

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

A Multi-site Case Study

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*But among you it will be different.
Whoever wants to be a leader among you
must be your servant.*

Mark 10:43
New Living Translation

ABSTRACT

Leadership in early childhood education (ECE) is an under-researched area and there is little to support those in leadership roles by way of literature to contribute to their understanding of the role. My experiences have led to a belief that leadership in ECE is about much more than a position, power or status. Servant leadership offers a perspective of leadership that considers the idea of being motivated by a genuine desire to serve others and seeks to encourage and support others.

The aims of this study were:

1. To define and critically discuss the concept of servant leadership.
2. To investigate the way in which leaders of three early childhood education services perceive and demonstrate servant leadership.
3. To explore the way in which staff and parents of three early childhood education services perceive and experience servant leadership in practice.

To carry out this study a purposive sampling method was used to select the early childhood centres to be studied. Three centres, all espousing aspects of servant leadership from the literature such as, collaboration, relational leadership, and an ethic of care towards staff, children and parents were selected. The centre leaders, staff and parents were invited to participate through an interview, focus group and a questionnaire respectively. The findings were compared across the individual centres as well as across the different roles of the participants.

Key findings from the research revealed that servant leadership involved spiritual foundations, certain responsibilities, relationships and a number of specific attributes of the person who is the leader such as integrity, altruism, and humility.

The espoused views of servant leadership generally aligned to the practice of servant leadership within the centres and the participants had many examples of how they had either demonstrated or experienced this.

Throughout the study, the term servant leadership was used in a variety of ways: as a concept; a style of leadership; a valid theory of leadership; and a way of being. The research highlighted a number of connections between the views of what makes an effective leader in ECE and the concept of servant leadership. It also identified some similarities between the principles and strands of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* and servant leadership, such as the concepts of relationships, empowerment, belonging, communication, and family and community (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Through being involved in the research, the participants gained a greater understanding of servant leadership as a concept as well as a greater awareness of the way in which this was practiced in their centres. This study has contributed to the wider body of literature on servant leadership and leadership in ECE. It has also provided a case for presenting servant leadership as a valid form of leadership within ECE.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The early childhood sector is one of great diversity (Ebbeck & Waniganayake 2003; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004; Rodd, 2006; Thornton, 2006; Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, & Tamati, 2009). Early childhood education (ECE) covers a range of different settings and each of these settings has its own distinctive philosophy. Each individual centre's philosophy is based on the pedagogical perspectives, values and beliefs of those running and working in the centre (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Rodd, 2006). Leadership structures within the early childhood setting are therefore also very diverse.

My experiences in ECE as a teacher, leader and teacher educator have enabled me to experience and observe the leadership practices of others and develop some understanding of leadership within the sector. From these experiences I have come to recognise that leadership is more than just ability and skill and it is also far more than an actual position or role (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Yukl, 2002). The concept of servant leadership considers this perspective.

Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that the importance of, and interconnection between, 'head, heart and hands' in leadership should be considered. Servant leadership is about the 'heart' issue of leadership where morals, values, beliefs and motivation are considered (Greenfield & Ribbons, 1993, cited in Bush, 2003; Youngs, 2002). It is my belief that the 'heart' issue ultimately affects the way in which leaders work with other members of the team and therefore the way team members respond to this in their practice. In the early childhood sector teamwork is

essential because teaching occurs within a team environment and therefore the relationship between leader and team members is crucial to effective practice.

Leadership involves an interchangeable leader-follower relationship. The quality of this relationship affects the ability to influence. It is my belief that a greater understanding on the part of leaders and aspiring leaders in relation to the concepts of leadership in ECE, including the concept of servant leadership, could add to the understanding of the quality of leadership practice and therefore the quality of relationship between leaders and followers, leaders and leaders, and followers and followers.

A RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Research and literature focusing on leadership in ECE is limited (Rodd, 2006; Thornton et. al., 2009) which makes it more difficult to fully understand leadership within the early childhood context. Early childhood educators are frequently moved into leadership roles early in their careers, often with little or no understanding of leadership theory (Thornton, et. al., 2009). A lack of empirical studies on servant leadership has also been identified (Russell & Stone, 2002). There is a need to establish the traits, characteristics, and behaviours of genuine servant leaders through empirical study so as to contribute to a greater understanding of the implications of servant leadership for practice.

Leaders in ECE are often not aware of their own leadership style which may influence the way they are perceived by teachers and parents (Nupponen, 2006a). My research aims to identify any differences or similarities in the perceptions of leaders, staff and parents. In doing so, it could add to the understanding of the leadership practice of early childhood professionals, potentially leading to a better

alignment of espoused theory and theory in practice in relation to leadership in early childhood education. This alignment leads to more authentic leadership (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

THE RESEARCH AIMS

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the concept of servant leadership and analyse the way in which it was both espoused and experienced by the leaders, staff and parents of three different early childhood settings. The following aims were identified for the purpose of this study:

1. To define and critically discuss the concept of servant leadership.
2. To investigate the way in which leaders of three early childhood education services perceive and demonstrate servant leadership.
3. To explore the way in which staff and parents of three early childhood education services perceive and experience servant leadership in practice.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the aims stated above, the following three research questions were identified:

1. How is servant leadership defined in the literature and by early childhood leaders, staff and parents?
2. How and in what way do leaders in early childhood education perceive and demonstrate servant leadership?
3. How do staff and parents in early childhood education perceive and experience servant leadership in practice?

THE OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into six chapters, each related to a different aspect of the research project.

Following this chapter, the second chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the study. Literature related to concept of leadership and leadership in ECE is reviewed to provide an understanding of the context in which this research project sits. This is followed by a literature review of servant leadership that establishes minor and major themes on the topic. The final section of this chapter outlines a sample of the research on servant leadership.

A rationale and justification of the methodology applied in this study is provided in chapter three. This is followed by an outline of the methods and tools used to gather the data and a theoretical base from which to apply these. In the final sections of this chapter consideration is given to strategies used for ensuring reliability and validity followed by a discussion of ethical issues.

Chapter four presents the results of the data and is therefore a much more extensive chapter than the others. Divided into three parts, data results are presented from each of the three sites used in the study. The data results are presented with little discussion and simply provide the words of the participants as much as possible.

The findings from chapter four are discussed in chapter five. Major themes arising from the data are presented and similarities and differences across the sites are highlighted. The second part of the chapter considers how the findings are used to define and contextualise servant leadership in ECE and barriers to the practice of servant leadership are discussed. The findings in this chapter are discussed in light

of the literature and research reviewed in chapter two.

The sixth and final chapter presents an overview of the major findings of the project before recommendations for the future practice of servant leadership in ECE and suggestions for future research are made.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

To understand the nature of servant leadership in ECE it is necessary to first understand the early childhood setting in which leadership occurs. The New Zealand early childhood sector is one of great diversity covering a range of different settings including state run kindergartens; private, community, church-based or corporate run centres, kindergartens and preschools; cultural centres; and parent run centres. Each setting has its own distinctive philosophy based on the pedagogical perspectives, values and beliefs of those running and working in the centre. These individual centre philosophies are woven into the outworking of the national curriculum *Te Whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Just as there is great diversity in the early childhood centres within New Zealand, so is there great diversity in the leadership structures. The first section of this literature review considers the concepts of leadership and educational leadership. Due to the lack of ECE leadership literature it was necessary to draw on school leadership literature to discuss educational leadership. The nature of leadership within ECE is discussed in the second section. These first two sections provide a platform from which to define and critique the concept of servant leadership as a credible style of leadership within early childhood education. The fourth and final section of the literature review examines a range of empirical research that has been undertaken with a focus on servant leadership.

THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Within literature there is a plethora of definitions of the concept of leadership, yet there is little agreement over these definitions (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2003; Gronn, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Razik & Swanson, 2000; Yukl, 2002). Yukl (2002) suggests that one dispute is over whether leadership is defined as a specific role or a process of social influence. It could be argued however that leadership can be both a specific role and a process of social influence allowing for both formal and informal leadership within an organisation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Leithwood, 2003).

Bush (2003) argues that the notion of leadership as a process of influence does not provide an understanding of what goals or actions are required through this process. An emerging view of leadership acknowledges the role of emotions, character, personal and professional values, self-awareness, empowerment, and development of individuals (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2003; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Yukl, 2002). This view takes the focus off leadership as the act of leading and instead draws attention to the character and attributes of the person who is a leader. Greenfield and Ribbons (1993, cited in Bush, 2003) argue that “leadership begins with the ‘character’ of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness and emotional and moral capability” (p. 6). Literature highlights the need to consider the values of the leader as well as the process of influence. The concept of moral leadership which identifies the need to recognise values and beliefs in the processes of decision-making has also arisen (Bush, 2003; Fidler & Atton, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1992). It is within these views that the idea of leader as servant has been acknowledged (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell, 2001).

It has been recognised that despite many definitions related to a general view of leadership, the unique environment in which educational leadership occurs requires a more specific definition (Bush, 2003; Robinson, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2001; Youngs, 2002). Robinson (2006) argues that there is a need to understand the concept of educational leadership in order to develop awareness of the specific characteristics of school culture where there is a focus on educational outcomes. Bush (2003) agrees with this and acknowledges the shift in educational leadership theory from a generic understanding of leadership to one that is based on research from within education. Sergiovanni (2001) argues that “schools need special leadership because schools are special places” (p. 166). While they share some common managerial requirements, schools must also respond to the unique political realities they are faced with. The stakeholders of a school vary from parents and children to businesses, churches and other community organisations. These stakeholders do not always agree and a high level of political skill is required to gain consensus and commitment so that the school works well for everyone (Sergiovanni, 2001).

The notion of educational leadership incorporates a range of terms. One term frequently used when describing educational leadership is ‘instructional leadership’ (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Bush, 2003; Harris, 2005; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). This term is largely used in North American contexts. The foundation of educational leadership is established in learning and teaching where opportunity for all to learn is the goal of the educational institution (Robinson, 2006; Youngs, 2002). The improvement of teaching and learning as the core activity of the school is a central component of the concept of instructional leadership (Bush, 2003; Cardno & Collett, 2004; Harris, 2005; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Southworth (2004) suggests that leadership of teaching and learning is complex. It requires professional knowledge, skill and understanding which we cannot assume all leaders will have. Sergiovanni (2001, cited in Harris, 2005) suggests that this form of leadership is one which “invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers” (p. 83). Southworth (2004) presents the term learning-centred leadership as another name for educational leadership. This term suggests that there needs to be more of an emphasis on the development and transformation of teaching and learning.

Educational leadership perspectives

A number of theoretical perspectives of educational leadership are identified in literature. These perspectives have been borrowed from the generic field of leadership and include: transformative; interpersonal; transactional; charismatic; and moral leadership (Bush and Glover, 2002, cited in Bush, 2003; Fidler & Atton, 2004).

Transformational and charismatic leadership models acknowledge the role of emotions within the notion of influence (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Leithwood, Jentzi and Steinbach (1999, cited in Starratt, 2003) propose that the notion of transformational leadership is a necessary framework for educational leadership considering features such as setting direction, shaping the organisation and the development of individuals. This style of leadership also involves charisma, influence, and motivation (Starratt, 2003) and has been borrowed from generic leadership styles due to its fit with the education reforms of the last 20 – 30 years and the expectation for principals to be heroic in their leadership rather than offering effective educational leadership which seeks to enhance and lead learning (Youngs, 2011).

Following similar lines to the concept of moral leadership, Sergiovanni (1992) suggests the need to consider the concept of head, heart and hands in leadership, and the importance of interconnectedness between all three in helping understand the behaviour of leaders. In this model, the heart of leadership relates to the beliefs and values of the leader and also to the personal vision of the leader. The head relates to the theories of practice that the leader develops over time and the hand relates to the decisions, actions and behaviours of the leader. Sergiovanni argues that the interconnection of head, heart and hands enables one to understand the leader's decisions, actions and behaviours (Sergiovanni, 1992), a concept that closely relates to the notion of servant leadership to be discussed further on in this chapter.

A number of functions and responsibilities of the leader are highlighted in literature along with what a leader should or should not do. While some believe the role sits within the position of principal (Weber, 1987), others argue that the role goes beyond this and should be shared or delegated within the organisation (Woods, Bennett, & Wise, 2004). Despite Weber's (1987) assertion that leadership is predominantly the role of a principal, he also recognises the difficulties of this and suggests that effective leadership involves the ability to delegate and share responsibilities. Southworth (2004) identifies three patterns of leadership: personal, shared, and distributed, and links these to the size of the school. Personal leadership exists when the influence generally comes from the principal alone and is particularly used in smaller school settings. As the size of the school increases shared leadership involves the principal working in partnership with others such as deputy heads or assistants. Distributed leadership occurs when leadership is delegated to a number of people and can be put into action in larger schools.

The concept of distributed leadership suggests that leadership lies within a group of people rather than an individual (Woods et al, 2004) and guidance and direction comes from many sources (Harris, 2005). Distributed leadership does not only come from those in formal roles but can also come from those in informal roles (Harris, 2005). Hoy and Miskel (2008) contend that “distributive leadership models embrace leadership by teams, groups, and organisational characteristics” (p. 438). They suggest that due to the complex nature of schools and the vast range of tasks required within educational leadership, it is necessary to use a distributed leadership perspective as no single person has the ability to be able to fulfil all leadership functions.

Characteristics of educational leaders

Blasé and Blasé (2000) explain that the encouragement of teachers, through dialogue, to show critical reflection on their professional practice was a key of effective principalship. This dialogue included “making suggestions; giving feedback; modelling; using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions; and giving praise” (Blasé & Blasé, 2000, p. 133). In the area of modelling, it is suggested that when principals and leaders lead by example, showing a congruence between what they are expecting others to do and what they themselves do, they gain the support of those whom they are leading (Southworth, 2004).

Jantzi and Leithwood (1996, cited in Cardno & Collett, 2004) suggest that identifying and articulating vision, is one of the critical practices required of an educational leader. Bush (2003) suggests that building a well articulated vision for the school could potentially help in the development of learning and teaching, however there is some concern as to whether or not a school leader can do this due to government curriculum prescriptions.

Much of the literature reviewed focuses on educational leadership within a primary school setting. Simkins (2005) argues that the “context of leadership is crucial” (p. 12) and therefore it is necessary to take this into account when considering the functions of an educational leader. It cannot be assumed that all approaches to, and functions of, educational leadership will be applicable to all educational settings. Each level of education, from early childhood through to tertiary, has different expectations placed on them by the wider community, society and the government. Bush (2003) argues that the following should be considered: “size of the institution; organisational structure; time available for management; the availability of resources; and the external environment” (p. 189). While some aspects of the wider context of educational leadership are relevant to leadership in ECE, there are also some differences. The next section of this paper considers educational leadership within the context of ECE.

LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

Leadership in ECE is a concept in which limited literature and research exists (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004; Scrivens, 2002; Thornton, 2006, 2009; Thornton, Wansbrough, Clarkin-Phillips, Aitken, & Tamati, 2009; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Confusion exists as to how leadership in this sector is defined (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Meade, 2008; Scrivens, 2002; Thornton, et. al., 2009) and there is no common understanding of what is required to be an effective leader in ECE (Nupponen, 2006a; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). The need to develop a clear definition has been highlighted by several authors (Meade, 2008; Scrivens, 2002; Thornton, 2006, 2009). There is a need for teachers in the early childhood sector to engage with the concept of leadership in order to better meet the increasing demands of being a competent leader in the field (Rodd, 2006; Thornton, et. al., 2009).

Although it might be expected that leadership in other areas of education such as schools might be similar to ECE leadership, this is not the case (Muijs, et. al., 2004; Thornton, 2006; Thornton, et. al., 2009). Literature suggests that this is partly connected to the differences in size and complexity between the sectors. ECE is characterised by a much more diverse number of organizations and institutions. The philosophies of early childhood centres are often different and a range of structures exists depending on the centre. Early childhood centres are also generally much smaller than schools. All of these things lead to quite distinct leadership styles (Muijs, et. al., 2004; Thornton, et. al., 2009). Definitions in other contexts may not be appropriate for early childhood settings due to the lack of hierarchical structure and more collaborative way of working (Thornton, et. al., 2009). However, it has been argued that the differences are not so major and that effective leadership regardless of the setting requires certain attitudes, attributes and skills (Ebbeck & Waninagayake, 2003).

Traditional approaches to leadership such as trait and behavioural approaches, according to Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003), do not provide a clear pathway for leadership in ECE to be understood. Early childhood is a unique, complex and diverse setting characterised by a range of smaller organisations, different ownership and management structures and differing philosophies (Couse & Russo, 2006; Nupponen, 2006a; Rodd, 2006). This setting lends itself towards a unique form of leadership that is diverse and multi-functional and reflects the gender and context specific influences that do not necessarily exist in this same way in leadership in other fields (Rodd, 2006).

Rodd (2006) argues that leadership in ECE is not about the influence of one individual but rather the effect of teams of people working together to influence and inspire each other. Hatherley and Lee (2003, cited in Muijs, et. al., 2004)

define leadership as having vision and being able to articulate this vision, strengthening links with the community and developing a community of learners where children are also given leadership. This view is also considered in generic leadership literature (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). However, little empirical research has been undertaken in early childhood settings to support the above claims.

Leadership has been identified as a key element of quality in ECE (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Thornton, 2009; Muijs, et. al., 2004; Rodd, 2006; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). It is suggested that committed, competent and respected leaders are a distinguishing factor in the provision of successful programmes.

Key elements of effective leadership in ECE

Research carried out by Nupponen (2006a) on eight child care directors identifies such notions as commitment and vision towards the goals of the organisation as important. Building team culture and working effectively with others, compassion, resilience, tolerance, patience, empathy, stability, listening and ability to solve problems are also identified as important aspects of leadership in ECE. Notions such as trust, collaboration, empowerment and sharing are central aspects of effective leadership (Rodd, 2006). These skills and attributes lend themselves to a relational style of leading rather than a controlling style and are also recognised in the literature as being key characteristics of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). The directors in this study also recognised the importance of participation in regular routines, leading by example and modelling good practice in their leadership.

A New Zealand study of ECE Centres of Innovation (COI) found that leadership

in these centres was characterised by “courage, commitment, and collaboration” (Thornton, 2006, p. 153). The study found that courage was required for leaders to challenge their own and others’ beliefs as well as to be innovative. Scrivens (2000) also emphasises the need for leaders to be courageous. Shared vision, values and beliefs were also identified as important aspects of leadership in order to give direction to the organisation (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2005; Thornton, 2006). Vision is important for leaders and sharing this with staff and families is essential. Supportive relationships with staff, open communication and staff participation in decision-making are all important aspects of implementing the vision of quality care and education (Nupponen, 2006a).

Studies in early childhood leadership have found that the style of leadership has a profound impact on the overall teaching approach of the centre. Neugebauer (1990, cited in Nupponen, 2006a) proposes that the leader’s style of decision-making relates to the quality of interpersonal relationships in the centre. Decisions made by the team increase the level of staff motivation, dedication and trust.

Leaders in ECE are often not aware of their own leadership style and how it can be developed (Nupponen, 2006a; Thornton, 2009). Rodd (1998, cited in Nupponen, 2006a) asserts that the personal style of early childhood leaders can influence the way they are perceived by children, parents, staff and other professionals. This can then have a flow on effect to the perception of ECE in the community. Rodd (2006) purports that self-awareness of values, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses as well as an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and goals will attract followers who will be willing to take direction from the leader. This suggests that a clear leader-follower relationship exists however, as has previously been identified, leadership in ECE can emerge from more than one person in the team. A shared approach to leadership implies that leader-follower

relationships could be interchangeable and the role of leadership may sit with more than one person. Regardless of whether leadership is shared or not there is usually one person who is identified as having a leadership role where a certain level of authority is held. The specific role of this person is dependent on the leadership and management structure of the individual centre.

An interview of 100 early childhood professionals in Australia identified several characteristics as necessary for effective leadership: being kind; warm; patient; assertive; goal oriented; visionary; confident; and able to build good relationships with parents and staff; being responsive to the needs of others; and able to communicate (Muijs, et. al., 2004). Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) also highlight the importance of communication and developing others. Again, these characteristics are similar to the key characteristics and attributes of a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005).

Perspectives of leadership in ECE

Thornton (2006) asserts that the concept of teacher leadership should be encouraged within ECE to ensure teachers work collegially and are committed to quality. Muijs, et. al. (2004) also suggest that a collaborative approach to leadership in ECE is necessary. Leadership in ECE not only requires working with and influencing staff, it also requires working with and guiding parents (Muijs, et. al., 2004). Mitchell (1989, cited in Muijs, et. al.) goes as far as to suggest that effective ECE leaders need to focus on the entire family as well as the wider community.

Nupponen (2006b) suggests that transformational and shared forms of leadership may work well in the early childhood setting. Transformational leaders motivate,

empower, influence and develop others, allowing them to make their own decisions and take ownership and responsibility for tasks (Nupponen, 2006b). Different to the transformational model, is shared leadership where leadership occurs at various levels and in a relational manner. In a shared leadership approach leaders engage with the group rather than the individual, people listen to each other, communicate openly and are empowered as a team. When using the shared leadership approach, leaders must be prepared to let go of power (Nupponen, 2006b). Similar to shared leadership, Muijs, et. al., (2004) and Nupponen (2006b) suggest that the concept of distributed leadership as theorised in educational leadership is also relevant to leadership in early childhood. This form of leadership allows for the empowerment of all those working within ECE. In the New Zealand context, it could be said that these forms of leadership offer ways for leaders to apply the principles of “relationships” and “empowerment” and the strands of “communication” and “belonging”, as identified in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum guidelines, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), to their practice with adults as well as their work with children.

Some aspects of leadership theories such as vision, ethics and risk taking (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Yukl, 2002) are also important aspects of leadership in early childhood (Carr, Johnson, & Corkwell, 2009; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Muijs, et. al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006a; Thornton, 2006). Despite these similar elements, Kagan (1994, cited in Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003) argues that there are some critical differences. Traditional theories such as trait and behavioural theories, suggest that leadership is usually about a single person, is based on an ethos of competition, and leaders are concerned about product, bureaucracy and hierarchy. Early childhood leadership on the other hand is concerned with a collaborative approach to decision-making and is more informal and flexible (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). Given the

high numbers of women within ECE and the tendency for women to demonstrate transformational and transactional styles of leadership it would make sense to examine the nature of women in early childhood leadership further (Muijs, et. al., 2004; Nupponen, 2006b).

Women in ECE leadership

Until recently there has been little research on the nature of women in leadership. Literature and research suggests that the behaviours women leaders display, are consistent with both transactional and transformational leadership styles (Nupponen, 2006b). Differences between the way women lead as compared to men, have been identified in the areas of risk taking, tolerance, flexibility, empowerment, and intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Women are often more relational and encourage collaborative decision-making (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Nupponen, 2006b; Rodd, 2006; Thornton, et. al., 2009; Woodrow & Busch, 2008).

Thornton, et. al. (2009) propose a need to develop models of leadership that maximise the leadership strengths of women such as wisdom in relation to people, emotions, roles, and resources. An existing model that appears to have key elements that relate to the strengths women in leadership display is the notion of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). In an essay on women and servant leadership, Patsy Sampson writes “so-called (service-oriented) feminine characteristics are exactly those which are consonant with the very best qualities of servant leadership” (Spears, 2005, p. 7).

THE CONCEPT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The concept of servant leadership, explored by Robert K. Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Laub, 1999; Spears, 2005) is one that has been emerging for the past three decades. Some writers espouse servant leadership as a valid theory for organisational leadership (Greenleaf 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). Despite this, there is a lack of published empirical research with much of the literature being anecdotally based (Russell & Stone, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1992). My initial search shows that this pattern has continued.

Greenleaf (1977) proposed that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (p. 21). Greenleaf argues that servant leadership begins with a natural desire to serve. The decision to outwork this desire to serve, then leads to an aspiration to lead. This concept is very different to one where a person desires to control through leadership before anything else, the difference being in the level of priority placed on meeting the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Laub, 1999; Patterson, 2003, cited in Dennis, 2005; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). Servant leadership has been referred to in literature as an authentic practice of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

Spears (2005) recognises the paradox of the term servant leader as the words servant and leader are usually considered to be opposites. Spears (2005) suggests the word servant may have negative connotations for some people due to the oppression of many in history. For others, the word leader may carry some negative history with it. The paradox of the two words being brought together in the term servant leadership, brings with it new understanding.

Servant leadership takes the traditional structure of an organisational pyramid and turns it upside down. While servant leaders will establish vision and direction they empower others and delegate decisions about how they will achieve the goals. This type of decision making involves both trust and delegation (Miller, 1995, cited in Russell, 2001). Russell (2001) suggests that servant leaders show respect for the capabilities of followers, giving them the opportunity to use their strengths and abilities by sharing power.

The difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership

Both transformational leadership and servant leadership have become popular concepts in recent years. Similarities have been identified between the two styles and some have questioned whether there is any difference between the two (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004). The similarities in characteristics of the two theories may be because both concepts attempt to define leadership styles that are people oriented. Characteristics common to both are valuing people, mentoring, empowering followers, listening, and appreciating others (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004). There are some differences between the two concepts however. While transformational leaders tend to focus more on organisational goals, servant leaders focus more on the needs of those who are following, leading from a relational context (Bass, 2000, cited in Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009; Russell & Stone, 2002; Stone, et. al, 2004). Other distinctions have been made between the moral nature of servant leadership and transformational leadership and the way in which the follower is influenced and motivated as a result of the focus of the leader (Parolini, et. al., 2009; Stone, et. al. 2004).

Alongside the difference of focus between transformational leaders and servant leaders comes another distinction. This emerging distinction is the way in which the follower is influenced and motivated as a result of the focus of the leader.

Stone, et. al. (2004) propose that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that while transformational leaders rely on charisma and attributes associated with this to influence followers, the servant leader influences followers through actual service.

Missing from theories such as transformational leadership is the explanation of values such as altruism. Where transformational leaders focus on the organisation, servant leaders focus on the follower and demonstrate unselfish behaviours. (Parolini, et. al., 2009). Servant leadership is based strongly in an ethic of care where teamwork and community are valued and decision-making is shared (Laub, 1999; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). This view has parallels with the literature on early childhood leadership which also identifies a need for teamwork, community and shared decision-making (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003; Muijs, et. al., 2004; Rodd, 2006). An ethic of care is also central to feminist approaches identified in both generic and early childhood leadership literature (Rodd, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Characteristics of servant leadership

Despite the lack of empirical research, there are possible themes in the literature that identify certain characteristics of servant leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002). Vision is one such characteristic (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) with terms such as foresight and conceptualisation used by Greenleaf (1977) to describe this. Research suggests that vision must be well articulated and communicated, inspiring and empowering, uniting members of the organisation and helping to develop and maintain a learning organisation (Russell & Stone, 2002). Maxwell (1998) suggests that followers must buy into the leader before they will take up the vision. This is largely dependent on the character of the leader. The question here is where power sits in the development of a shared vision.

The positioning of power is a characteristic of servant leadership discussed in literature. Sergiovanni (1992) proposes that power can be understood as power over and/or power to. Power over stresses the idea of controlling what, when and how people do things, while power to suggests power is a means to achieve shared goals and purposes. Greenleaf (1977) questions the traditional way in which power and authority have become legitimate aspects of leadership in organisations. He suggests the need to move away from a paradigm that is based on manipulation, dominance, coercion and self interest and instead move towards a concept of leadership that builds people up and empowers them. The idea of empowerment relates to power to rather than power over. Servant leaders will walk alongside followers using their position and power to empower those they lead (Laub, 1999). Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that it is difficult to talk about the notions of power to and servant leadership without addressing the gender issue.

The notions of power to and servant leadership fit well with the feminist tradition. In contrast to this, traditional concepts of leadership are more oriented towards males. Where women tend to emphasise relationships, connectedness, authenticity and power as a means to achieve shared goals, men tend to focus on individual relationships and achievement where power is a means to control events and people and gain authority (Rodd, 2006; Thornton et. al., 2009; Sergiovanni, 1992). Sergiovanni (1992) highlights the need to consider the female perspective in school leadership. Female leaders must be free to be themselves rather than having to fit into the views and practices of traditional leadership principles and theory. This is a view that should be considered in the ECE sector where leaders are predominantly female.

Duignan and Bhindi (1997) suggests that leaders take on hierarchical views of leadership where their relationships are based on power over people because they

do not have sufficient understanding of the complexities of organisations. Dominant individuals or groups expect to be served by others rather than being the ones who serve. Authentic leadership requires authentic relationships (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). The quality of relationships influences everything else that happens in organisations. Relationships that are trusting and caring are central to the development of a culture where values such as honesty, integrity, loyalty and justice become a natural part of everyday practice (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). The concept of a caring community and having an ethic of care are also mentioned by Duignan and Bhindi (1997) as being vital to developing authentic relationships.

Laub (1999) defines servant leadership as an authentic practice of leadership where people are valued and developed, community is built, and power is shared for the good of the individual, the organisation and those whom the organisation serves. Patterson (2003, cited in Dennis, 2005) defines servant leadership as leaders serving with a focus on the follower. The servant leader displays certain virtues such as goodness and high morals. Patterson (2003, cited in Dennis, 2005) asserts that the servant leader leads with love and humility, is altruistic, trusting, serving, and is a visionary.

Attributes of a servant leader

Greenleaf (1977) identified several key attributes of servant leaders which have been summarised into ten characteristics by Larry Spears (1996). They are: listening; empathy; foresight; awareness; persuasiveness; conceptualisation; the ability to heal relationships, stewardship; commitment to developing others; and building community. Various research studies have also highlighted characteristics of effective servant leaders (see Table 2.1 p. 24).

Table 2.1 – The Person who is the Servant Leader

Theme	Attribute	Literature Source
<p>The person who is the servant leader</p>	<p>Honesty Integrity Dependability Credibility Initiative Imagination Awareness Ethics Authenticity Altruistic Humility Values Courageous Fairness Care Empathy</p>	<p>Beazley & Beggs, 2002; Bennis, 2002; Burkhardt & Spears, 2002 Dennis, 2005; Duignan & Bhindi, 1997; Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Laub, 1999; McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1992; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005; Van Dierendonck 2011</p>

Lubin (2001, cited in Joseph & Winston, 2005) validates nine of the characteristics of servant leadership as being congruent with the behaviours of visionary leaders. A review of literature by Russell and Stone (2002) identified 20 distinct attributes related to servant leadership. These attributes build on the lists as identified by Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (1996, 2002, 2005). Nine of these attributes can be viewed as functional attributes.

Functional attributes are the operative qualities, responsibilities, characteristics, and distinctive features belonging to leaders and observed through specific leader

behaviours and in the workplace. The functional attributes are the effective characteristics of servant leadership. They are identifiable characteristics that actuate leadership responsibilities. Each functional attribute is distinct, yet they are all interrelated. In some cases, the attributes reciprocally influence one another (Joseph & Winston, 2005) (see Table 2.2 below).

Table 2.2 – The Functions of Servant Leadership

Theme	Attribute	Literature Source
<p>Functions of Servant Leadership</p>	<p>Vision Conceptualisation Persuasiveness Intuition Foresight Perception Delegating Sharing responsibility Modelling Service Empowerment Pioneering Competence Communication Stewardship Influence Visibility Teaching Agent of change Good decision maker Risk takers</p>	<p>Beazley & Begg, 2002; Bennis, 2002; Burkhardt & Spears, 2002; Dennis 2005; DePree, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes and Posner, 2007; McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 2002; Russell and Stone, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1992; Spears, 1996, 2002 2005.</p>

Delegating and sharing of power are identified in literature as being important aspects of servant leadership however Argyris (1998, cited in Russell & Stone, 2002) argues that these are still mainly illusions because “executives tend to undermine genuine empowerment” (p. 152). Personal example and modelling are foundational to leaders influencing others (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell & Stone, 2002). To do this, the leader must be visible and have some sort of public presence (Russell & Stone, 2002). Servant leadership occurs when leaders are prepared to serve those they work with. The motivation of a servant leader should be found in the needs of others rather than in self-interest (Greenleaf, 1977; Russell, 2001; Russell & Stone, 2002) (see Table 2.3 below).

Table 2.3 – The Servant Leader and Relationships

Theme	Attribute	Literature Source
<p>The servant leader and relationships</p>	<p>Listening Trust Presence Encouragement Healing Understanding Acceptance Concern for others Justice Loyalty appreciating others Building community</p>	<p>Beazley & Begg, 2002; Bennis, 2002; Burkhardt & Spears, 2002; Dennis, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Laub, 1999; McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 2002; Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009; Russell, 2001; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sergiovanni 1992; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005.</p>

Russell (2001) highlights the significant impact of values on leadership. A greater emphasis on values is called for in leadership, however leaders must first understand their own values and beliefs before they can pass good organisational values onto others (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell, 2001). Organisational values can be developed by leaders modelling and demonstrating values themselves and then instilling them in others (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell, 2001). Leader-follower relationships are considerably affected by the personal values of leaders. These same values affect the moral reasoning and personal behaviour of the leader (Russell, 2001).

In recent years the research on servant leadership has increased and various models have emerged. In each of these models, trust is a central element (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Russell & Stone, 2002). Joseph and Winston (2005) suggest that the way in which a leader communicates affects the ability of the follower to trust the leader. Greenleaf (1977) purports that in servant leadership, “leadership is bestowed upon persons who are trusted because of their stature as servants” (p. 24). They are trusted because of their empathy, dependability, and insight, and because they lead by example (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005).

Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that leadership is forced into servant mode when respect for everyone is taken seriously as one way to show respect is to serve another person. Sergiovanni (1992) proposes that leadership that counts is the type of leadership that touches people differently, taps emotions, appeals to the values of others and leads to connection. Sergiovanni refers to this as moral leadership and considers it a form of stewardship.

RESEARCH OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Much of the literature seeks to provide a summary or overview of past writings on servant leadership, particularly the work of Greenleaf (1977), due to the lack of empirical research on the topic (Laub, 1999, Russell & Stone, 2002). The recognition of this lack of research has led to a small number of studies being undertaken in the area of servant leadership.

An empirical study on the difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership by Parolini, et. al. (2009) identified the difference in purpose for servant leaders as compared to transformational leaders. The findings of this study which was carried out across a range of organisations suggested that the primary purpose for servant leaders was that of meeting the needs of followers. The study also supported the idea that servant leaders choose to serve first and put the needs of the others above the needs of the organisation.

Doctoral research carried out by James Laub (1999) led to the development of the Organisational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument which has since been used in other empirical research studies (e.g. Joseph & Winston, 2005). His research of servant leadership also identified a significant number of characteristics as evident in the literature related to the way in which people are treated, the personal qualities of the servant leader and the characteristics that led to the development of others and the building of community.

Joseph and Winston (2005) undertook a research project which sought to explore the relationship between the perceptions of employees in regard to servant leadership and leader and organisational trust. This study used the work carried out by Laub (1999) in developing an Organisational Leadership Assessment tool. The findings of this study showed that organisations practicing servant leadership

appeared to show greater levels of trust in both the leader and the organisation. This correlation shows the significance of trust as integral to servant leadership and the implications of this on practice within organisations.

Another research study carried out by Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) also sought to examine the correlation between servant leadership and trust. This study also found that in organisations where servant leadership was practised there was a high level of trust in the leader. The concepts of authenticity, relationship, morality, spirituality and “transforming influence” (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010, p. 649) were significant aspects of servant leadership that contributed to this high level of trust.

More specific to servant leadership in education, Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson and Jinks (2007) undertook a study in which they examined the leadership practices of principals who had been identified as servant leaders. Using various assessment tools, this largely quantitative study found that principals demonstrating servant leadership were seen to be more effective in challenging, inspiring, enabling, motivating and encouraging others than those who did not demonstrate servant leadership. The concepts of challenging, inspiring, enabling, motivating and encouraging are consistent with existing servant literature that highlights various characteristics similar to these. The implications of this study suggested that if servant leadership is a truly relevant style of leadership then there should be a consideration of this within educational leadership programmes.

A mixed method case study on servant leadership in higher education carried out by Howard Youngs (2002) for a Masters degree found that servant leadership had three dimensions; intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational, from which it could be viewed. This research identified the need for a leader to be secure, self

aware, and have boundaries of self-care. It also highlighted the need for interdependent relationships with others (Youngs, 2007).

SUMMARY

Servant leadership is a concept that reminds leaders of the need to balance leadership with service. For those in leadership positions it acts as a reminder that our first responsibility is to serve others. It also encourages followers to look for opportunities to provide leadership through service (Spears, 1996). Servant leadership is a way of being that potentially leads to positive change within organisations and throughout society (Spears, 2005).

An initial review of the literature shows that the concept of servant leadership and various attributes of servant leadership are apparent also in the literature on effective leadership both generically and in ECE. The relational nature of servant leadership and its parallels with a feminist approach to leadership suggest that there are some possible potential benefits of implementing the principles of servant leadership into the ECE setting.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the rationale and justification for the qualitative methodological approach of this study. It identifies the methods used for gathering data and considers the principles and practices for applying these methods. Considerations for strengthening reliability and validity are identified and ethical issues related to the study are discussed.

METHODOLOGY

All research sits within a certain epistemological framework. An epistemological position demands consideration of what is acceptable, legitimate knowledge, how it is acquired and how it is communicated to others (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Two main paradigms, a positivist paradigm, or an interpretive paradigm, guide the choice of epistemological position taken (Cohen, et. al., 2007). A positivist paradigm encompasses a view of knowledge as objective and tangible with strong links to the natural sciences. An interpretive paradigm, on the other hand, is more personal and subjective and can be linked to the social sciences (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Because this study sought to explore and examine the concept of servant leadership and how this is experienced and perceived within the early childhood context, the problem lent itself to being studied from an interpretive paradigm. Davidson and Tolich (2003) suggest that the interpretive paradigm asserts that the

greater environment must be considered in order to understand or solve a problem. In this study, the greater environment includes the wider ECE context as well as the leaders, staff, and parents who contribute to the early childhood centre communities. The interpretive paradigm is characterised by concern for the individual (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007) and seeks to understand an aspect of the subjective realities of human experience. In order to understand the nature of servant leadership within ECE it was important to carry out my research in such a way as to come to recognise the context and individual realities for teachers within this setting.

Creswell (2002) proposes that qualitative research is useful when the researcher is unsure of the important variables to examine, especially in such instances when the topic is new or has never been addressed with a specific sample group. It may also be useful when “existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study” (Morse, 1991, cited in Creswell, 2002, p. 22). It is for these reasons that I believe a qualitative approach was relevant to my study, given that the literature related to leadership in early childhood, and more specifically, servant leadership within the early childhood setting, is limited (Rodd, 2006; Russell & Stone, 2002; Thornton et. al., 2009).

While on the face of it, distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies can be viewed in terms of the way in which measurement is used, many writers suggest that the differences go deeper than this and are more closely connected to the differences in epistemology (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative research fits within an interpretive paradigm where the researcher seeks to study and understand phenomena in relation to the meanings people attribute to it (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is argued that to do this requires significant differences in the way these things are measured as compared

to the measurement strategies applied to quantitative research (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Working from within a framework of a mainly qualitative methodology enabled me to view the topic of servant leadership through the eyes of the participants and come to an understanding of the meanings that these people attribute to the concept of servant leadership within the ECE context.

A number of methods and approaches related to qualitative research are described in detail in the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Not one method is viewed as better than another in qualitative research. The use of multiple methods is common within a qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers frequently change their data collection instruments and flexibility is valued as opposed to quantitative research where consistency is highly valued (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The nature of the research problem along with the skills of the researcher and discipline in which the problem is situated are all important considerations in deciding which method or methods to use (Keeves, 1997).

In reviewing research method literature in light of my research problem it quickly became apparent that a more specific qualitative approach, namely a case study, would be appropriate for the purpose of this study. Case studies involve the in-depth exploration of one or more individuals, an event, an activity or a programme (Creswell, 2002). Bryman (2008) asserts that some of the best known studies in sociology are based on case studies of single organisations, people or events. Yin (1994, cited in Merriam, 1998) defines a case study in terms of a research process that occurs within the context of real life whereas Merriam (1998, p. 27) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit”. To be a case, the phenomenon being studied should be intrinsically bounded (Merriam, 1998).

To gain a wider perspective of how servant leadership was perceived, demonstrated and experienced in early childhood, I needed to explore the viewpoints of more than just the person who held a leadership position. I was interested in finding out the perspectives of the staff and parents as well as the head teacher or manager. Case studies explore the research topic within a specific environment and may involve obtaining the views of different people involved in that environment (Hinds, 2000). While case studies may be carried out in a single site, a multi-site case study was chosen for this research topic. Merriam (1998) suggests that “the more cases included in a study and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). My study explored the topic of servant leadership in early childhood education within the bounds of three different early childhood centres with the intention of being able to transfer the findings to the wider bodies of knowledge of both servant leadership and leadership in early childhood education. Case studies do not claim any particular method of data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 1998). The data gathering methods selected for this study include semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire (see Appendices D, F and H).

For the purposes of a multi-site case study as discussed above, a purposive sampling method was used to select the early childhood centres to be studied. Purposive sampling allows for the cases to be handpicked in order to meet the specific needs of the research problem (Cohen, et. al., 2007). To do this, I chose to select three early childhood centres, each with different structures and philosophies, but all espousing aspects of servant leadership from the literature such as, collaboration, relational leadership, and an ethic of care towards staff, children and parents. These aspects of leadership were identified in each centre’s current Education Review Office report. Participants from each of the three centres included the head teacher/manager, staff and parents. One centre is a state

kindergarten with one head teacher, three staff and 32 parents, another is a full day care centre with two joint owners/managers, seven staff and 30 parents, and another is a Christian preschool with one manager, ten staff and 30 parents. At no time were children from the early childhood centres involved in this research.

The centres used were initially invited to participate through contact with the head teacher/manager of each centre and asked to provide organisational consent (see Appendix A). Once the centres were selected, staff from each centre were provided with information about the research and given the opportunity to choose whether or not they would like to participate (see Appendices C and E). Parents of each centre were given an open invitation to participate through information and questionnaires being sent out to them in the same way the centre would usually distribute newsletters (see Appendix G). In Site One, one centre leader was interviewed and three staff participated in the focus group. Only four out of 32 parents returned the questionnaires. Site Two had two centre leaders who were both interviewed, four staff participated in the focus group and nine out of 30 parents returned the questionnaires. In Site Three, one centre leader was interviewed, five staff participated in the focus group and only two out of 30 parents returned the questionnaires.

METHODS

Interviewing

Interviews allow participants to discuss the way in which they interpret the work and express their own points of view regarding certain situations (Cohen, et. al., 2007). Interviews are used by both qualitative and quantitative researchers regardless of whether the purpose is to acquire rich, in-depth data or to garner a “simple point on a scale of 2 to 10 dimensions” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 698).

My decision to interview the head teachers/managers of the three different sites was to enable me to obtain rich, in-depth data.

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Hinds, 2000). A structured interview focuses on pre-defined questions that are worked through in order whereas an unstructured interview focuses on a pre-defined theme or area, allowing discussion to occur between the researcher and the interviewee on that theme. These two approaches may be combined where some structured questions and some unstructured themes are used to explore the topic (Hinds, 2000). Bryman (2008) suggests that the two types of interview in qualitative research are the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gather rich, detailed data (Bryman, 2008) from the head teacher/manager of the selected early childhood centres (see Appendix D). A semi-structured interview requires the researcher to have a basic list of questions or reasonably specific topics that need to be covered during the interview. This list is used as a guide only and there are times when the interviewer may move away from this slightly, or may change the order of things. By using a semi-structured interview, I was able to ask additional questions that were not included on the list as I picked up on what the interviewee said and gave opportunities for further elaboration (Bryman, 2008). The benefit of using a semi-structured interview was that generally, all the questions were asked and similar wording was used from one interviewee to another.

Cohen, et. al. (2007) suggest that there are both advantages and disadvantages of interviews as a research tool. One advantage is the way in which they allow for greater depth and richness than other methods of data collection do. On the other

hand, a disadvantage of interviews is that they are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. By applying more than one research method to the study, problems such as subjectivity and bias can hopefully be minimised.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a form of group interview where questioning occurs on a well defined topic (Bryman, 2008). The focus group considers the topic as it is discussed by members of a group rather than individuals. In an individual interview the opportunity is often given for the respondent to share their reasons for maintaining a certain view, however, with the focus group approach the opportunity is there for people to prove each other's reasons for holding a particular view (Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000). Participants in a focus group are able to identify issues relating to the topic that they believe to be of importance and significance (Bryman, 2008). As ideas are expressed then bounced off each participant, a chain reaction of informative dialogue is developed and the researcher begins to take an interest in the ways in which people respond to each other's views and develop these as a result of the interaction that takes place between the participants (Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000).

The provision for focus groups to hear all participants' perspectives is an important feature of a great deal of qualitative research and given that one of my aims was to examine how servant leadership is perceived and experienced by teachers, focus groups were an appropriate choice of method for my research (see Appendix F). I was able to gain an understanding of the collective view of the staff in each centre which can only add to the understanding that was gained from individual interviews with each of the head teachers/managers (Bryman, 2008).

Focus groups are somewhat contrived in nature, however, this can be viewed as both a strength and a weakness. Despite the unnatural settings, they concentrate on a particular issue, potentially leading to insights that may not have arisen in an interview. Focus groups can potentially produce a large amount of data in a short period of time however, they still produce less data than would be collected if the same number of participants were interviewed individually (Cohen, et. al., 2007).

Bryman (2008) suggests that more than one group is needed as with one group there is always a possibility that the responses you get will be particular to that one group. There are also strong arguments that too many groups can be a waste of time. The use of a multi-site case study ensured that I had three focus groups, one from each early childhood centre. This enabled me to gain a broader perspective of ideas.

While focus groups have a number of strengths they are not without problems however and it is important to consider these. The results cannot be generalised, the emerging culture of the group may interfere with individual expression, one person may dominate the discussion and groupthink is a possible outcome (Fontana & Frey, 2005). It requires some skill to deal with and minimise these problems however it was necessary to be aware of them as I conducted my own research and facilitated the focus groups that were an essential part of my study. Where one or two people tended to contribute more than others, I sought to draw out responses from those who were quieter by asking them specifically what their thoughts were and making space within the discussion for them to be able to contribute.

Questionnaires

A third tool used for my research was that of paper-based questionnaires (see Appendix H). In order to gain an understanding of how parents perceive and experience servant leadership in the different early childhood centres, the most logical way to get information from a large number of parents was to use a questionnaire. Questionnaires are a useful tool when collecting data from a large number of respondents (Hinds, 2000).

The questions were carefully considered to ensure the respondents were aware of the purpose of the study and able to understand the questions (Bell, 2007; Hinds, 2000). The questionnaires were based on some open ended questions and some closed questions using a rating scale where respondents were asked to respond to different statements, so they were mostly qualitative.

Before distributing the questionnaires to the parents from the early childhood centres, a pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out to ensure the questions were clear and to avoid using leading questions. The usefulness of the responses in a questionnaire is influenced by the way the questions are worded (Bell, 2007; Hinds, 2000). This pilot test was carried out with a selection of parents with early childhood aged children from centres not involved in this study. No subsequent changes were made to the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to the parents through each centre's normal method of passing out newsletters and other written information. A sealed box was placed near the office of each centre so that parents and caregivers were able to return the questionnaires anonymously without needing to give them to a staff member.

As is the case with any research, it was necessary to ensure that my case study had rigor and therefore the tools used for gathering data needed to be reliable and valid.

RELIABILITY

Reliability relates to the consistency and accuracy of research tools used in the study. It is applied differently depending on whether a quantitative or qualitative stance is taken in research. From a quantitative perspective, for a measure to be reliable, it must be able to produce similar results at a different time and in a different context or even when used by other than the original researchers. There must also be consistency in the research tools used (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Hinds, 2000). The strength of quantitative research lies in its reliability (Bryman, 2008; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Qualitative research, however, is not based on the same level of consistency.

In qualitative research reliability is concerned with the fit between what the researcher records as data and what actually happens in the natural setting (Cohen, et. al., 2007). In qualitative methodologies reliability includes a commitment to real life, context and situation specifics, honesty, depth of response, authenticity and meaningfulness to the participants (Cohen, et. al., 2007). To ensure reliability in my interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires, careful consideration was given to the way in which questions were formulated so that the meaning was consistently clear for the interviewees (Cohen, et. al., 2007).

Davidson and Tolich (2003) propose that because reliability and validity are independent there are separate measures for each. Achieving one or the other of reliability or validity does not necessarily provide an automatic guarantee of the

other. Measures can be reliable but not valid and vice versa (Cohen, et. al., 2007). I therefore needed to ensure that my research was both reliable and valid.

VALIDITY

The issue of validity requires one to consider whether or not the empirical measures realistically measure the concept being studied. It is related to the possession of worth and value and the quality of strength (Bryman, 2008; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Hinds, 2000; Keeves, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Validity is an essential aspect of effective research, so much so that if a piece of research is invalid the research is worthless (Cohen, et. al., 2007). “The question of validity can be both external and internal” (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 32). External validity is concerned with the ability of findings to be generalised (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Keeves, 1997).

Internal validity can be addressed through the depth, richness, honesty, authenticity, credibility and scope of the collected data, the participants, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher (Cohen, et. al, 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). One of the most practical ways for me to achieve validity was to minimise the level of bias as much as possible. From the perspective of the interview process, the characteristics of the interviewer and the participants as well as the content of the questions are all sources of bias and have an impact on the interview (Cohen, et. al., 2007). Validity in the interview process is reinforced if the questions are seen to measure what they claim to measure (Cohen, et. al, 2007).

Generalisation is not a concern within the realms of qualitative research. Its validity is strengthened by triangulation (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Triangulation involves the use of different methods to consider an idea or event from more than one perspective (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Keeves, 1997). The interpretive foundation of a study is deepened through triangulation, particularly if a case study is utilised (Cohen, et. al., 2007).

As this study sits within a qualitative case study, where multiple methods are employed, triangulation could only strengthen the rich data that was collected. Different aspects of servant leadership practice in early childhood education were identified as a result of the interviews that sought to reveal different levels of understanding and the focus groups that provided the opportunity for feedback on the initial findings from the interviews. The convergence of data from interviews, focus groups and questionnaires to ascertain the different perspectives of the head teacher/manager, staff and parents of three different early childhood centres provided a means for triangulation to support the reliability of the study.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Research offers a range of benefits to many people however it can also be a burden to many people, particularly to those involved in the study (Wilkinson, 2001). Ethical issues must be acknowledged as they relate directly to the integrity of the research study and the disciplines involved (Bryman, 2008). Four ethical considerations must be made in any research study. These include the minimisation of harm to participants, informed consent, privacy, and avoiding deception (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Wilkinson, 2001).

Research that could potentially harm participants is not considered to be acceptable. Harm, here, includes physical harm, loss of self-esteem, stress, and

harm to the development of participants (Diener and Crandall, 1978, cited in Bryman, 2008). Where there is potential for harm, this must be outweighed by the benefits of the research. The judgement about when the benefits outweigh the burdens is generally left to ethics committees (Wilkinson, 2001). This study was passed through the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee in order to gain approval and ensure compliance for the undertaking of a Master's thesis. My current position as a teacher educator in the field of early childhood education was taken into account throughout the study as my position requires me to have regular contact with a number of early childhood centres when placing and visiting students on practicum. To minimise the potential risks of conflict of interest and power issues, I chose sites for my case study which were outside of the immediate area where I work. I also ensured that each centre was made aware that I was working with them in my role as researcher only and not as a teacher educator.

Informed consent means that prospective research participants should be provided with as much information about the study as is needed to ensure that they are able to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the study (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007; Wilkinson, 2001). All participants in this research study were informed in writing as to the nature of the study and the potential audience of the research (see Appendices C, E and G). This information was also expressed verbally and participants were given a guideline for the interviews and focus groups. It was made known that any information the participants provided would remain confidential and their anonymity maintained at all times. Informed consent forms were used for the interviewees, members of the focus groups and the centres in which the multi-site case study was carried out (see Appendix B). Parents/caregivers provided informed consent by completing the anonymous questionnaire and placing it in a sealed returns box at each early childhood centre.

Maintaining the confidentiality of records and identities of participants is an important ethical consideration (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, et. al., 2007). Care must be taken to ensure that even when the findings are published the participants are not identified or identifiable (Bryman, 2008). While in quantitative research, it is reasonably easy to ensure records remain anonymous, it is not so easy with qualitative research where care needs to be taken with the possible identification of people and places (Bryman, 2008). For the purposes of my research, the sites used in my case study have been identified by number only and the participants have been assigned a code based on which site they were from and a letter from the alphabet. Care was also taken in the presentation of field notes and transcripts so as to prevent the identification of people as this is also an identified area of concern in terms of maintaining confidentiality in qualitative research. To ensure accuracy and provide opportunities for the sharing and checking of data (Cohen, et. al., 2007) participants received a copy of the transcripts from the interviews and focus groups and were given the opportunity to alter or delete any of the data that they provided. All necessary steps were taken before, during and after my research study to ensure it was carried out in an ethical manner.

SUMMARY

A qualitative methodological approach to this study enabled servant leadership to be viewed from the perspective of the participants. A multi-site case study provided the opportunity for triangulation across three different early childhood centres. Interviews with the centre leaders, focus groups with each group of staff and questionnaires completed by the parents of each centre also enabled triangulation to occur and a range of perspectives from those involved in the context of ECE to be gained. Throughout the study all ethical considerations were adhered to.

Chapter Four

DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The use of a multi-site case study for this study produced a wealth of qualitative data from each of the sites and a small amount of quantitative data from the questionnaires. This chapter seeks to provide a platform from which to allow the reader to draw initial conclusions from the data gathered. No major discussion of the findings or conclusions have been drawn at this stage.

The chapter is divided into three parts with the data gathered from each case study site summarised and analysed individually. In each part the espoused views of servant leadership and leadership in ECE are considered followed by any identified links to the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* and an overview of the data related to the practice of servant leadership. Finally, the responses in relation to barriers to servant leadership are identified.

Each site in this case study has a different structure and philosophy and therefore the number of participants in each site also varied. Site One was a state kindergarten with one head teacher, three staff and 32 parents. Site Two was a full day care centre with two joint owners/managers, seven staff and 30 parents. Site Three was a Christian preschool with one manager, ten staff and 30 parents. No children from the early childhood centres were involved in this research.

Quotes from the participants are used throughout this chapter. As each site used different titles for those in positions of leadership, for the purposes of this study

the title of 'centre leader' will be given to allow for continuity and to avoid any confusion. To identify these participants a CL is placed after the site number (S 1, 2, or 3) and where there are two centre leaders an A or B is also used. Focus group participants are identified by their site number followed by a letter.

PART ONE: SITE ONE

This first part considers the responses given by the various participants from site one in the interview and focus group session along with the results from the questionnaire put out to parents from the centre. It must be noted at this point that while all parents were given the opportunity to complete questionnaires the return rate for this centre was low and only 12.5% or four out of 32 questionnaires were returned.

In selecting this centre it was evident through the Education Review Office report that many aspects of the concept of servant leadership were being put into practice within the centre. Despite this, it became clear through the interview and focus group processes that the centre leader and the centre staff did not previously have a great deal of existing knowledge of what servant leadership was and the centre leader commented on the fact that she had taken time to read a little about it.

S1.CL: I read online the definitions of it and ...so what I think it is, is just having respect and responsibility, that's what I see servant leadership as.

Espoused views of servant leadership

The espoused views of servant leadership from Site One provided both a definition of servant leadership and a description of the servant leader as a person. Coding of the interview and focus group transcripts enabled the definition and description to be categorised into the responsibilities of a servant leader and the concept of relationships as essential to servant leadership. These categories were then further analysed to identify emerging themes and more specific definitions and descriptions of servant leadership and the leader as servant.

Responsibilities of a servant leader

Emerging themes from the interview and focus group that related to the responsibilities of a servant leader were vision, example, commitment and the development of others.

The centre leader identified vision as being a crucial responsibility for someone who is in the position of leader and acknowledged that this vision should be shared with others.

S1.CL: I think that as a leader who's been put into the position of a leader you need to have vision ...if you're just going to stay in the same place over and over then people are going to get fed up with your leadership and you have to be able to have a bit of vision and you have to be able to make it a shared vision with everybody, like it can't just be your vision, everybody wants the same thing. ...you're not going to achieve if you're flying solo.

The centre leader's view of shared vision as being part of a servant leader's responsibilities was also shared by staff in the focus group as they defined servant

leadership and described the person who is the servant leader. Vision was seen as something that should go beyond the centre itself to the community as a whole, with a need to be aware of what the community's needs were and then helping to meet these. This community awareness could also be seen as an important aspect of the relational side of servant leadership.

S1.A: Somebody who has a vision of what, not so much just what they would like to see but the vision for our little community as a whole, and for us, all of us.

S1.B: It's [servant leadership]...being aware of community needs because every kindergarten has got different needs as far as you know the community that it...encompasses.

S1.C: I feel a person who leads through role modelling, looking at a holistic look at everything, the whole picture, not just a one off thing when they are leading.

Along with vision, the centre leader also commented on the importance of passion and ongoing commitment, suggesting that a servant leader has a responsibility to put in more than just the expected hours.

S1.CL: You have to have passion for what you do and you have to be committed to what you do ... you have to put in extra hours, you have to put in the extra time, you can't just say well I finish at 4, I'm quite committed and passionate until 4, it doesn't stop so it's sort of that ongoing commitment. Yeah and I think...so commitment, passion, and vision, but you still have to have a really awesome team.

The recognition of the need for an “awesome team” was reflected by the emphasis placed on the development of others which also has implications for considering the relational side of servant leadership and the characteristics described associated to relationships.

Relationships

As the idea of relationships was considered, emerging themes from the interview and focus groups such as respect, empowerment, community awareness and communication became evident. Relational aspects of servant leadership such as treating others how you would like to be treated, being supportive, listening and being aware of community needs were all identified in the data. All participants acknowledged the need for servant leaders to show respect, build respectful relationships and encourage others in their strengths and weaknesses.

S1.CL: It's respect for everything, respect for other people, respect for other things, respect, and just treating people how you would like to be treated.

S1.A: Communication...is an important characteristic...and also...relationships, respectful relationships, responsive and reciprocal relationships.

S1.C: [A servant leader is] someone that encourages...people that they work with, so they excel in what they're good at, what their strengths are, but also there to support them through, I don't want to say weaknesses but through areas that they may be struggling with.

The paradox of servant leadership

While the categories of responsibilities and relationships were particularly evident in the transcripts of both the interview and the focus group, the idea of servant leadership as a paradox was also identified and discussed by the focus group. The paradoxical nature of the concept of servant leadership was highlighted as the participants considered the definitions of the separate words servant and leader. While their definition of a leader was not difficult to grasp an understanding of, one of the participants particularly struggled with the word servant and the connotations of what this meant while another participant had a slightly different perspective of a servant.

S1.A: The actual name servant leadership...it sounds really quite old, you know what I mean, like a very old concept which is fine, but it's something you would refer to a long long time ago, which I think...sort of puts you off wanting to know more if you get what I mean with that name servant leadership. ...I understand it's sort of derived from back in the days of the kings and all that sort of stuff and the king was a servant to his people and you know that sort of thing which is understandable but then as we've gone through history when you think of servant you know you think of...little apron and.. you know you think of the butler and the maid and I guess that's the way the word has changed throughout the decades and centuries you know and it's changed I think.

S1.B: I sort of looked at it as though you're here to serve the communities needs and the children. Like civil servant or public servant or, yea...So that's where it's important to be aware of

what your community is and the dynamics of it. Because the community we have here is quite different to what's over there, you know so yeah, and not to judge people either because some people can't help where they are at. So it's accepting people for who they are and for the qualities that they bring because everybody brings qualities.

Through discussion, the participants were able to see how the two words came together to provide a specific view of leadership and what it really means for someone to be a servant leader.

Espoused views of leadership in early childhood

The line between the discussion of espoused views of servant leadership and espoused views of leadership in early childhood was somewhat blurred and therefore the ideas shared in regard to servant leadership almost flowed on into the discussion of leadership in early childhood. Again, the concept of building relationships relating to this was central to the participants' comments alongside of several characteristics of the leader. The types of relationships talked about were not just relationships with children and other teachers they also included relationships with parents and whānau (family).

S1.CL: Relationships are the biggest thing. That would have to be the biggest and trust which is part of relationships, but it's trust that, it's trust in everybody you know, people have got to have trust in you, you trust them to do things, it's parents, whanau, team...It's empathy, it's compassion, you know not everybody is going to...feel like you and you're not going to feel the same some days either so you know understanding that and listening. Of

course listening entails...listening, really listening, and a lot of that I think is if you build really good relationships...

S1.C: I think for early childhood you've got to be really sort of like committed to what you're doing and probably committed for quite a period of time to follow through on the child and extend it and actually past the child and into the family that you're working with...Because I mean, it's all about building up those relationships... There's still quite a bit of nurturing that's going on and building up that trust with parents.

As is evident in the above comments from both the centre leader and one of the staff involved in the focus group, characteristics such as empathy, compassion, listening, commitment, and nurturing were seen as essential aspects of building relationships along with the concept of trust. Developing people by allowing them to take risks and give things a go, and recognising the importance of being a lifelong learner were also valued by the participants and considered as important to leadership in early childhood education.

S1.B: I also think letting people try new things and if they fail what could you do differently next time ...Let's face it learning is lifelong isn't it so you learn from your mistakes so if you keep putting people down people won't try different things.

As participants discussed the many characteristics of both servant leadership and leadership in ECE they were able to make connections between servant leadership and the national curriculum document, *Te Whāriki*.

Connections between servant leadership and *Te Whāriki*

Both the centre leader and the staff were able to recognise connections between the characteristics of servant leadership and *Te Whāriki*.

S1.CL: If you look at it, you know in *Te Whāriki* they talk about everybody is a unique individual. ...That's what everybody is and that's everybody so it's not just a child curriculum it's a curriculum for life. Treat everybody like this, let everybody be who they want to be, let people discover their strengths, let people make mistakes. Stop being so, the only word I can think of is pernickety. Yea, you know we don't care if kids are whoever they want to be it's like let adults be who they want to be. Stop judging and trust you know that they can do jobs, can do things.

The centre leader recognised that the concepts of relationship and continuity strongly emphasised within *Te Whāriki* were also important aspects of servant leadership. These connections were made by the participants of the focus group also. One participant went as far as acknowledging that:

S1.C: If you were leading the team or the team is working, using these [servant leadership] characteristics and things, it must be enabling you to have a better understanding of *Te Whāriki* because that's a holistic view of things too.

The practice of servant leadership

In describing her own style of leadership the centre leader was quick to suggest that her style was “messy” and that she relied on the team to support her. The idea

that her role was one of function and responsibility rather than status was particularly palpable.

S1.CL: I don't like to be seen as the leader either because we all lead in our own ways here so it's sort of like if anything I'm the person responsible, so if something does go bad or whatever I'm the person responsible so I do have to sort of make sure things are all operating within certain things but it's definitely shared leadership. ...There's no hierarchy as such and again that all comes down to trust. I trust that if parents have a problem or whatever here or something happens that everybody here can step in...

The recognition of the level of responsibility and the function of her role that the centre leader identified was also reflected in her comments about the need to ensure that everything that needed to be done in the centre was done and that the team kept moving forward in different areas.

S1.CL: I'm always looking for change to keep us moving. There's always momentum, I don't know how to explain that but we've always got a project and we're always talking about what we'd like to happen so there's always things happening that we all want to do...and it's just making sure I guess it's that responsibility again, making sure that all that other stuff is taken care of so that the team can be secure in the knowledge that they're working in a place that's safe and everything's right and if anybody walks in for an audit or does anything that it's all done.

Team was particularly valuable to S1.CL and she acknowledged the importance of working together, sharing responsibility and working within individual strengths. Along with supporting others' strengths the concept of giving people the chance to be "who they want to be" was also significant to the S1.CL.

S1.CL: I suppose too it's making sure that the strengths of everybody that you have in your team and um letting people be who they want to be. It's exactly the same as we do with our kids. You don't change the children so you don't change the adults do you. Or you shouldn't. ...Everybody's got a responsibility to the team as such so everybody's delegated certain tasks that they're good at. ...It's delegating, finding people's strengths and letting them run with that. Giving them that little bit more responsibility or something in that area. A decision is never made without it being discussed and everybody in agreement. And we'll support each other and nobody cares if it falls flat on its face.

The value placed on team by the centre leader was also reflected in the comments by the staff as they shared their experiences of servant leadership.

S1.B: We can't fathom working any other way because that's the way we all work together.

S1.C: I think you know each team person has to feel confident in themselves and have, I suppose, a respect for each other, you know each other in the team and I suppose have a fairly good feeling of well being. I mean none of us here worry about mistakes, or something that mightn't have worked out. No one

has a problem with that and talking about it with others and I think yeah it's getting those dynamics within the team that one is comfortable but then at the end of the day there has to be a leader.

As has been identified already parents, whānau and community are as much a part of the centre as the children and staff. The practice of servant leadership with parents is seen to be demonstrated through the development of respectful relationships with parents.

S1.CL: The most important thing is to build a trust relationship more so than with the child when they first walk in the door. I don't know whether it's because it's our, it could be our area, though I'd do it anywhere, but yeah our parents are quite wary sometimes when they walk in the door of how they're going to be accepted or whatever um and it's just respect. Again, it's just total respect. You're not better than that person at all.

S1.A: I think that comes back to the relationships that we build with the families. Yeah the children, the parents and extended family as well. And that contributes into our wider family as well, not just our kindergarten community. ...I think that relationships is probably the biggest one for us.

These relationships are developed through time taken to listen to parents, making them feel comfortable, greeting them when they arrive with their children and talking with them.

S1.CL: Informal talking with the parent constantly...we always greet them and find that thing in common...which could be their child or yeah, you just find something to start a conversation about. Little things that make them comfortable here.

The shared nature of team was evident as one of the participants of the focus group expressed the fact that when it came to working with parents, individual staff members recognised that sometimes some families will relate better to one teacher better than others.

S1.C I think we all basically have the same...aspirations and expectations for our children and we want to see that followed through. I think we all relate fairly, we all relate well to our families but there'll be you know how sometimes just one teacher clicks with a family more than the other one. We all recognise that, no of us has a problem with that.

The parents' perspective of how they experienced servant leadership based on a number of characteristics of the leader as servant identified in the literature was gained through the use of a questionnaire which had a mix of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The questionnaire was given to parents through the usual means of disseminating information within the centre. As stated previously the number of returned questionnaires was limited. The few responses gained from parents however suggested that what was significant for parents in terms of leadership was feeling like they were heard. Characteristics identified as being important for the leader to have were honesty, care, patience and reliability.

The overall ratings of staff in regard to the characteristics attributed to the practice of servant leadership suggested that parents perceived the centre staff to demonstrate all of the characteristics. These characteristics included caring; integrity; humility; honesty; courage; foresight; authenticity; persuasiveness; empowering others; listening; developing others; leading by example; patience; building trust; vision; working collaboratively; communicating clearly and displaying a sense of justice.

All but three of the overall ratings were positioned at the highest end of the scale showing that parents perceived staff to demonstrate the characteristics of servant leadership to a high degree. It could be argued that due to the role of teachers, these results may be influenced by the way staff are portrayed in their relationship with children in the centre rather than in ways specifically associated to the relationship and role of working with the parents directly.

While the centre leader said that what was espoused and what was demonstrated and experienced would “pretty much” align there were several barriers identified that made this alignment difficult.

Barriers to Servant leadership

From the data, the barriers to servant leadership could be divided into two categories; those barriers that were site related, and intrapersonal barriers (see table 4.1, p. 59).

Table 4.1 - Categories of Barriers to Servant Leadership: Site One

Category	Barriers
Site	Higher levels of management within the wider organisation Outside agencies Government Regulations Requirements Policies
Intrapersonal	Past experiences Lack of vision Lack of passion Egos Insecurities Power Control The desire to show off

The structure of the kindergarten meant that there was another layer of management above that which occurred in the actual centre. This level of management was seen to be one of the barriers to servant leadership.

S1.CL: Sometimes with management, sometime it's very hard too, if you have vision and motivation and everybody wants change and it just keeps getting stopped or you're not allowed to run with that or something it can become slightly frustrating.

S1.C: I don't think I as a staff member have any barriers in regards to going through my head teacher but there could be barriers and there are barriers higher up in the organisation. ...I believe that's because they're really just not at grass roots anymore. Once they're taken away from the floor and it doesn't take long to be out, off the floor, to really lose reality and you know it can be

quite hard with them sometimes suggesting things that you should be doing and it's...they need to be here for longer, not just for an hour or for two hours a day

Policies, regulations and requirements were viewed as barriers to servant leadership that did not necessarily come from within the centre itself. Other site related barriers were identified as coming from the influences of outside organisations and agencies that the centre is required to work with.

S1.A I mean I guess in the way of barriers ...I think there's those influences on the outside that come in like agencies and you know the more political kinds of things that have to come into it and yeah dealing with outside agencies that come in and they have a different way of dealing with things and so we have to try and adapt. But ...you can always get around things but in that sense it is just a barrier, you know you can overcome it. It's not set in stone, not like a brick wall.

One of the participants of the focus group acknowledged the role of politics and other social influences as potentially stopping a leader from being able to apply servant leadership in their practice as a result of the pressures put on them from these influences. This stimulated a discussion as to whether this was an assumed barrier rather than an actual barrier.

S1.A: I guess some leaders have influences you know like influences on them such as political, social influences, that like you say they have to meet targets or they have to achieve particular goals so at times this sort of thing [servant leadership] gets pushed to the

side in order to achieve what they have to achieve or to do.

S1.C: Well they believe that they can't achieve it using this form of leadership but they probably can.... You know it's all about trusting who you work with and ...believing in them and giving them opportunities to help you but they might not see it that way. They see that they need to be more...authoritative in their way rather than getting their team to participate in it.

Many of the barriers highlighted were not necessarily barriers the staff faced in their own centre but rather barriers they recognised from past experiences and observations of other environments. One participant (S1.B) told the story of an experience she had had as a reliever in another centre. She explained that she did not feel that staff members were able to function as a team because the centre leader made it clear that she was the boss and there was a "power down situation". This stopped the participant (S1.B) from wanting to apply for a permanent position in the centre as she did not feel that she could work under this type of leadership.

S1.B: In a situation like that you can't actually feel that you can sort of display leadership qualities because you're never allowed

This participant went on to express that as a result of being a relief teacher in a number of different centres with a lot of different head teachers she felt she had been able to recognise different qualities in each one and as a result take some of these qualities on board for herself. Her negative experiences while barriers at the time were also seen as having broken down the barriers now in terms of now being able to recognise what was important to her.

Another participant (S1.C) shared her dismay in seeing other teachers leave teaching because of their experiences of leadership.

S1.C: What I find really sad and I've seen it twice in my years of teaching ...and it's been caused by head teachers who haven't displayed any of the attributes and qualities of servant leadership, they have actually cost two I think very promising teachers their careers. And I think that is really really sad. They were two women who left teaching because they had so much pressure put on them they just decided this wasn't what it's all about and never really got a chance to work in another kindergarten to see that it doesn't have to be that way.

The intrapersonal aspects of power struggles, ego and insecurities were seen to be big barriers to the outworking of servant leadership.

Summary of Part One

Part One of this chapter has provided an analysis of the data results from the interview, focus group and questionnaires of Site One. It has sought to define and describe the espoused views of servant leadership and leadership in ECE, the connections between servant leadership and the New Zealand early childhood curriculum guidelines, *Te Whāriki*, the practice of servant leadership and the barriers to servant leadership.

The participants espoused that servant leadership involved certain responsibilities. These responsibilities could be identified in the themes of vision, example, commitment and the development of others. The espoused view of servant leadership also involved the concept of relationships where respect, empowerment,

community awareness and communication were important to this.

The paradoxical nature of servant leadership also became apparent in the data from the focus group where the word servant evoked different thoughts and opinions based on individual understandings.

The differences between the espoused views of servant leadership and leadership in early childhood were somewhat blurred with the ideas of relationships that involved trust, empathy, compassion and listening, and the development of people being identified as important characteristics of leadership in early childhood. There was also recognition of the need to establish relationship beyond the children and staff in the centre, to the parents and wider community. In defining and describing servant leadership participants were also able to identify connections between servant leadership and the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* through the theme of relationships and the need to treat others as unique individuals.

The centre leader's view that her role was a function and responsibility rather than a status was shared by the focus group as participants referred to the practice of servant leadership within their centre as being something that involved teamwork and the development of each other strengths.

The practice of servant leadership in regard to working with parents was described by the participants as being about developing respectful relationships with them and building trust so that parents felt comfortable in the centre. Responses from the parents through the use of questionnaires, although limited, showed that they rated characteristics of servant leadership demonstrated by the staff at the highest end of the scale with particular aspects of honesty, care,

patience, and reliability identified as being important.

The participants identified both site related and intrapersonal barriers to servant leadership suggesting that these barriers involved management at a higher level of the organisation, policies, regulations, and outside agencies, along with past experiences and attitudes of power and control influenced the outworking of servant leadership.

The conclusion of the analysis of Site One in Part One now leads to the analysis of the second site of the case study in Part Two.

PART TWO: SITE TWO

The second part of this chapter considers the data collected from site two of the case study. Site two has two centre leaders which enabled additional information from the centre leader perspective to be collected along with a slightly different view of leadership from the staff and parents' perspective.

Espoused Views of Servant Leadership

Four categories or espoused views of servant leadership were established from the coding of interview and focus group transcripts from Site Two. These categories were identified as spiritual, responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the leader.

Spiritual

While not a Christian centre, the participants' view on servant leadership were clearly linked to their own individual beliefs and worldview some of which came from a Christian foundation and therefore their definition was related to their

understanding of Jesus Christ who is often referred to as a model of servant leadership.

S2.CL.B: My first thought when I saw servant leadership was...what Jesus did with the disciples...how Jesus led the disciples was by teaching and encouraging and supporting and role modelling and you know all those sort of good perfect things.

S2.C: Jesus...his life was ...servant leadership wasn't it.

The spiritual foundations of the participants' perspectives of servant leadership clearly underpinned many of their views in relation to other aspects of their definition and description of servant leadership.

Responsibilities

In analysing the data from Site Two related to the responsibilities of the servant leader similar themes emerged to those from Site One; vision, example, and the development of others. Additional themes emerging from Site Two were decision making, authority and provision.

In defining and describing servant leadership vision was seen to be something that should be shared so as to have the team working together. This working together involved building a democracy where those in leadership positions worked alongside other members of staff and involved them in decision making.

S2.CL.B: I thought did it [servant leadership] mean like a democracy where staff and bosses make joint decisions.

While to some the idea of democracy could imply that there is no need for any sense of authority this was not the case in the views of the participants in Site Two of the case study. The participants of the focus group did not suggest that servant leadership involved an absence of authority but rather defined servant leadership as having authority with humility.

S2.C: I suppose I would define it as authority with humility... 'cause you're not trying to rule it over them, you're showing them the way. ...Authority without domination or control. You know the control that sort of squashes anyone else's ideas.

The idea of developing others was seen as a significant responsibility of servant leadership, "recognising potential in others and having the ability to draw that potential out of other people" (S2.CL.B). Along with the need to develop others was the need to be an example and to be a role model.

S2.D. If you just read the words, I would assume that it would be someone who is willing to do what they expect of others.

The first centre leader interviewed also saw the role of a servant leader as providing for the staff. This was described as she explained her view of their responsibilities of both her and the other centre leader and was particularly expressed in terms of financial support.

S2.CL.A: Because we are the owners, directors, we don't really have a title for ourselves ...it was up to us to provide financial support needed for the staff.

Participant S2.B suggested that servant leadership is about breaking down the barriers between owners/managers and staff so that everyone was on the same wavelength. While this could be seen as a responsibility it also points to the need to develop relationships as part of being a servant leader.

Relationships

Relationships were seen to play a significant role in defining servant leadership with many characteristics identified that impact the way people work together. Emphasised within the interviews and focus group sessions were concepts of being a good listener, showing respect, being aware of others, support, encouragement, empathy, trust, building community and developing a sense of belonging. These characteristics along with others could be categorised into the emerging themes of respect, empowerment, community awareness, and communication.

Participant S2.CL.A identified respect as being something that was extremely important and what they valued in the centre. She talked about respect not only for each other but also for the environment and the children. This same participant also talked about the altruistic quality of having empathy for others and being aware of others.

S2.CL.A: Empathy is quite an important characteristic ...'cause this job can be quite a stressful job so you need to be aware of what's happening in people's lives.

To demonstrate many of these qualities that help to develop relationships also requires many different personal characteristics and qualities. These personal qualities could be used to describe the personal character of a servant leader.

The Person who is the Servant Leader

The personal and inner qualities of a person cannot be overlooked in defining and describing servant leadership. The focus here is on the person who is the servant leader. Emerging themes from the interview and focus group transcripts were linked to a number of attributes that a servant leader might have such as integrity, humility, altruism and fairness.

As stated previously, a participant in the focus group suggested that if the responsibility of a servant leader was to have authority then this should be carried out with humility. In the interview with one of the centre leaders, this idea of humility being a necessary attribute of a servant leader was also identified.

S2.CL.B: Humility would be a big thing, not having this I'm the boss attitude.

One of the participants of the focus group (S2.A) suggested altruistic qualities such as kindness, charity and patience were three characteristics of a servant leader. Participant S2.B suggested that compassion was another attribute that a servant leader would have. The concept of integrity was important with honesty identified as a character quality.

Espoused views of leadership in ECE

As was the case for Site One, there are a number of similarities between the espoused views of servant leadership and the espoused views of leadership in ECE. These similarities related to the concepts of responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the leader and a number of the emerging themes from the transcripts. Shared decision making, community awareness, communication, being an example, commitment and empathy were all important characteristics of

leadership in ECE highlighted by the centre leaders.

S2.CL.A: I think that allowing everybody to share in the decision making, that sort of collaborative community thing happening. Probably that respect for each other. And being able to communicate as well, communication.

S2.CL.B: Having an understanding of the sort of job that you're asking people to do. ...I guess for me role modelling would be a huge part of being a good leader. If you can role model the level of competence and commitment that you would want your staff to come in with. ...But then it's all those relational things like ...being a good communicator, having empathy ...not losing your cool when they do something wrong. And not necessarily seeing things as being done wrong but seeing things as maybe partly done. ...Just valuing other people and respecting other people and respecting the children you're working with, the parents you know the whole thing.

Patience, respect, passion for what they do, fairness and open mindedness were also some of the characteristics of a leader in ECE identified by participants in the focus group. When asked why the participants thought these characteristics were important the following comments were made:

S2.C: Because they bring out the best in everybody don't they. If you've got someone who is unkind to you that's not going to be helpful to your work. You want to come to work and you want to be happy at work. ...And if things are shaky or unpleasant or...

S2.A: Sets a solid foundation for everyone.

S2.B: Yeah you know you've got to be able to deal with people ...especially in this industry ...you're involved with so many people all the time you have to be able to understand or try and understand where they're coming from and not take the moral high ground.

S2.D: I find it easier to respect somebody when they're kind and understanding but have that sense of authority you know, it's almost like security I suppose in a sense 'cause you know where you stand.

Authority was once again seen to be something that is necessary for a leader to have. One participant even went as far as saying that a certain level of assertiveness from the leader was required.

S2.B: I think they need to have assertiveness as well, you know, when something is wrong they need to be able to tell the staff that it's wrong.

In asking for clarification of the way this participant was defining assertiveness, the response from the participants was as follows:

S2.C: Authority without being threatened. If someone comes to you and something is wrong, not be threatened so that they're not ...reactive.

S2.B: Yea so not power and control but um...

S2.C: They are the boss.

S2.B: Yeah, they are the boss ... there is regardless of whether they want to be or not there still needs to be some form of division there ...I think so anyway.

S2.C: Because that's safe for us isn't it. That's a boundary for us. They're the boss and they need to be the boss and if something needs to be sorted out they sort it out.

A sense of safety and security was one of the reasons that authority was deemed to be necessary, along with knowing where one stood.

Connections between Servant Leadership and *Te Whāriki*

The centre leaders in Site Two both found connections between the principles of *Te Whāriki* and servant leadership in ECE. The strongest connection was seen to be the focus on family and community, relationships and communication.

S2.CL.B: For me *Te Whāriki* is the most beautiful document because it's all so strongly related to needs like we all need to feel like we belong, we all want to contribute, we all want to be part of the communication, we all want to have a sense of well being. All those things, not only for the children but for the teachers, for the parents and whanau, everybody ...it looks at respect, looks at nurturing, it looks at learning but it's all interwoven. ...If you have that respect for those around you ...for me it goes back to

that love one another ...It's all the sorts of things that Jesus said do ...you know to the best of your ability, do them, and if we could do them all and do them all consistently then we would be awesome leaders, we'd be awesome servants, we'd be awesome people all round and for me we would be ticking every single box in *Te Whāriki* because we would be recognising the potential in each other and in the children.

Underpinning this viewpoint were the Christian beliefs of the centre leader and her recognition of a spiritual foundation to the concept of servant leadership. Following Jesus Christ's example of servant leadership and loving one another was seen to be something that would enable quality servant leadership and the ability to meet all aspects of *Te Whāriki*.

Participants in the focus group also recognised the links between servant leaders developing a sense of belonging within the centre and the emphasis on belonging, relationships, family and community and holistic development in *Te Whāriki*.

The Practice of Servant Leadership

The practice of servant leadership in Site Two was significantly influenced by the fact that there were two centre leaders. Differences in leadership styles led to the way servant leadership was demonstrated and experienced being varied and all participants acknowledged these differences. Despite these differences there were also some similarities in the way both centre leaders viewed their own leadership styles. Both highlighted the fact that they saw themselves as role models, desired to be supportive and valued relationships.

Both centre leaders were open and honest as they shared the way they viewed their own leadership styles.

S2.CL.A: I would like to think I was a motivator, good role model within the team. I'm a quiet person, I sort of, if someone comes with a problem I really like them to try and work it, work with them to find a solution rather than that dictator sort of yeah. I hope I'm supportive but realise that's very much a reciprocal relationship to everybody. I don't have all the answers and people don't expect me to. I'm learning as much as they are.

S2.CL.B. I really try hard to role model the sort of behaviour ... I mean that's a huge thing for me because I hate confrontation. I also, I'm not very good at delegating because I sort of think why should I ask them to do it when I could do it. And yeah sometimes that's quite justified but most of the time I just do it myself because I haven't got long to ask them to do it sort of thing and I really recognise that and so I'll run myself into the ground doing things and trying to be what I think I should be and I find it very very tiring at my age to keep doing that. So ...I need to recognise that more within myself that yes it's good to be a role model but if you collapse who's going to step in you know. So I guess recognising just how much I can do and how much I can't yet do. You know, it's not necessarily that I'll never do it but when somebody else may be able to do it way way better than I can. So it's recognising that ...asking somebody to do something is not necessarily because you are lazy and don't want to do it. ...I'm very task oriented. ...What is of value to me is

getting the job done while at the same time getting the main job done ... which is bringing the kids up and looking after the kids and ...that sort of thing. So I struggle to get a balance there and I find that very very difficult because I am so task focussed. ...

It is clear that the second centre leader was aware of her strengths and weaknesses and how this influenced her practice. She recognised that being task orientated led to some struggles however it was clear that her desire was to do the best by and for the staff of the centre. The tendency to do things by herself and not ask for help was something that had obviously been experienced by staff in practice.

S2.D: I have grown heaps since I've been here and sort of come into my own since being here but there are times where you would, you kind of feel you don't let me do that, just let me do it. You look like you're trying to do everything, just go away and let me do it.

Both centre leaders indicated that when they first established the centre they had agreed that they did not want to have a dictatorship. This was made particularly clear by the following comments:

S2.CL.B: When we first set this place up we said we're not going to have a dictatorship because we've all worked under dictators and we were not going to go there. We were going to have a place where the staff would be respected and listened to and we would encourage them to do stuff around the place to make it their place. ...We would look after them when they studied, we'd look after them when they or their family were sick ...we would see

them as people. We weren't going into business to make a million dollars. ...We were going into business so that we could give a service that was a really comfortable relational service rather than a money providing service.

This desire to look after the staff and support them when family were sick was clearly something that was more than just talk. Comments made by the participants during the focus group session showed that the staff are indeed supported in a number of situations.

S2.B: I know for myself, my partner has been quite sick this year and they've been very understanding of that in allowing me to have a lot of time off and so that I can deal with that part of my private life you know without it completely interrupting my job and me having to go and find another job ...they've been very compassionate about my circumstances.

S2.C: That is an area where I think they are very good actually, understanding if we need time off or if we want to go on a holiday for something special and they even give us our birthday off which is the most brilliant present that anyone could give.

Also expressed by the centre leader was the aspiration to share responsibilities and give staff opportunities to develop and utilise their strengths. This was carried out by allowing staff to take responsibility for choosing which tasks they would do around the centre each day rather than being told. This required open communication and a willingness for staff to take some sort of ownership over what happened in the centre.

S2.CL.A: It's giving them that sense of responsibility that they will do something rather than saying you're on outside all this week. ...And to try and open those lines of communication so we can talk to each other, "I'm busy doing this, can you help with this?"

A story was told by S2.CL.B about a child who has been attending the centre that cries a lot and how they had modelled a particular way of working with this child according to their philosophy, explaining the reasons behind what they did, "leading them into a new way of doing something." This supported the espoused views of being a role model and setting an example for others.

The differences in personalities and leadership styles of the centre leaders clearly impacted the staff as participants shared the confusion that was caused as a result of the different styles and the unease that this can sometimes cause.

S2.D: Sometimes the confusion can come because we have two owners that manage very differently. They have different views on management. ...I believe that people can behave differently and practice differently but still get the same view so that's maybe where it's lacking ...I sometimes kinda feel like they have a slightly different view or different ideas about what's going on so it's very easy as a staff member to be like if you don't know then how am I going to know.

Authority was espoused to be an important characteristic of both servant leadership and leadership in ECE and this was something that one of the participants suggested they would like to see more of in practice.

S2.B: They need to at times take charge and have that little bit of division between us and them so we do know where we stand.

One area of practice that both the centre leaders and participants of the focus group appeared to be in particular agreement about was the practice of servant leadership with parents and family of the centre. Examples were given of whānau (family) evenings they had held where parents were able to share their ideas about what they wanted to happen within the centre and what they thought they could do with the children that was related to the focus of the centre at the time.

S2.CL.A: They came up with some fantastic ideas ...things that I wouldn't have thought of so I feel that's a good example of our families feeling like they can contribute to their child's learning. Making sure we know them really well and they're all really excited and on board with it now so there's a lot of communication.

S2.CL.A: We have quite few parent whanau nights and celebrations ...where the parents are invited and we get a really good turnout. And ...we had a parent teacher meeting just a couple of weeks ago and at that we shared from teaching perspective why we do the things we do but then we also had open discussions, like small group discussions with all the parents. ...And when parents come in they tend to hang around quite a bit at the end of the day and chat and so that's a really good opportunity to be sharing, for them to share any concerns or for us to share any concerns. And because we have quite a good relationship with all our parents if there are ...behavioural concerns we've got their trust to a degree where we can actually

point out inappropriate behaviour and work out strategies to cope with it at home and here and so that's a hugely important thing to be able to do.

S2.C: If we have a parent evening or something, we have an amazing turnout.

Centre leader S2.CL.A told a story of a child's father helping to rebuild the vegetable garden at the centre which to them was a sign that he feels that he can come in and offer his time. She pointed out that they greatly valued these sorts of relationships.

The willingness of staff to serve the parents of the centre was clearly expressed by the way in which staff took the time to wash children's clothes when necessary.

S2.A: If the children get their clothes dirty they get washed and dried. ...And everybody listens to the parents ...and takes up any concern and I would think that that's pretty strong, it's a strength.

Espoused views of listening to others as an important aspect of servant leadership and leadership in ECE were illustrated in practice by the commitment staff showed to listening to parents and taking time to value the input that parents had in the centre.

S2.C: They've actually come in and said it's wonderful because I can come in here and can offload and you listened. That was one thing wasn't it. Everybody knows the families, everyone knows their needs.

S2.B: We value the input that they can give us because they are these children's parents you know and the parents see that from us, that we value the input that they can put into the centre.

Responses to the questionnaire were higher in number for this centre with a return rate of 30% or nine out of 30 questionnaires returned. The responses gained from these questionnaires showed that the parents valued integrity, patience, care, honesty, trust, knowledge, understanding, and approachability as being important for leadership within early childhood. Parents also indicated that professionalism, keeping the best interests of their children in mind, and staff enjoying their work and being involved, were significant aspects of leadership for them.

The overall ratings of characteristics of servant leadership as practised by staff suggested that parents perceived the centre staff to demonstrate all of the characteristics. Parents perceived the caring nature of the staff to be the characteristic most demonstrated. This was closely followed by being authentic, listening, developing others and building trust. The lowest ratings, but still above 4 on the rating scale were the characteristics of displaying courage and being persuasive. It is interesting to note that the higher rated characteristics were more closely aligned to the concepts of relationships and the person who is the leader whereas the lower two relate to the responsibilities of the servant leader.

Examples given as to how the staff displayed some of the characteristics above included examples of having vision, being caring, developed and empowered others, communication, listening and building trust. In reading the examples given by parents in the questionnaires, it became obvious that their experiences of the different ways staff demonstrated the characteristics of servant leadership were closely related to their view of how their children were treated and cared for

within the centre rather than how the parents themselves were treated. Two parents however, shared of the way in which they were made to feel welcome in the centre and use parent evenings to allow parents to be involved in the planning of the centre programme. This last idea supports the data provided by both the centre leaders and the participants of the focus group.

In sharing their perception and experiences of servant leadership in practice, it was clear that there were a number of barriers that prevented or inhibited the outworking of the espoused views of servant leadership.

Barriers to Servant Leadership

As was the case for Site One, the barriers to servant leadership could be divided into two categories; site related and intrapersonal barriers, as seen in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 – Categories of Barriers to Servant Leadership: Site Two

Category	Barriers
Site	Different leadership styles of owners Administrative processes Time Miscommunication Lack of communication Relationship differences Specific friendships within team Past experiences
Intrapersonal	Perceived hurts Being human Personal experiences

While possibly related to having two centre leaders and the need for a certain level of authority to exist in the centre, one of the participants commented that the leadership could be “a bit hierarchical at times” (S2.C.). This was viewed as a barrier and created some discussion among the participants of the focus group.

S2.D: It’s a hard one aye, ‘cause it’s almost both things at once. It’s the whole practise what you’re preaching but there are times where there is a ladder if that makes sense. It’s both at the same time.

S2.B: Some of that also comes back to the different leadership qualities of the two of them. ‘Cause you’ll get different responses from both of them. Not that it plays them off against each other or anything but yeah there’s definitely, they’ve both got very different ideals on things.

S2.C: And sometimes you do something that you know that is backing one and you feel pretty disapproval stamp from the other.

The participants’ comments about the different leadership styles also showed that having two people in the leadership role within the centre was also a barrier. This dual leadership is created by both of the centre leaders being the owners of the centre. As well as the focus group participants seeing this as a barrier, the centre leaders also recognised that having two leaders could create some difficulties.

S2.CL.A: I think some of the barriers are having two of us [centre leaders] in that sort of ownership role.

Having two different leaders also lead to the barrier of communication issues that resulted in confusion or mixed messages. Other aspects of communication were also seen as a barrier to servant leadership. The lack of communication between staff was seen to have a direct impact on the messages that parents were able to receive about their children.

S2.D: A barrier can be lack of communication because if you're not communicating and getting a reasonable sound idea of a child you can have different opinions about a child and that can create barriers with parents 'cause they could be hearing from one teacher how great they are and from another teacher how they need these behaviours sorted out. So, communication is a huge barrier.

An essential and unavoidable role of a centre leader is the processing and completion of administration tasks. For S2.CL.A, this was seen to sometimes get in the way of being able to practise servant leadership wholeheartedly as it was difficult to find a balance between meeting the requirements of completing tasks and being able to work with the children and staff. Finding the time to do all that was required was also seen to be a barrier.

S2.CL.A: Sometimes I think my biggest challenge is because I have to do all the accounts and the financial side of things, finding the balance between working with the children and yeah. ...Sometimes there's just not enough hours in the day to feel like you can stop and think about how things are going.

One of the barriers identified could be seen to have both site related and intrapersonal influences. This barrier is that of the past experiences of staff which can then contribute to the understanding individuals have of leadership and the attitudes they have toward it.

S2.CL.A: The other barrier I guess is staff that have come from other centres where it has been quite a, you know, the boss in the office telling you what to do, so it's almost been building their trust that yes we do value your input and you can do things but it can happen that way. ...Jobs or situations they've been in would probably be the biggest barrier.

The nature of ECE means that teamwork is involved and therefore relationships are a central aspect of the job. This brings with it potential for strong friendships to be formed on one hand but on the other hand tensions can also develop between people. Relationships with others were seen to be a barrier to servant leadership.

S2.CL.B: I think relationally, because we are all very different I might get on really well with a staff member on a, you know the sort of person I'd go kayaking with in the weekend or we'd have lots of laughs with and I'm happy to work with everybody else it's not that I don't like everybody else, but me and this one just really click. And that can cause barriers because then the other staff can feel left out. ...You tend to share with that person not only your personal life but also a lot of the work issues and that can become almost like gossip which is a terrible terrible thing in early childhood. All these women in one place, it's shocking and

yeah for me that would be the biggest barrier, perceived hurts. ...I think we've got a great team and I think we've got fairly open communication but that sort of thing [perceived hurts] still happens in this team. Friendships are still seen as a threat. Strong individual friendships are still seen as a threat. So for me ...I think the biggest barrier would be perceived hiccups within relationships.

While people's intentions may be good, this does not stop others from getting hurt and sometimes perception is greater than reality, particularly in a team environment.

To sum up her view of the barriers to servant leadership, S2.CL.B suggested that the biggest barrier would be simply that we are all human and as a result we are all influenced by a number of surrounding influences.

S2.CL.B: Barriers, the fact that we're human would be the biggest one I think ...we're all human and we all try to do the best we can with what we've got but on any one day we might not have a lot going for us and other days we have tonnes going for us so the barriers are maybe a bit less some days than others. ...For me, theory is always very cut and dried and practice is always very grey ...in a perfect world everything would flow just as the books say it would but it doesn't because we're all individuals. We all have good days and bad days and all that sort of thing. We may have issues at home, we may have issues with staff here for a time that is sort of niggling at us and therefore causing us to be not as onto our game as we should be.

Despite the number of barriers identified, it was pointed out that because we are human we can only do our best and some days that will be better than others.

S2.CL.B: If the effort is there to do it and if you arrive at work and you've decided you're going to be at work body, soul, spirit ...and you're going to be here and doing the best you can with what you've got and with how you're feeling today then that's the best you can do. I think you can only do the best you can do on the day... I think in theory it's all really really good and in practice I think you've just got to be real and accept that some days it doesn't go the way you want it to.

Summary of Part Two

Part Two of this chapter has provided an overview of the data results as related to Site Two of the case study. Once again it has provided a definition and description of the espoused views of servant leadership and leadership in ECE as presented through the interviews and focus groups. Consideration has also been given to the responses participants gave in relation to connections made with *Te Whāriki*, the practice of servant leadership and barriers to servant leadership.

Categories established through the analysis of data pertaining to espoused views of servant leadership were spiritual, responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the servant leader. Within the spiritual category was the recognition of Jesus Christ as a servant leader. Additional to the responsibilities of servant leadership identified in Site One were decision making, authority and provision. Similar characteristics to Site One in regard to relationships were identified by the participants of Site Two with community awareness also considered.

The participants of Site Two also placed a focus on the person who is the servant leader in their espoused views, considering integrity, humility, altruism and fairness to be important aspects of servant leadership.

Espoused views of leadership in early childhood were very similar to those of servant leadership, once again focusing on responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the leader. Connections were seen to exist between servant leadership and *Te Whāriki* and for one of the participants this was also underpinned by their spiritual foundations and the concept of loving one another.

The practice of servant leadership was seen to be influenced by the fact that there are two centre leaders. While both genuinely sought to be examples of servant leadership and align their espoused views with their practice, they both acknowledged that this was not always possible. The comments from the centre leaders about their practice were supported by the comments from the participants in the focus group however there was also some variation between the opinions of the centre leaders and the staff based on experiences. These differences were generally tied to the different ways in which each of the centre leaders led and the way this was experienced. Questionnaire responses from the parents identified the altruistic nature of staff as being something they experienced within the centre.

Site related and intrapersonal barriers to servant leadership were identified and once again one of the biggest barriers was the differences in leadership style between the two leaders. Different types of relationship were also believed to be a significant barrier with individual's perceived hurts connected to this.

PART THREE: SITE THREE

Part three of this chapter considers the data from the interview, focus group and questionnaires of Site Three. Despite sending questionnaires out more than once, the response rate for this site was the lowest with only two out of 30 (7%) of the questionnaires returned. This therefore had a significant impact on the data results from parents in relation to their perception and experience of servant leadership.

This centre is a Christian centre that employs all Christian staff therefore their philosophy and programme reflects Christian principles and practices.

Espoused views of servant leadership

The participants of Site Three had their own personal Christian faith which provided a worldview that shaped their values, beliefs and opinions. It was not surprising therefore that one of the categories identified was spiritual. Other categories identified in the data from this site included responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the servant leader.

Spiritual

The first response in the focus group, when asked to define servant leadership, was of a spiritual nature, acknowledging the participants' belief that they were a servant of God and that He was the source of everything.

S3.A: First and foremost I'm a servant of God and I believe everything flows through from God as far as work goes, through the leaders, through us and so I'm serving God and Jesus is God's servant and so you know I do from what the Bible says and everything flows.

The participants saw the role of a servant leader as representing who God is through being an example of Christian values and beliefs. They also acknowledged that for them Jesus Christ set an example of how to be a servant leader.

S3.E: Be an ambassador of Christ, role modelling values and beliefs to the community.

For the participants of the focus group they saw servant leadership so inextricably linked to their personal faith that they found it difficult to see how the principles of servant leadership could be outworked by those who did not have a personal faith.

S3.D: To me the word servant can only come from Christian, from Jesus, the example is Jesus. And if you haven't got him as an example, what have they got? That's just, I strongly believe that.

S3.B: For us it's internal. The Holy Spirit is the one who keeps us in check or gives us the graciousness or whatever it might be.

Responsibilities

In considering the spiritual nature of servant leadership and the belief that the participants had in terms of following the example of Jesus Christ, there was recognition that Jesus was authoritative and therefore participants saw one of the responsibilities of servant leaders as demonstrating a certain level of authority.

S3.D: I think defining a servant leader is someone who is Christ-like and it may not mean that the person has to, is going to be nicey

pie all the time, there has to be some authority in what they say sometimes and the characteristics for me is the wisdom, using wisdom when it's needed with the authority. Because sometimes you can't always be friends ...and having Jesus as our example in that area he had to be authoritative sometimes didn't he, with love.

The centre leader also expressed a need to maintain some sense of authority with the staff.

S3.CL: That still needs to be there yeah it does because when you come up with issues which you always do, you've got to have that respect and getting them to listen to what you've got to say. ...Most of it I think is from valuing them, making them know that they're valued in the centre and their work is you know, even though they are all completely different and what they do and you know someone might have a huge weakness in some area but it's finding what their strength is and valuing that strength and really focussing on that. And yeah just giving them tasks. There's things that I purposely 'cause I'm not a good delegator, I'd rather just do it all myself but things like for instance policies, finding someone that is really into policies and giving them that task to take on and if that's their strength then they are ...flattered isn't the right word but they feel really privileged to have been asked to do it and it just gives them a sense of belonging and ...so I think it comes down to valuing what they bring into the centre.

Leading by example was identified as another responsibility and participants suggested that it was important that this was done without complaint. Part of setting an example included filling needs wherever the leader could and doing some of the less popular tasks. This was also seen as fulfilling the responsibility of service by taking time to serve others in the team.

S3.B. [A servant leader] leads by example, willing to do the undesirable jobs ...good role model and serving others.

The category of developing others arose from the data. This was particularly evident as the participants proposed that a servant leader should provide the opportunity for people to take risks and sometimes let them fail in order to help them grow.

Relationships

Relationships were clearly important to the participants from Site Three and this was evident on the emphasis they placed on this when sharing their espoused views of servant leadership. These views were able to be categorised into areas of respect, open mindedness, communication and empowerment.

For the centre leader, seeing the worth in others, and showing respect were significant aspects of servant leadership. Respect also included being thoughtful and putting others' needs above one's own. This was closely linked to the responsibility of giving others the opportunity to take risks, enabling others to develop their sense of self-worth by trying things out for themselves. It was suggested that this would also require tolerance, particularly if someone did fail at what they were doing.

To show tolerance requires a level of open mindedness. Being open minded also involves a certain amount of diplomacy and can lead to forgiveness of others. In discussing this, the participants also highlighted the need for aspects of communication such as listening and negotiation.

S3.A: Christ-like but also on top of that diplomatic, diplomacy ...you know a great negotiator, listening and understanding.

Empowerment was another category identified in the data and included concepts of being understanding, and encouraging others.

Aspects associated with the area of relationships can also be seen in some of the character attributes relevant to the person who is the servant leader.

The person who is the servant leader

From both the interview and the focus group, it was clear that the various attributes and qualities of the person who is the servant leader were seen to be significant aspects of servant leadership for the participants. The centre leader considered graciousness to be important. This concept was also supported by one of the participants of the focus group.

S3.B: [A servant leader is] gracious, wise, encouraging, is a learner, is forgiving.

Other attributes considered to be of importance for a servant leader by the participants were honesty, trust, values and beliefs, kindness, forgiveness, and being reflective. These attributes could be categorised into concepts of integrity, altruism, being a learner, wisdom and fairness.

Espoused Views of Leadership in ECE

As was the case with Sites One and Two, there were a number of similarities between the espoused views of servant leadership and the espoused views of leadership in ECE. The viewpoints of the participants were able to be categorised into three categories; responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the leader. Emerging themes relating to the idea of responsibilities were community, empowerment, communication and awareness.

There was recognition that leadership in ECE involves administrative tasks as well as working with people and therefore depending on whether there is administrative support or not the leader has a responsibility to fulfil these tasks.

S3.CL: I think if you're talking about a head teacher I think there has to be very much the task focused as well. It depends on what roles you encompass. Because I've got all the admin work as well then I do need to be task focussed as well but if I was just purely managing and I had an administrator and the head teachers then it would only need to be people focussed.

Being people focussed was also seen as a significant aspect of servant leadership with the need to develop relationships through building a sense of community and empowerment. Treating others well and building a strong team were deemed to be essential aspects of leadership in ECE.

S3.A: Treating others, treat a person how you'd like to be treated and coming under authority yourself even if you're a leader

S3.CL: From my perspective and I guess it comes from because of who I am though, people have a different perspective depending on how they work, but for me it's building that team. That's always been my biggest focus is your team ...and I guess in other cases it depends on who you've got working with you as well. Like if I had a really good, if one of my head teachers for example was a really good team builder and I didn't need to focus on that so much and that wasn't my skills then maybe it would be the financial control but in my case I sort of find it is the morale and everything sort of flows out of that.

In describing the qualities necessary for building a team the centre leader related back to what she had said about the characteristics of a servant leader.

S3.CL: It's giving them that self worth ...Gaining their trust and respect. ...I think the ones I brought out ...were the people, leading people, people orientated ones. ...It's being able to motivate them and just finding different ways of doing that. It's getting to know ...it's understanding your team, knowing where their strengths and weaknesses are so you can build them up in their strong areas so they do feel valued and you know take ownership of the centre as well.

Communication and awareness were also considered as important aspects of relationships and involved being aware of the needs of others, listening to and encouraging others.

S3.C: Understanding the centre's needs, being an encourager, being organised, a good communicator, enthusiastic ...a good listener, even tempered, and for a principal teacher I think it helps if they are a trained early childhood teacher.

The need to be trained was reflected in the comment below as the person who is the leader was described as needing to have knowledge of the bigger picture of ECE. Being enthusiastic and even tempered as highlighted above, along with being calm and considerate were also attributes considered to be important for a leader in ECE.

S3.E: Considerate, calm and knowledgeable, but knowledge in many senses, so knowledge of survival, knowledge of the teachers, the children and the whole system, the whole early childhood system.

Connections between Servant Leadership and *Te Whāriki*

Both the centre leader and staff identified links between the concepts of servant leadership and *Te Whāriki*.

S3.C: I think that it fits really well with *Te Whāriki* because with servant leadership you've got people working together not against each other. I don't know, that's how I see it and that's what *Te Whāriki* is all about, weaving.

The participants recognised that the principle of family and community and the strands of well-being, belonging, communication and contribution found in the curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) fit well with their espoused views of servant leadership.

The Practice of Servant Leadership

In describing her own leadership role the centre leader highlighted the relational aspects of her practice in terms of building a team and motivating others.

S3.CL: Much what I've been saying, team builder and a motivator. I'm very people focused, very team focused and yeah. Making sure that ...'cause I think that if you've got a good team that are communicating well between each other, communicating well with their head teachers and that then you've got a really good combination for everything else to be working. So yeah, probably team builder. Team builder and a motivator.

Throughout the interview and focus group session there was a significant focus on the idea of team by both the centre leader and the staff participants. The centre leader talked of the strategies she used to develop her relationships with the staff, highlighting the need to spend time with them, have fun and create a relaxed environment.

S3.CL: On a day to day level things like just getting yourself out of the office and coming out and just chatting with them casually and genuinely being interested in what's going on with them. You know and there's times when you get out there in summer and have a water fight and things like that so you're creating that relaxed environment as well so that they do feel open to be able to tell you when there are issues. So if you've got a relaxed environment then they can see you as having a bit of fun as well and approachable then I think they can then also, they find it easier to approach you if they've got issues. So yeah on a day to

day basis it would be that type of thing and you know when sand is delivered, getting out and shovelling sand with them instead of sitting in your office saying you do this and I'll do that. And then the other thing that I'm big on is our team building events.

The centre leader told the story of an event she had organised where the team went away for the weekend to do some professional development. Included in this time was also a social aspect where the staff went ten pin bowling and enjoyed a meal out at a restaurant. During this time she did all the cooking herself which the staff appreciated. The reason she gave for cooking was as below:

S3.CL: You know they work hard all year for me, well not for me, but you know, and then for me to work hard just for a weekend to give them a rest and a break 'cause a lot of them are busy, they're studying, they've got families, they're working, and not even having to think about being in the kitchen and you know just being treated I think they did really appreciate it. Well they said they appreciated it even. ...It's to do it in appreciation for what they do for you instead of I want to get something out of them. You know I want them to work harder so I'm going to do this for them. It's more so it's not doing it to see what you can get in the future from them it's doing it for appreciation of what they've done.

As the staff discussed their experiences of servant leadership in the centre, it was soon clear by their comments that the work done by the centre leader in building team had been successful and the staff were comfortable and happy working together in this way.

S3.A: It's so easy, there's no, in general, there's no like cattiness things like that ...it's just an easy place to work in.

It appeared that this sense of team was also the result of characteristics such as graciousness and respect being shown toward each other.

S3.B: Being gracious in our nuttiness, being gracious to each other's faults probably, yeah, trying to bypass them.

S3.C: Respecting each other I think too, we have a lot of respect for each other.

S3.E: We thrive and learn from each other.

While acknowledging the fact that they were part of a team and were given the opportunity to use their initiative, there was still recognition of the importance of considering the centre leader and respecting them in their role.

S3.B: I think we've got a free hand with you know we can use our initiative and we're not having to run to the boss for everything because we know, we know we're part of the team so, we're part of a team but we still appreciate that top person.

This sense of being part of a team enabled staff to recognise opportunities for them to practice servant leadership and recognised each other's strengths without feeling threatened.

S3.CL: Definitely with each other and with the children and their parents. I think as a Christian centre that should really be quite a big focus between staff rather than any sort of rivalry between them it should be more that they are wanting to ...and I see it in things like behaviour management, just backing each other up and that sort of thing. You know if one teacher is particularly good with behaviour management of one child and the others are struggling a bit or something they don't see it as a threat ...they don't see it as a failure on their behalf. I guess it's just that that teacher's good with that particular child and therefore they'll take that child to that teacher that can deal with them and things like that. I think that's a way of serving the others by helping them where your strengths are.

When discussing the ways in which servant leadership is demonstrated with parents and whanau, the centre leader and staff were in agreement. The centre leader proposed that this was somewhat harder than with staff as they were not in the centre as much. Despite this there was a strong sense that building trusting relationships with parents was essential. This was done through communication, taking time to talk and listen to parents on a regular basis.

S3.CL: It's a harder area [practising servant leadership with parents] I would have to admit because you've got your staff here all the time so there's always opportunities but with the parents it's harder to find those opportunities. I always have my door open first thing in the morning so that they can, well I try also to have times where I'm standing at the door and greeting them, so it's just being welcoming and listening. You get parents come in and

tell you what happened day or night with their child, how they slept and whatever and you're sort of thinking I've got more important things to be doing but it's listening to that so it's building those relationships and ...no it is a lot more difficult than with your staff I think. ...It's time more than anything. You know the times of day that they come in is quite a busy time and you've sort of got to almost plan that time to set aside for them.

S3.C: We listen to and talk with parents in a positive way. Build a trusting relationship with them. I think that if we're not professional with how we talk to them as well we're not going to build that trust.

The commitment to building healthy relationships with parents was evident by the way in which the centre had a specific whanau liaison role to provide more formalised programmes for parents along with the opportunity for parents to have relaxed coffee mornings with other parents.

S3.CL: Within the centre with [one of the staff] with her role as the whanau liaison I would say the majority of our parents feel really really comfortable in the centre. She has coffee mornings and she gets quite a good turn out to that. That's every week and they just pop in for 10 minutes or pop in for the whole morning. It builds up the relationships with the parents, between parents as well, which is really important. And then she's got the toolbox parenting and we run parent nights. So we always get a really good turnout which indicates to me that we're doing something right.

The participants made a point of highlighting the need for integrity in the way they demonstrated servant leadership, suggesting that they needed to show the characteristics of servant leadership both when parents were in the centre and out of the centre.

S3.B. They see and hear us when they come in so we need to have that servanthood while they're not there but also when they come in because they can see. They're not stupid and they're not dumb. They can also hear and they can sense also.

The two parents that returned the questionnaires showed that they felt the staff of the centre demonstrated the identified qualities of servant leadership in all areas, rating each attribute at the higher end of the scale. Just as the staff saw the importance of having integrity, so too did one of the parents. This was evident in the comments on the questionnaire.

: I love this kindy for my daughter, one of their main differences is their integrity and leading by example. ...There's such a strong sense of respect between the staff, it's great. Through this the kids are so secure and happy, my daughter loves going.

Barriers to Servant Leadership

As with Sites One and Two the barriers to the practice of servant leadership were categorised into site related and intrapersonal barriers (see Table 4.3, p. 101).

Table 4.3 – Categories of Barriers to Servant Leadership: Site Three

Category	Barriers
<p style="text-align: center;">Site</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Relationships Different personalities Time Administration tasks Policies Guidelines Professional boundaries Job descriptions Responsibilities </p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Intrapersonal</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Human nature Staff trying to prove themselves Cattiness Pride </p>

In sharing her thoughts about the practice of servant leadership in the centre, the centre leader suggested that as the centre had grown and more staff had come on board the ability to align her espoused views of servant leadership with her practice was becoming more difficult.

S3.CL: On a good day it generally is, I think with opening the new centre and getting busier, with more staff and things like that I now have to try and be a lot more purposeful. I think that while we were still small and half a dozen staff it was a lot easier for it to be natural and it just happened whereas now you've got so many more personalities as well, yeah you definitely have to be more purposeful. There's ones that you naturally, staff that you naturally communicate well with and work well with and there's others that you have to purposefully have your lunch break when they're having theirs or something because you just haven't got that...

The comment above clearly shows that the ability to build relationships as staff numbers change is one of the site related barriers to servant leadership. Also affecting relationships and creating a barrier is the differing personalities of staff and conflicts that can occur as a result.

S3.CL: I guess human nature, it's pride and personality conflicts and that sort of thing are barriers. ...Personalities is probably a big thing. ... So it comes right back to who's employed in the centre too, you know whether they fit within your philosophy or if you just employ people because you're desperate to get a registered teacher or something like that then that's not necessarily going to benefit the team.

Time was also seen to be a barrier. This included time taken to do administration tasks and therefore not being able to be as available to staff as one would want.

S3.CL: Time constraints, when everything else gets your attention, you're busy, office work and things like that taking your time and you know you can hide away in your office all week and never say boo and that's the biggest barrier is time. Because it does take time, building relationships and yeah it just takes time to find people's strengths.

In talking about this particular barrier, the centre leader also explained one of the ways she had worked around this so as to develop a greater awareness of the various staff members.

S3.CL: One thing I found there with, because it became a time issue with finding out how people tick and the more different personalities, was we went through a DISC profile course to say what our strengths and weaknesses are so I've got that on file as well and that's worked really well with giving people tasks that align to their strengths and so that's sort of been, so you start to use tools I guess to help you in that. But yeah, time's a biggy and the other barriers, it's keeping that balance of coming out and having fun, having a water fight and shovelling the sand and that sort of thing is all good but it's also keeping that balance of professionalism and those clear lines of your duties and roles an because you've got to have a leader and they need to know that they've got a strong leader. So it's not looking, you don't want to be, it's not being all chummy chummy and best of buddies sort of thing but...

Other site related barriers were seen to be less visible such as policies and guidelines and as mentioned by the centre leader, professional boundaries.

S3.E: There are invisible barriers like there are certain things that you're not going to be able to touch or go and look at because it's a policy or part of the guidelines so it's that professional boundary really so certain things that.

From the intrapersonal perspective human nature, cattiness, pride and people trying to prove themselves were all seen as barriers to servant leadership.

S3.CL: The barriers to them would be trying to prove themselves to other staff members I think that they're more capable or whatever. ...If they're valued by leadership then they won't feel like they have to be proving themselves to other staff members. Because they've got that self worth so therefore I'm not so good in this area but hey I'm good in this area so let's let this person deal with it.

Summary of Part Three

Part three of this chapter has provided an overview of the data results from Site Three gained through the process of an interview, focus group and questionnaire. The data results provided definitions and descriptions of servant leadership and espoused views of leadership in ECE, showing connections to *Te Whāriki*. The practice of servant leadership in the centre was discussed along with identified barriers to servant leadership.

The Christian philosophy of this site provided a spiritual foundation on which to base the perceptions and experiences of the participants and therefore one of the categories of espoused views of servant leadership was spiritual. Other categories identified were responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the servant leader with a number of key concepts associated to each of these categories.

The categories of leadership in ECE were similar to those of the espoused views of servant leadership and include responsibilities, relationships and the person who is leader. The similarities continue through to the different characteristics within each of the categories.

When considering the practice of servant leadership within the centre the sense of team was particularly evident with the importance of building trusting relationships highlighted by both the centre leader and the staff. Although only two parents responded to the questionnaire both responses showed that they felt the staff demonstrated all the characteristics of servant leadership identified. The integrity of the staff was a significant characteristic identified in the comments from one parent.

Several barriers to servant leadership were identified in the data as being site related and intrapersonal. These barriers ranged from being human and pride through to time, policies and personality differences.

SUMMARY

This chapter has been divided into three parts to provide an overview of the data results produced from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires carried out with each of the three sites used in the multi-site case study. The main categories of espoused views of servant leadership have included spiritual, responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the servant leader. These same categories were evident in the espoused views of leadership in ECE with less emphasis on the spiritual. The centre leaders and staff were all able to see connections between their perceptions of servant leadership and the outworking of the New Zealand curriculum document, *Te Whāriki*.

For each of the three sites participants have generally acknowledged an alignment between espousal and practice of servant leadership however they were able to identify a number of barriers to practising servant leadership fully. These barriers were both site related and intrapersonal and ranged from the influence of another

level of management within the organisation through to more personal attitudes and simply being human.

The following chapter seeks to pull together the findings from the data across the three sites and discuss the similarities and differences between them as well as the perceptions and experiences of the different roles of the participants. It will also seek to interpret the findings in light of literature and research on servant leadership.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The design of this study enabled data to be gathered from across three different early childhood centres, and from the centre leader(s), staff and parents associated with each. While it is necessary to consider the plethora of data from each site individually, it is also necessary to consider the similarities and differences across all three sites and how this contributes to an understanding of the espousal and practice of servant leadership in ECE as a whole. Comparisons can also be made between the data and literature on servant leadership and leadership in ECE. This chapter first discusses the major themes arising from the data and highlights the similarities and differences of the espousal and practice of servant leadership between each of the three sites used for this multi-site case study.

The second part of the discussion will consider how the findings are used to define servant leadership. In order to contextualise the practice of servant leadership in ECE specifically, the connections between espoused views or servant leadership and espoused views of leadership in ECE are discussed. Findings of perceived barriers to the practice of servant leadership are considered also.

MAJOR THEMES EVIDENT IN THE ESPOUSED VIEWS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Each of the sites used for this study have different structures and philosophies that underpin their practice. Despite these differences their core purpose of educating and caring for young children is the same. Many similarities were evident from

the findings as the centre leaders and staff discussed their espoused views of servant leadership. A number of minor themes emerged from the data and these were able to be categorised into major themes as seen in Table 5.1 below. Three of the major themes were also identified in the review of servant leadership literature in Chapter Two. The only difference being that rather than functions of servant leadership identified as one of the themes in the review of literature, the terminology used in the study was responsibilities of servant leadership.

Table 5.1 - Major and Minor Themes of Espoused Views of Servant Leadership Across Sites

Major theme	Minor themes	Site One	Site Two	Site Three
Spiritual	The example of Jesus Christ as Servant Leader		✓	✓
Responsibilities	Example	✓	✓	✓
	Authority		✓	✓
	Development of others	✓	✓	✓
	Service			✓
	Vision	✓	✓	
	Commitment	✓		
	Decision Making		✓	
Relationships	Provision		✓	
	Respect	✓	✓	✓
	Communication	✓	✓	✓
	Empowerment	✓	✓	✓
	Open mindedness			✓
The person who is the servant leader	Community Awareness	✓	✓	
	Integrity		✓	✓
	Humility		✓	
	Altruism		✓	✓
	Learner			✓
	Fairness		✓	✓
	Wisdom			✓

Spiritual Foundations

Values have been identified in the literature as having a significant impact on leadership with an emphasis placed on the need for leaders to understand their own values and beliefs so as to then be able to pass good values on to others (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell, 2001). Personal behaviour is also impacted by these values. The theme of spiritual foundations that emerged from the data appears to support this as it places an emphasis on the personal values of the centre leader and the staff which then shape the behaviour in relation to the practice of other servant leadership characteristics and the way individuals relate to each other within the centres. The research by Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) also highlighted the relevance of spirituality to servant leadership.

Although only one of the sites used was a specifically Christian centre, the individual beliefs and values of participants in the different centres impacted their espoused views of servant leadership and leadership in ECE. This was particularly evident as the data revealed two out of three of the sites acknowledged a spiritual foundation to their perceptions of servant leadership, linking these views to the example of Jesus Christ as a servant leader.

For Site Three each participant had a personal Christian faith that clearly influenced their choice to work in a Christian early childhood centre and therefore also laid a foundation on which to base their views of servant leadership. For these participants there was no hesitation in linking their understanding of servant leadership to their beliefs. Servant leadership was not just following the example of Jesus Christ as a servant leader but rather an act of serving God and being an ambassador of Christ. This then influenced the other aspects of servant leadership they placed an emphasis on, as it underpinned their beliefs about the way people should act toward others. Many of the participants from this site believed strongly

that these spiritual foundations were essential to the outworking of servant leadership and consequently believed that it would be difficult to practise servant leadership without them. This did not prove to be accurate however as the data gathered from the other two sites where the majority of participants did not profess to have any Christian faith showed that servant leadership was able to be practised in other centres also.

While not working in a Christian centre, S2.CL.B and at least one of the staff from Site Two held Christian beliefs which also shaped their perception of servant leadership. Like the participants from Site Three they too based their initial definition of servant leadership on their beliefs and values and suggested that servant leadership could be defined as the way in which Jesus Christ led others. In seeking to follow this example S2.CL.B linked this to her desire to show love for one another and lead in such a way as to outwork this in all areas of her practice.

Responsibilities of servant leadership

Across all three centres emerged the major theme of responsibilities. It became evident that the centre leaders and staff alike saw leadership as a responsibility rather than a status. Although it was acknowledged that servant leadership could occur across staff rather than sitting with the centre leader alone, the participants from Sites Two and Three suggested that a certain level of authority should be held by the centre leader. It was considered that this authority should be balanced by an attitude of humility. For Site Two, the staff particularly found this important to help with knowing where one stood and what was required of them. It is possible that this may have been fed by the perception that at times the differences in leadership between the centre leaders caused some confusion as there were times when the staff felt mixed or different messages were communicated depending on which centre leader they spoke to.

Several minor themes emerged in regard to espoused views of the responsibilities of servant leadership. Similarities across the three sites were evident in the recognition of being an example and developing others as being key responsibilities of servant leadership. Participants from across the sites acknowledged the need to see worth in others, seeking to develop their potential through encouraging others in the areas of strengths while also allowing them opportunities to take risks, make mistakes and grow in their areas of weakness.

Despite the concept of service evident in the title of servant leadership itself, only one centre acknowledged the role of serving others as being one of the responsibilities of servant leadership. For the centre leader from Site Three the idea of serving others was clearly important and was motivated by a desire to show appreciation for what was being done in the centre rather than for what she could get out of the staff in the future. The participants of Site One saw serving others as part of being an example for others to follow.

For the centre leader from site one the need to have vision and share this with the staff was a significant responsibility and was a view also held by the staff. Participants from Site Two shared this perspective also and vision was perceived as something that enabled the team to work together. The importance of vision as expressed by S1.CL was not just for what could happen in the centre itself but also in the wider community. This sense of community awareness flows into the relational side of servant leadership.

Relationships

A major theme of relationships emerged in the data from all three sites with similar views shared about the way in which relationships were developed and maintained and the characteristics associated with this. These similarities

highlighted the need for respect, communication and empowerment when seeking to practise servant leadership, and were views expressed by participants from all three sites. Other minor themes relating to relationships included community awareness and open-mindedness. As the participants discussed the concept of relationships the idea that ECE involved not just relationships with children and staff but also parents, whānau and the wider community became clear. These views were supported by centre leaders and staff across all three sites with Site One and Site Two particularly stressing the importance of being aware of community needs as being a key aspect of relationships in regard to servant leadership.

S3.CL. described herself as a team builder and the stories she shared of the way she worked with the staff and provided opportunities for them to do fun things together, as well as participate in professional development as a team, provided evidence to support this. Having a team that worked well together and got along with each other was obviously important to her. Engaging the staff in an activity to discover their own and each other's personality types was also another way that S3.CL sought to develop the relationships within the team. Having a strong team was also important to the participants from Site One and was emphasised by the significance placed on developing others, showing respect for one another, being gracious and encouraging others in their strengths and weaknesses.

For S1.CL the practice of servant leadership occurred not just with the staff but with the parents and whānau of the children who attended the centre. Building trusting relationships with the parents in her eyes was more important initially than with the children as they settle in the centre. Respect for individuals was central to this and building these relationships required time as the staff sought to listen to parents and make them feel comfortable in the centre. For the staff there

was recognition that this required a team approach, acknowledging that some parents connected better with one staff member than others and there was no need to feel threatened by, or jealous of this. These views were also shared by the participants from Sites Two and Three with the latter expressing a sincere commitment to doing what was described as a sometimes difficult task of making time to build trusting relationships with the parents.

Authenticity has been seen to be significant to the development of trust (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010, p. 649). The findings of this study have shown how the centre leaders, staff and parents all valued integrity and honesty as important aspects of servant leadership. Integrity in leadership can only lead to authenticity as leaders seek to walk the talk. Authentic leadership is also seen to lead to authentic relationships which are trusting and caring (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). These authentic relationships can then lead to a culture in which honesty, integrity, loyalty and justice are the norm for all members of the team rather than just the leader. The commitment to and importance placed on these concepts by the participants in this study suggest that authentic relationships existed within the teams as individuals sought to meet each other's needs and serve the wider centre community.

Meeting the needs of followers and seeking to serve others first was significant to the findings of Parolini, et. al. (2009) as they sought to compare transformational and servant leadership. This study has corroborated these findings as it has highlighted the responsibility of developing others, serving and being aware of community needs. For Site Three the importance of developing healthy relationships with parents and seeking to serve their needs was such that a specific staff member was given the role of whanau liaison which involved organising whanau nights and regular opportunities for parents to have relaxed coffee

mornings together. These are apparently well supported.

Participants from Site Two also held parent evenings where time was spent by all staff talking with parents and opportunities given for them to contribute to the overall programme of the centre through being asked for suggestions that contributed to the planning. Relationships were established with parents through these events as well as allowing parents to come in and spend time in the centre helping. A genuine desire to serve parents was evident by the centre's willingness to wash and dry children's clothes when they got dirty while at the centre.

The Person who is the Servant Leader

The data from Sites Two and Three revealed that the person who is the servant leader and character attributes associated with this were thought to be important in considering the definition of servant leadership. This did not appear to be the case for Site One who, despite acknowledging the attributes of the person who is a leader in ECE, did not identify any specific characteristics of the person who is the servant leader as being important to servant leadership. While some of the minor themes evident within this were different, the attributes of integrity, altruism, and fairness were recognised by both, along with honesty, trust, being kind, gracious, patient, and charity.

For Site Three the idea of being a learner was emphasised as the participants expressed the need for a servant leader to be reflective. Their acknowledgement of the need for wisdom also indicated that being a learner was important as it is difficult to gain wisdom without a willingness to learn.

Results from Questionnaires

The return rate of questionnaires for each of the sites was limited and therefore limits the reliability of the data. The ratings show that staff from all three sites used in the study, are perceived to be demonstrating the qualities of servant leadership to a high level. The qualities and attributes of being authentic, building trust, displaying integrity, honesty, leading by example and being patient were rated highly by the participants. These qualities were all mentioned by staff and centre leaders in the three sites throughout the data suggesting alignment between the different participants' perceptions of servant leadership.

Qualitative data from the questionnaires returned by parents from Site One identified the need to be heard, honest, care, patience and reliability as being important to them in terms of their experiences of servant leadership. Their experience of servant leadership characteristics displayed by the staff were evident in the rating of the characteristics where each attribute was rated at the high end of the scale with being persuasive, empowering others and listening receiving the lowest ratings.

The highest return rate of questionnaires was from Site Two where participants clearly saw staff as being caring. Qualitative data from the respondents highlighted professionalism, staff enjoying their work and keeping the best interests of children in mind as important to them when it comes to leadership. Their perceptions of how they experienced servant leadership in practice were strongly connected to how they saw their children treated and cared for rather than how they themselves experienced the many attributes identified.

The focus group participants from Site Three highlighted the need for integrity when demonstrating servant leadership, ensuring that how they acted when

parents were around was the same as they acted when parents were not there. This level of integrity was clearly important to the parents from this centre and the comment by one of the respondents to the questionnaire supported this by specifically commenting on the level of integrity that she saw in the staff and the way she appreciated this.

Barriers to the practice of servant leadership

The perceived barriers to the practice of servant leadership identified across the three sites could be categorised into site related and intrapersonal barriers. These categories became evident as the data showed that some barriers were specific to the site and came from outside expectations, experiences, requirements or situations beyond the control of the individual themselves while other barriers were connected to attitudes, perceptions and individual motivations. There were some similarities across the sites and these were largely related to the intrapersonal barriers where the individuals recognised potential barriers based on attitudes of wanting power, insecurities, pride, egos, trying to prove themselves and simply being human. These were seen as potential barriers rather than actual barriers as participants had not experienced them in the centres they were currently working in but had seen them in other centres in the past.

The different structures of each site in terms of management and ownership led to the site related barriers being slightly different across the sites. For Site One the centre leader and staff themselves did not see many site related barriers within their immediate team however they did acknowledge that as part of an organisation with another layer of management who had certain expectations and requirements that needed to be met there were sometimes situations resulting from this that made it difficult to practise servant leadership fully.

The dual ownership of Site Two created both perceived and experienced barriers to servant leadership for both the centre leaders and the staff. In considering the data from the centre leaders in relation to their practice of servant leadership and comparing this to the data from the staff in the focus group session, it became apparent that what the centre leaders described in terms of their practice was not always what the staff themselves experienced. These differences were generally the result of a number of barriers, some of which were identified by the centre leaders themselves and some of which were identified by the staff. For the staff the differences in leadership qualities of the two centre leaders was one of the biggest site related barriers to the practice of servant leadership. While these differences were acknowledged by the centre leaders it did not appear to be as significant to them as it was to the staff who were experiencing the leadership. These differences led to the barrier of miscommunication and sometimes lack of communication which is contrary to one of the identified responsibilities of a servant leader, good communication.

For S2.CL the site barriers related also to time constraints and the requirement to complete administration tasks while still balancing time spent with the rest of the staff on the floor working with the children. This was a view shared by the centre leader from Site Three who acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to get out of the office enough to be able to build the type of relationships with the staff that she would like to. Along with this S3.CL expressed the difficulties of getting to know staff well as they had taken on more staff to meet the needs of the centre as it grew. For her, there was a need to be much more intentional about developing relationships than she had found in the past with smaller numbers of staff.

While relationships are central to working within early childhood and the development of them is recognised as being a major theme relating to servant leadership, they were also seen as a potential barrier by S2.CL.B as different relationships are built between people, possibly opening the door for perceived hurts from others that they are not getting along with as well.

CONTEXTUALISING THE DATA

Leadership in ECE literature suggests the need for a more collaborative way of working (Thornton, et. al., 2009). Rodd (2006) also identifies the effect of teams working together and inspiring each other as significant to leadership in ECE. The strong emphasis on relationships, building team, shared vision and community awareness, among other characteristics, suggests that servant leadership provides a way for a more collaborative approach.

There is an alignment between leadership in ECE literature and servant leadership literature as they both suggest characteristics such as building team, relationships, compassion, tolerance, patience, empathy, listening, trust, and empowerment are central to effective leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Rodd, 2006; Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). Further alignment can be drawn when comparing this to the characteristics emphasised by the participants in the data of this study.

For each site, the lines between espoused views of servant leadership and espoused views of leadership in ECE were particularly blurred with few differences in the viewpoints relating to each. When discussing leadership in ECE there were significant similarities across all three sites in regard to their espoused views. The major themes that emerged in the data on espoused views or servant

leadership also emerged in the data on leadership in ECE. These themes were relationships, responsibilities and the person who is the leader.

Minor themes arising from the data from Site Three revealed that community, empowerment and communication were significant aspects of leadership in ECE. These views were shared by participants from Site Two who also expressed the importance of being an example and showing commitment.

There was a strong recognition that within early childhood, trusting relationships are particularly important and these should be with children, staff and the wider community. For the centre leader from Site One, compassion, commitment and good communication were essential to developing good relationships. These views were also reflected in the responses from the participants of Site Three.

When describing the person who is the leader it became apparent in all three sites that the qualities expressed as significant to the person who is the servant leader were also identified as being significant to the person who is the leader in ECE. These characteristics included being calm, patient, considerate, compassionate, passionate, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, even tempered, an encourager, a good listener, and having empathy. Participants from Site Two suggested that these qualities were important to leadership in ECE because they bring the best out in everybody and in an environment where you are dealing with people all the time it is important to be able to understand where people stand. S2.D believed that these qualities made it easier to respect someone, however, as is the case for a servant leader she recognised that there still needed to be a certain level of authority so as to provide a sense of safety and security along.

Strong connections were seen to exist between the espousal and practice of

servant leadership and *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum document. Within this document the principles of relationships, family and community, empowerment, and holistic development are identified along with the strands of well-being, belonging, communication, exploration and contribution (Ministry of Education, 1996). Data gathered from each of the sites highlighted the links between these principles and strands and the participants' views and experiences of servant leadership. The concept of *Te Whāriki* as a 'woven mat' (Ministry of Education, 1996) was seen to be reflected in the idea by participant S3.C, that with servant leadership, people are working together rather than against each other.

THE PARADOX OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership in itself can be viewed as a paradox, the two terms seemingly contradicting themselves (Spears, 2002, 2005). The word servant carries with it negative connotations due to its historical meaning. The paradox of these two words and the meaning attached to the word servant by one of the participants of Site One created some discussion in the focus group as each participant considered their view of this. This discussion enabled a deeper understanding of the term servant leadership and how the two words come together to form a unique style of leadership.

SUMMARY

This chapter has sought to present a discussion of the findings that highlights the similarities and differences across each of the three sites used in this multi-site case study. The discussion has been structured according to the various themes emerging from the data. The findings have also been contextualised according to

the data specific to leadership in ECE and the New Zealand curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. Triangulation has been evident through the comparisons across the sites as well as the discussion of the perceptions of centre leaders, staff and parents. The data has also been compared alongside the servant leadership and leadership in ECE literature and research. These comparisons along with the triangulation of data have subsequently validated the findings.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter presents a review of the research project and highlights the major findings. Some recommendations for future practice of servant leadership in each of the sites are presented along with suggestions for future research.

The research questions for this research project were:

1. How is servant leadership defined in the literature and by early childhood leaders, staff and parents?
2. How and in what way do leaders in early childhood education perceive and demonstrate servant leadership?
3. How do staff and parents in early childhood education perceive and experience servant leadership in practice?

A multi-site case study was employed with a mainly qualitative approach. Interviews, focus groups and questionnaires were used to collect data from centre leaders, staff and parents respectively across three different early childhood centres. Each centre had a different structure and philosophy that guided its practice.

THE MAJOR FINDINGS

Defining servant leadership

The definitions of servant leadership found in the literature have been reiterated in the overall findings of this study. Servant leadership is outworked by a desire to serve and meet the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Joseph & Winston, 2005). It is viewed as an authentic form of leadership where the traditional structure of an organisational pyramid is turned upside down (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Values underpin the desire to lead from such a perspective and many would suggest that a spiritual foundation lies beneath the aspiration to practice servant leadership as they seek to follow the example of Jesus Christ who was perceived as a true servant leader. Servant leadership can be defined in terms of responsibilities, relationships and the person who is the leader where a range of characteristics can be applied to each aspect.

Responsibilities

Being a role model and leading by example is viewed as an essential aspect of servant leadership. As a servant leader seeks to walk alongside others they are willing to do whatever they ask of others without complaining (Laub, 1999). A servant leader has a responsibility to show commitment to what they do. To have a vision for the organisation is important, but more importantly is the sharing of this vision with other members of the organisation so that they too can share in the responsibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Russell, 2001). This also enables decision making to be shared. The development of others is paramount as servant leaders seek to provide opportunities for others to grow and develop their strengths and weaknesses, providing encouragement and support along the way. Where necessary a servant leader will be willing to provide for others in order to meet their needs, serving them in whatever way is needed or in the best interests of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Russell & Stone, 2001).

From a servant leadership perspective, being a leader is viewed as a responsibility or function rather than a status. Despite this, servant leaders should demonstrate a certain level of authority. This enables others to feel secure and safe in the knowledge that issues will be dealt with appropriately as necessary and that individuals will know where they stand in various situations. Authority must not be seen as a chance to exercise power and control but rather as an opportunity to exercise humility (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

Relationships

As is evident in the literature and data, relationships are central to servant leadership (Laub, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1992). They cannot exist without respect shown between and toward others as people work alongside each other and seek to meet each other's needs. Seeing other people's worth and showing thoughtfulness toward others, is the outworking of respect. Listening to others is not only an important way of showing respect, it is also an essential aspect of communication and without communication relationships cannot be developed or maintained. Other aspects of relationships include support and encouragement, empowering others to grow in all areas and being open minded enough to show tolerance, diplomacy and forgiveness toward people (Spears, 2002, 2005; Joseph & Winston, 2005). The idea of community is important to relationships, being aware of others and their needs, breaking down relationship barriers and providing a sense of belonging. Relationships are complex and dynamic, the characteristics of the person who is the servant leader can have an impact on the type of relationships that are established.

The person who is the servant leader

The person who is the servant leader has integrity. They are honest and trustworthy and are willing to walk the talk as they lead by example. A servant

leader shows humility and does not seek to place themselves higher than others (Greenleaf, 1977). Altruistic characteristics are evident in their lives as they show compassion, empathy, charity and kindness toward others (Spears, 1996, 2002, 2005). They genuinely care for people and fairness and justice are important. A servant leader is a learner as well as a teacher and is willing to reflect honestly.

The centre leaders' perception and practice of servant leadership

The findings of this study showed that the centre leaders across the three different sites perceived servant leadership to be a responsibility rather than a status. They recognised that while they held a specific position of leadership this did not give them any power over the staff in their centres. These findings support the literature which also highlights the idea of servant leadership being a responsibility or function rather than a status (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). All three leaders highlighted the relational aspects of their practice, as they described the ways in which they sought to develop a strong sense of team and work alongside the staff.

The centre leaders saw themselves as role models who had a responsibility to lead by example. They were committed to show others rather than tell others and were not willing to ask staff to do anything they weren't willing to do themselves. They had a genuine desire to meet the needs of the staff in their centres and the centre leaders from one site considered it important to provide for staff, giving financial support to staff who were studying.

The centre leaders all provided examples of how they had demonstrated servant leadership in various ways. These provided evidence to show how their espoused views of servant leadership aligned with their practice although for one centre this did not always line up with the experiences shared by the staff.

Where the centre leader role was shared by two people there was recognition that the two had different ways of working with people as is to be expected with different personality types. Where one leader considered herself to be task focused the other leader saw herself as a people person. While this provided certain benefits in being able to work according to strengths, it also created certain barriers to the practice of servant leadership. These barriers were particularly experienced by the staff of this centre.

Other barriers to the practice of servant leadership outlined by the centre leaders included time constraints, administration tasks, policies, regulations and requirements, the past experiences of staff and being human.

Staff and parent perceptions and experiences of servant leadership

The findings of this study revealed that servant leadership was viewed by staff in a similar way to the centre leaders. It was acknowledged as a style of leadership that recognised the importance of relationship where one of the responsibilities was to lead by example and be a role model to others. This view reiterates the perspectives in literature where personal example and role modelling are seen to be essential for leaders in influencing others (Russell & Stone, 2002). The qualities and attributes of the person who is a leader were central to the perceptions of two out of three sites. For the other site, the emphasis was placed more strongly on the responsibilities of the servant leader and relationships.

Staff across the three sites provided examples of how they experienced servant leadership within their respective centres. There was general alignment between the stories and examples that the centre leaders had provided and those of the staff. The sense of team was strong among staff members and the findings showed that there were opportunities for the staff to practice servant leadership themselves,

particularly in relation to working with parents.

For Site Two, where there were two centre leaders, the findings revealed that the staff experienced servant leadership in a slightly different way to what was espoused by the centre leaders. This appeared to be as a result of the differences in leadership styles and miscommunication or lack of communication that sometimes occurred as a result of two people not always giving the same messages. This provided a barrier to the practice of servant leadership for the staff in the centre.

Other perceived barriers to the practice of servant leadership from the perspective of the staff included attitudes, relationship differences, personal experiences, personalities and trying to prove something. The findings suggested that these barriers were not necessarily experienced within the centres.

Relationships with parents were viewed as of extreme importance to the staff and centre leaders across all three sites. The findings revealed a commitment on the part of staff and centre leaders to involve parents, develop relationships and serve them in a number of ways. This commitment on the part of the centres to relate to parents and whānau was clearly influential in how the parents experienced servant leadership.

The questionnaires from parents revealed that they viewed staff as demonstrating the qualities and attributes of servant leadership at a high level. Their experiences of servant leadership were positive and appeared to be viewed through the way in which they felt their children were treated in the centres.

The Strengths and Limitations of this Study

The multi-site, multi-method approach to this study allowed for a broad perspective of servant leadership within ECE to be examined. The use of three sites and interviews, focus groups and questionnaires undertaken with centre leaders, staff and parents respectively allowed for triangulation of the results.

The low return rate for the questionnaires was a limitation for the study as it meant that the range of responses was limited. This affected the overall response ratings of the questionnaires and therefore altered the results.

While each of the centres clearly espoused a significant number of characteristics of servant leadership and the Education Review Office reports showed this, two of the three centres did not specifically refer to their leadership practices as servant leadership. As a result some of the staff and the centre leaders from these sites took time to do a small amount of reading on the topic before the focus groups and interviews. This may have influenced their espoused views of servant leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The future practice of servant leadership in ECE

To enhance the practice of servant leadership in ECE I recommend that:

- Staff from the centres involved in this study take time to develop a greater understanding of servant leadership and the implications of this for further practice.

- Staff from the centres involved in this study are more intentional about the practice of servant leadership within their respective centres.
- Servant leadership be considered as a valid form of leadership in ECE and therefore be added to the teaching of leadership in teacher education programmes.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Valuable insight into the leadership practice of three early childhood centres was gained from this research project. Follow up research with these centres to see if and/or how this particular research project has impacted the practice of centre leaders and staff may provide another level of understanding.
- This research project has provided an insight into servant leadership in ECE. It has shown a correlation between the concept of servant leadership and leadership in ECE literature. It is my suggestion therefore that further research is undertaken to consider the correlation between the two. It may even be useful to study the way in which the practice of servant leadership in ECE influences the quality of practice in early childhood centres.
- The findings of this project showed that the characteristics and themes of servant leadership were similar to the principles and strands of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki*. It would be useful to carry out a focused study on the connection between these. This could be used to inform practice within New Zealand early childhood centres.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This thesis sought to investigate the espousal and practice of servant leadership in three different early childhood centres. At the start of this project a lack of research had been identified in the areas of servant leadership and leadership in ECE. Combined, there was very little literature on servant leadership in ECE. By undertaking this research I have been able to contribute to the wider body of knowledge of servant leadership as well as the literature and research on leadership in ECE.

The study has been beneficial for the participants of the centres involved as they themselves have gained a greater insight into servant leadership and their own leadership practices. It has also been an insightful journey for me as I have gained a greater understanding of both servant leadership in ECE and what it means to be a researcher.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEMPLATE FOR LETTER PROVIDING ORGANISATION'S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
--

[Organisation's letterhead]

Date

Address letter to:

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Servant Leadership in Early Childhood Education

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and I give permission for research to be conducted in my organisation. I understand that the name of my organisation will not be used in any public reports.

Signature

Name of signatory

APPENDIX B



CONSENT FORM - ADULTS

DATE

TO: [participant's name]

FROM: Karyn Robertson

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Servant Leadership in Early Childhood

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for checking before data analysis is started.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011-1166)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (25.5.2011) to (25.5.2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX C



INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Thesis: Servant Leadership in Early Childhood Education

My name is Karyn Robertson. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to define and critically discuss the concept of servant leadership and investigate the way leaders of three early childhood services perceive and demonstrate servant leadership. I also aim to investigate the way in which staff and parents of the three early childhood services perceive and experience servant leadership in practice.

I request your participation in the following way.

I will be collecting data using a semi-structured interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact me by phone 027 473 3081 or email karynmrobertson@gmail.com or my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Howard Youngs and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8411 Email hyoungs@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Karyn Robertson

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011-1166)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (25.5.2011) to (25.5.2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is intended that this interview will take approximately 25 minutes

- 1a. How would you define servant leadership?
- 1b. What are the characteristics that you believe a leader brings in servant leadership?
2. What do you believe to be the most important qualities or characteristics of a leader in ECE?
3. How would you describe your leadership style?
4. How do you practice servant leadership when working with the staff of the centre? Please give an example.
5. How do you practice servant leadership when working with the parents/caregivers of the centre? Please give an example
6. Does what you espouse as being the characteristics of servant leadership align with what you are able to do in practice?
- 7a. What are the barriers to alignment of what you espouse and what you practice in relation to servant leadership?
- 7b. What are the barriers for servant leadership occurring across staff.

APPENDIX E



INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Thesis: Servant Leadership in Early Childhood Education

My name is Karyn Robertson. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to define and critically discuss the concept of servant leadership and investigate the way leaders of three early childhood services perceive and demonstrate servant leadership. I also aim to investigate the way in which staff and parents of the three early childhood services perceive and experience servant leadership in practice.

I request your participation in the following way.

I will be conducting focus group interviews and would appreciate your contribution as a member of the group. The group will be made up of staff from your centre. The focus group interview will take approximately 45 minutes outside of work hours at a time suitable for you and other participants. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. All participants will be asked to keep what is said within the focus group confidential. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript of the discussion for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. Individuals will be identified by numbers only so as to ensure the confidentiality of participants. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact me by phone 027 473 3081 or email karynmrobertson@gmail.com or my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Howard Youngs and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8411 Email hyoungs@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely
Karyn Robertson

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APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

It is intended that this focus group will take approximately 45 minutes.

- 1a. How would you define servant leadership?
- 1b. As teachers, what are the characteristics that you believe a leader brings in servant leadership?
2. What do you believe to be the most important qualities or characteristics of a leader in ECE?
3. Do you experience servant leadership in practice and if so, how?
4. How do you see servant leadership practiced in relation to working with the parents/caregivers of the centre?
5. Do you feel that what is espoused in relation to the characteristics of servant leadership align with what you experience in practice?
6. What are the barriers to alignment of what is espoused and what you experience in relation to servant leadership?
7. What are the barriers for you as teachers to practice servant leadership?

APPENDIX G



INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Thesis: **Servant Leadership in Early Childhood Education**

Kia Ora,

My name is Karyn Robertson. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to develop an understanding of a particular leadership concept called servant leadership. I will be looking at how this is evident in three different early childhood centres and how both staff and parents in these centres view and experience this type of leadership in practice.

I request your participation in the following way:

I will be collecting data using the attached questionnaire and would appreciate it if you would take the time to complete it. Once completed please place in the sealed posting box by the centre office before 10 June 2011. By completing the questionnaire and returning it, you are giving your consent for the data to be used in my research.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact me by phone 027 473 3081 or email karynrobertson@gmail.com or my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Howard Youngs and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8411 Email hyoungs@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Karyn Robertson

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APPENDIX H

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender: Male / Female (please circle)
2. Ethnicity: Tribal/Iwi affiliation:
3. I am aware of who the person in charge of the centre/kindergarten is:
Yes / No (please circle)
4. What is important to you as a parent in regard to the leadership of the early childhood centre/kindergarten?

Please rate the following characteristics in response to the level of which you see them demonstrated by the staff in the centre/kindergarten. Place an **X** on the continuum for each characteristic. (If you are unsure of what the characteristic is, do not know or do not wish to give a response, please leave blank).

The staff of the centre/kindergarten:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 5. Are caring | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 6. Display Integrity | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 7. Display humility | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 8. Are honest | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 9. Display courage | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 10. Display foresight | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |
| 11. Are authentic | Disagree | Agree |
| | ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- | |
| | 0 | 5 |

12. Are persuasive
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
13. Empower others
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
14. Listen
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
15. Develop others
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
16. Lead by example
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
17. Are patient
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
18. Build trust
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
19. Have vision
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
20. Work collaboratively
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
21. Communicate clearly
- Disagree 0 5 Agree
22. Display a sense of justice
- Disagree 0 5 Agree

23. Provide an example of where one of the above characteristics has been demonstrated. (Please do not provide any names of staff or others in your response).