

Robyn was working within a strong group culture developed by the General Manager. She trusted the General Manager and the commitment to consultation that she had brought to the Association. Robyn saw very little conflict for herself between the requirements of the Association and the way in which she wanted to do her job. She was largely in agreement with the new managerialist ideas which were presented to her as necessary for kindergartens to succeed in the new management structures.

Jennifer worked in a different situation. For herself, she identified a culture that was trusting and where people worked on establishing trust. She worked with confidence within the managerialist system that prevailed, and her personal characteristics and professionalism seemed to carry her through. There are elements of agreement and appropriation (Strachan 1999) in that she did not see the system as a problem at all, and ensured that it worked to support her philosophy for children and kindergartens. She had returned to the kindergarten movement and was committed to getting the best deal for children, and by implication for teachers. There are components of all the elements suggested by Blackmore and Strachan in her reactions.

In her research, Hall (1996) focussed on professional identity as a key to understanding women's headship in schools. For Dorothy, Margaret, Brenda, Christine, Robyn and Jennifer their belief in their professional identity as teachers was a determining factor. Despite the changed responsibilities and increased workload, their commitment to the promotion of teaching, to children and to kindergartens kept them going. They also worked best where their personal day to day culture allowed them to enact their ideas about consultation and communication, particularly where the office culture of trust included the General Manager. In situations where this happened -for Robyn, Margaret, Christine Jennifer - this commitment and trust was reflected in their reported professional relationships with the Head Teachers.

Strachan (1999:135) suggests that the women in her study were characterised by diverse ways of coping, reacting in different ways to the same event. She suggests that the human factor, ignored in much theorising needs to be taken into account. She sees this human factor as encompassing

the women's value systems; their educational philosophy; their commitment to putting students' needs first; the involvement of the 'emotional' in their leadership; the energy needed to bring about change in a context of managerialism; and the ethnicity of the principal.

Court (1998:51) points out that research shows that

There is not a universal women's way of leading: women, like men, lead in different ways, influenced by their values, political persuasions, personalities and ethnicity.

In this study ethnicity was not a factor, as all the Senior Teachers were of European origin. In the case of these women, their values and philosophy, their commitment to children and the strengths of their personalities influenced the ways in which they wished to lead, and made it possible to cope with the tensions, dilemmas and constraints brought about by a shift to a neo liberal system.

SUMMARY

This group of Senior Teachers were asked to be part of this research because they were regarded as being particularly good at their job. They set high standards for themselves, and saw themselves principally as supporting teachers and promoting teaching and learning in kindergartens. The dilemmas for them that were identified were an increase in workload and a multiplicity of additional jobs, and the intrusion of work into their private lives. For most of them, there was a role tension between supporting staff and reporting on them to the Association, and the question of where power and authority lay between the Senior Teacher and the General Manager and the Association was a constraint.

Despite the dilemmas, tensions and constraints described above, they managed to enact their leadership in ways that were consistent with their personal theories of leadership. Their strong sense of professional identity as teachers helped them in this. Each woman used a variety of different strategies in order to ensure that their leadership was consistent with the values they had for promoting teaching and their aspirations for young children within the kindergarten service.

Conclusion

This study has researched the personal theories about leadership of a group of Senior Teachers in the kindergarten service and has examined the ways in which they enact their leadership. The context of working in a neo liberal, regulatory environment and the attendant dilemmas, tensions and constraints for these women who wish to lead in a supportive, collaborative way has also been explored. The implications of this study for theorising about leadership in early childhood, and for policy and practice will be considered in this section. In addition, recommendations for further research and action will be made.

THE STUDY

In this study, these Senior Teachers identified the following characteristics as important for an early childhood leader:

- being a consultative leader
- sharing power
- being a good communicator
- a supporter of teachers and promoter of good teaching
- commitment to children and to the ethos of the service
- having a vision.

The commitment of these Senior Teachers to children, teaching and the kindergarten ethos meant that the promotion of teaching and the support of teachers in kindergartens was regarded as the most important component of their leadership. However, the multi sited, often geographically fragmented nature of the kindergarten associations made power sharing between Senior Teachers and staff more difficult. Nevertheless, consultative leadership was reportedly carried out in this situation and valued by the participants. For both power sharing and consultative leadership, the component of personal trust was important.

Power sharing was found to be easier to carry out among a group of senior staff where trust had built up. This happened either within the Senior Teacher team or between Senior Teachers and the General Manager

The dilemmas identified for these women were to do with an increase in workload and a multiplicity of additional responsibilities, and an intrusion of work into their private lives. In most cases, there was a role tension between supporting staff and reporting on them to the Association; and the question of where power and authority lay between the Senior Teacher and the General Manager was a constraint.

Despite the dilemmas, tensions and constraints described above, they managed to enact their leadership in ways that were consistent with their personal theories of leadership. Their sense of professional identity as teachers was a factor in this. They each used a variety of strategies, including appropriation, resistance and agreement, in order to ensure that their leadership was consistent with the values they had for the promotion of good teaching and their aspirations for young children and for the kindergarten service.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Recently, in the updated 1998 edition of her 1994 book *Leadership in Early Childhood*, Jillian Rodd acknowledged the importance of research on women in leadership to early childhood, citing Valerie Hall (1996) as her principal reference from outside of early childhood. Rodd concentrates on research about women's use of power:

the picture which is emerging is one of strong leadership within a collaborative framework ...Women appear to define power differently from men and do not seem to be interested in displays of power ... Leadership is exercised in a climate of reciprocal relationships where the leader seeks to act with others rather than assert power over others. (Rodd 1998: 11)

This constitutes the first acknowledgment in early childhood writing that research into women's ways of leadership could be a useful lens for the analysis of leadership in early childhood. Discussions of leadership in this

field have, as was described in Chapter Two, come either from a business perspective and have used ideas derived from research on men, or have evolved from ideas about the non competitive, nurturing nature of the early childhood context (Kagan 1994; Kagan & Neuman 1997).

'Early childhood' is a relative newcomer as a defined sector in education. In New Zealand, it dates from 1986 when childcare was shifted from Social Welfare to Education to become part of a policy section that incorporated all early childhood services including kindergartens. For this sector, a strong emphasis on 'education' has only been evident since the development of the national curriculum *Te Whaariki* (1996) which brought the kindergarten and childcare sections philosophically closer together. In addition, although kindergartens have until recently been part of the state sector, they have not been part of the compulsory education sector and tend to have been ignored by the dominant education discourses. Consequently, early childhood has not been considered when researchers have studied women's leadership in education in this country.

The present study, however, places leadership in early childhood within the wider context of women in educational leadership. These women's ideas about the importance of leading by consultation and power sharing, and their commitment to the promotion of good teaching through teacher support are found also in the literature on women's leadership in education. In addition, some of the effects of leading in a neo liberal environment, already documented for women in the primary and secondary sectors, are now documented for a group of women leaders in kindergartens. The tensions, dilemmas and constraints and the ways in which they cope parallel findings in other educational sectors.

This study also adds to the small body of research into leadership in early childhood. Previous studies have tended to concentrate on managers rather than on professional leaders, and on childcare rather than kindergartens. Probably as a consequence, the findings about the importance of promoting teaching to this group of leaders have not been emphasised. In addition, the findings of this research support the ideas of

theorists such as Sharon Kagan (1994; 1997) and Linda Espinosa (1997) about the way that leadership in early childhood should be carried out: ie collaboratively with high levels of communication. People in this study argued that this should be so, and based their work on these ideals.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE FIELD

The present administrative systems in early childhood put the responsibility for establishing and implementing philosophy and for goal setting, with 'management. *Quality in Action* (1998), the manual for the implementation of the *Desirable Objectives and Practices*, does not mention leadership. In the section on operation and administration, each statement begins with the phrase 'Management and educators'. While it is recommended that 'everyone has ownership of the statement of philosophy' (p60), it is not compulsory, and 'educators' are only one of a list of people that 'can' (rather than must) be consulted. Furthermore, unlike schools, where the principal is effectively the chief executive, the chief executive in early childhood is a management person who often does not have a background in early childhood.

This study brings educational leadership in kindergartens to the forefront for consideration. It documented the tensions and constraints that the participants reported in being accountable to a lay board, the members of which, they often felt, did not really understand educational matters. The difficulties that both the General Managers and the Senior Teachers had with the present situation were also discussed. There needs to be debate in early childhood about the importance and position of professional leaders. At present the system prioritises 'management' over 'education'. This means that educational leaders are effectively powerless in many centres and organisations. The question of whether early childhood centres should be managed and effectively led by lay people needs to be debated.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The generalisability of the present exploratory study is limited by its context and methodology. It is limited to one context of early childhood

that is unique to New Zealand: that of kindergartens. This is, however, a context that has much in common with schools as well as with childcare centres. As we have seen, kindergartens, because of their historical origins, identification as a state sector organisation, and rigorous adherence to teacher education, have always seen themselves as involved in education rather than care. This may be one of the reasons why the results are similar to those found in schools. More research needs to be done into leadership in other sectors of early childhood in New Zealand, particularly childcare, where the influence of a business model is more marked.

In addition, owing to time and money constraints, the data gathering was limited to interviews and the collection of supplementary material. While these are valid instruments for collecting information, they did not give a complete picture of the way in which these Senior Teachers worked. In order to develop such a picture, it would be necessary to spend time in the office and in centres with them, trailing them and talking to them about what they were doing over a long period of time, in a similar way to the way that Valerie Hall (1996) tracked principals in England. More in depth work is needed, both in New Zealand and overseas, to find out in detail how leaders in early childhood work, and how they relate this work to their ideas about leadership.

This study has added to research about leadership in early childhood. It has supported much of the theoretical material that asserts that women in early childhood want to share leadership and act in a consultative fashion. In addition, the findings have added to the present knowledge about women in educational leadership, furnishing data from a different sector of education. Further debate and research are needed within early childhood to establish whether ideas and behaviour similar to that of these women are widely established among professional leaders.

Leadership in Early Childhood: The Kindergarten Experience

PERMISSION LETTER

Department of Educational
Studies and Community
Support
Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099
Facsimile: 64 6 351 3385

The Executive Officer
ETC

I am at present working on my Masterate in Educational Administration and have chosen as my topic Professional Leadership in Early Childhood. My supervisors are John O'Neill and Marion Court from the Department of Educational Studies and Community Support at Massey University College of Education. They can be contacted by telephone at (06) 3569099 or (06) 3579104.

I intend to study Senior Teachers in the Kindergarten Service. The main objectives in my research are to study leadership style in early childhood education, and to investigate the effects of the recent educational reforms on Senior Teachers and the way in which they carry out their job.

In order to carry out this research I intend to invite a small number of Senior Teachers from a variety of working conditions to take part. I would very much like to have NAME take part in the study.

Participation would involve the Senior Teacher in keeping a diary of her work for a week and being interviewed for 1 - 2 hours. I would also like to interview a member of the Association who works closely with the Senior Teacher or the Executive Officer, and a Head Teacher or small group of Head Teachers. These interviews should take about an hour each. Permission will also be sought to examine any relevant documentation concerning the position of Senior Teacher, such as job descriptions and discussion documents on the Senior Teacher's job. Confidential documentation will not be sought.

All material gathered will be confidential. At the end of the study all documents, transcriptions and tapes will be returned to the participants. Neither the Senior Teacher nor the Association will be identifiable in the final report. A copy of the findings will be send to you when the study is finished.

Yours sincerely

Cushla Scrivens
Dept of Educational Studies & Community Support
Massey University College of Education

Leadership in Early Childhood: The Kindergarten Experience

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Cushla Scrivens. I am a lecturer at Massey University College of Education, where I lecture in the Higher and Advanced Diploma Programmes. I am responsible for the early childhood courses for these Diplomas and for the Certificate in Management in Early Childhood. I am at present working in my Masterate and have chosen to research Professional Leadership in Early Childhood. My area of study will be Senior Teachers in the kindergarten service.

The participants in this study will be asked to keep a 'critical event' log for a week. This will be the context for a taped interview, which will investigate the participants' ideas about leadership and examine the effects of the recent changes in educational administration on their job. Interviews will also be carried out with a member of the Kindergarten Association and one or more Head Teachers employed by the Association.

If you agree to take part, you will have the right to withdraw at any time and to refuse to answer any questions. The interview will be coded anonymously and transcribed by a member of the University staff. You will be sent a transcript of your interview to read and return with any alterations you wish to make. When the research is finished your tape and transcript will be returned to you. All of your remarks will be confidential to the researcher and the transcriber, and it will not be possible to identify you in the final research report. A summary of findings will be sent with you.

I work at the Hokowhitu campus, Palmerston North. You can ring me or fax me at the numbers on this sheet. I am also available at home on (06) 3591308. My Email address is c.a.scrivens@massey.ac.nz. My supervisors are John O'Neill and Marion Court from the Department of Educational Studies and Community Support at Massey University College of Education. They can be contacted by telephone at (06) 3579104.

Cushla Scrivens
Dept of Educatiional Studies and Community Support
Massey University College of Education

*Leadership in Early Childhood: The Kindergarten Experience***CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

My participation in the study is voluntary. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researchers on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. I understand that the information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.

I agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information sheet.

Signed

Name

Date

*Leadership in Early Childhood: the Kindergarten Experience**Senior Teacher Interview*

The interview will be semi-structured. It is anticipated that the following topics will be discussed.

- * A short personal/professional history.
- * Discussion of the key areas of responsibility of the job.
- * Relationships with the Association
 - delegation of responsibilities
 - involvement in the decision-making process
 - communication and sharing of information
 - issues in relation to power.
- * Relationships with kindergarten staff
 - main responsibilities
 - how do you facilitate communication?
 - the decision-making process
 - issues in relation to power.
- * Have the ST responsibilities changed during your time in the job?
 - effects of government legislation
 - ideas about management/professional leadership
 - other influences.
- * Why do you lead as you do? What sort of leader do you want to be?
- * Who or what informs/influences your ideas about leadership?
- * What are the effects on the way that you lead of working in an organisation that consists mainly of women?
- * The literature on women in educational leadership comments on the effects of their personal life on their jobs and vice versa. Comment?
- * What are the rewards/difficulties in your job? What would you like to change?
- * What is your vision for kindergarten in the future? How do you communicate your vision?

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Leadership in Early Childhood: the Kindergarten Experience

Head Teacher Interview

The topic for this research project is the role of the Senior Teacher. Head teachers are being interviewed in order to give another perspective on the work of the Senior Teacher.

The interview will be semi-structured. It is anticipated that the following topics will be discussed.

- * A short personal/professional history.
- * What do you see as the key areas of responsibility of the Senior Teacher's job?
- * The Head Teacher, the Senior Teacher and the Association
 - How are decisions made which concern you, the Association and the Senior Teachers?
 - How does communication take place between you, the Assn and the Senior Teachers?
 - What are the issues for you in these relationships?
- * The Head Teacher and the Senior Teacher
 - what do you see as the ST's main responsibilities in relation to you?
 - how are decision-making and communication handled?
 - how might they be handled differently?
- * What do you see as the difficulties/issues in the Senior Teacher's job?
- * How has the Senior Teacher's job changed during your time in kindergartens? What has been the effect on you of the changes?
- * How do you think that an effective leader in kindergartens should lead?
- * Who or what informs/influences your ideas about leadership?
- * What do you think the effect of being an organisation that consists mainly of women has on the way in which it is led?
- * If you were a Senior Teacher, what would your priorities be? How would you work?
- * What is your 'vision' for kindergartens in the future?

MASSEY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Educational Studies And Community Support

Leadership in Early Childhood: the Kindergarten Experience

General Manager Interview

The topic for this research project is the role of the Senior Teacher. Association Representatives (mostly General Managers, Executive Officers) are being interviewed in order to give another perspective on the work of the Senior Teacher.

The interview will be semi-structured. It is anticipated that the following topics will be discussed.

- * A short personal/professional history.
- * What do you see as the key areas of responsibility of the Senior Teacher's job?
- * The Senior Teacher and the Association
 - allocation and carrying out of responsibilities
 - involvement in decision-making
 - communication and information sharing
 - how is power managed?
- * What are the issues for you in these relationships? What do you think the issues are for the Senior Teachers?
- * Have the Senior Teachers' responsibilities changed during your time in kindergartens? What has been the effect of these changes on the organisation? on your relationship with the Senior Teachers?
- * How do you think that an effective educational leader in kindergartens should lead?
- * Who or what informs/influences your ideas about leadership?
- * What do you think the effect of kindergartens' being an organisation that consists mainly of women has on the way that it is led and managed?
- * If you were a Senior Teacher, what would your priorities be? How would you work?
- * What is your vision for kindergartens in the future?

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