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Value-based Leadership and Management

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Chapter Overview

This chapter considers the nature and characteristics of early years provision and the influence this might have, and demands it might make, on the leadership and management of settings. The opening section explains the development of diverse provision in the sector, putting some of the leadership and management challenges into context. Subsequent sections explore concepts integral to the nature of early years and their significance for leadership and management. The need for a value-based, principled approach to leading and managing is proposed, in order to provide a firm foundation for ethical decision-making which keeps the interests of the child and family at the heart of the operation of the organization.



Characteristics of the Early Years Sector – the development of diverse provision

The early years sector in Britain, and England in particular, is the inheritance of political disinterest stemming from a cultural, economic and political divide between what constitutes public and private interests of the state and the individual in matters of childcare and education. During the development of the Welfare State, early childhood was seen as the province and prime responsibility of the family rather than the state. The foundations of the current school education system were laid in 1870 with the Elementary Education

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Act. This established an arbitrary starting age of five years which subsequently became compulsory with publicly funded state school education and created a divide between care and education which still persists. Throughout the 20th century, national policy and resources were largely focused on the requirements of state education, resulting in years of political and economic neglect for childcare and early education. Changing social, cultural, economic and employment trends during the 20th century increased demand for childcare outside the immediate or extended family, and the absence of a publicly funded entitlement and concomitant regulation allowed a mixed economy of provision to grow rapidly in the Private, Voluntary, and Independent (PVI) sector to meet the demand and space left by a lack of national policy and funding. As political interest to increase access to early education and childcare developed in the late 1990s, Meeting the Childcare Challenge (DEE, 1998) set out the National Childcare Strategy and economic initiatives were developed around the existing pattern of provision, further embedding the market economy in the sector. Increased public funding brought regulation and national standards in the attempt to bring some comparability and assurance of quality between the diverse types of provision, yet the sector remained fragmented and characterized by variety in types of settings and the services they offer, the level of staff qualifications and ratios of staff to children. It can be argued that a range of provision arising from the operation of market forces offers choice and the potential to meet individual or community requirements but it sets challenges in respect of equity, access and affordability as well as quality, continuity and coherence of service. As Dahlberg and Moss (2005) suggest, the operation of market forces gives the appearance of devolution and the rhetoric of diversity and choice but with a consequent imbalance of provision. Successive governments have sought to redress this by regulation, standardization, subsidy and funded programmes targeted at the most disadvantaged.

Since the political spotlight turned onto the early years sector during the late 20th century, there has been a flurry of activity in relation to policy and legislation, creating a driving force to raise quality within this complex and diverse sector and working towards more commonality and integration of services, a theme extended in Chapter 4. Persistent distinctions between childcare and education have inhibited development of a unified service and a powerful professional voice to gain recognition of the issues facing the early years sector. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that the end result of the British

approach is a system which is less dynamic and capable of change when compared with Sweden over the last 40 years. In light of the recent policy and strategy initiatives, which are demanding transformation of the sector into a more unified and integrated whole, this judgement will need to be deferred until their success can be properly assessed.

The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004b) set out the first long-term policy ambitions and direction for the sector, and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004c) expressed a vision and intention for developing integrated, seamless services. The Childcare Act (2006) and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES, 2007a) bring care and early education closer together in a single statutory framework. The government's agenda for change intends to be transformative, as indicated by the statement of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families in the foreword to the Children's Plan: 'this Children's plan is the beginning of a new way of working' (DCSF, 2007).

The history of development of early years provision in Britain, however, leaves a legacy of separation of childcare from education and distinction between education as a public good and childcare as a private commodity, which will take time and more than legislation to overcome. History has a pervading influence on the values and beliefs of the policy makers, service providers and service users, and a legacy which affects the composition and nature of the workforce and the people who lead and manage early years settings. There is a predominance of private providers and reliance on unqualified assistance, qualifications at lower levels than for teaching, and persisting low status and a largely female workforce. Initiatives such as Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) are working towards achieving graduate-level leaders of practice in the PVI sector but contain no organizational leadership or management element.

We are currently experiencing unprecedented levels of funding to raise qualification levels in the non-maintained sector (aptly named Transformation Funds, succeeded by Graduate Leader Fund), particularly for leaders of practice through EYPS, and public investment in the training of Children's Centre Leaders, through the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL). These initiatives aim to cultivate the leadership skills required to meet the challenges of change, expansion and integration relating to professional practice and organizational and community development.

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The Public Accounts Committee (House of Commons, 2007) indicated a need to raise qualifications, skills and confidence of staff (including managers), as only a third of 134 Children's Centre staff interviewed by the National Audit Office felt well qualified to perform their roles. The challenge for leadership across the early years sector is immense and requires confident, capable and creative managers. Yet the sector is largely untrained in management and its managers have been weighed down by the emphasis on accountability and regulation, leaving little room for the constructive contesting of practice.

Picture of Practice

Kim is a pre-school supervisor in a voluntary setting catering for children from age two to 'rising' five years. She is a trained primary teacher and has worked at the pre-school for 10 years. She was promoted to supervisor after three years.

'The supervisor left for financial reasons and she asked me to take over running the group. I agreed as there was no one else to do it but said to the staff that we would do it together, as I had no more experience than they did at managing a pre-school.

Our motivations for working there were very similar in the beginning: convenience of the location and pre-school operating hours, pending or supplementing another job. None were trained in early years.

I hadn't expected to stay. I didn't actually choose to become an early years leader. From talking informally to colleagues from other settings, their experiences were similar. Many said, "I don't know how it happened really – I was just in the right place at the right time and have ended up staying!"

I agreed to accept the job as supervisor at the pre-school because they had asked me; my teaching degree allowed me to work at a supervisory level; my children were at the pre-school, so this allowed me to be involved in their education and I didn't have to pay for their fees whilst I worked there, saving money and I needed the small amount paid in wages.'

Kim is accountable to the management committee but has no professional manager. All the staff members are part-time, with variable hours. Kim has just completed EYPS and feels that there is a need to change some aspects of practice but believes this will need the staff to change and that this could be difficult. They are not keen to undergo training and Kim finds herself using Ofsted as a 'stick' to force a change in established routines.

Inevitably, differences in settings affect the nature of provision, organizational goals, services offered, and the experience for the child and family. The nature of the organization impacts on leadership and management issues, dilemmas, drivers and constraints. Leaders and managers in the sector come from diverse backgrounds with varying levels of experience and training in early years and management. So it is important when considering leadership and management in the early years that we do not fall into the trap of thinking that we are dealing with a single entity and recognize that the challenges faced in different aspects of the sector may have distinctive features. This does not mean that commonalities cannot be identified but that complexity and diversity need to be acknowledged as part of the challenge. It is unlikely that 'one size fits all' in terms of leadership and management approaches. The history and characteristics of current provision in the sector, together with the agenda for transformative change, provide the essential background and context in which to consider the leadership and management of early years settings. If we are to face the challenge and deal with diversity, a flexible approach to leading and managing will be required but it is important that it is leadership which suits the nature of early years.

The Nature of Early Years – pedagogy and moral purpose

'The term pedagogy is seldom clearly defined' (Mortimore, 1999: 228), but effective pedagogy is fit for purpose in that the teaching approach, the learning purposes, and conditions for learning suit the needs of the learner, whether child or adult, and promote their personal learning and development. All participants in the early years context can be seen as learners, whether children, parents and carers, staff team members, managers or governors. They are all contributors to the development of the organization and the individuals and groups associated with it. The pedagogic orientation of early years is on learning to learn within a social context. In this sense, the early years setting is a community with a collective interest in promoting the process of learning and creating the conditions in which children can thrive and so help to secure the well-being of future generations. Sergiovanni (2001) draws attention to the link between pedagogy and leadership (from the Greek derivation of the term pedagogy): 'leadership in the learning community has a special meaning that

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comes from the word pedagogy' (2001: 72) and involves caring, supporting and guiding.

'Without a concept like pedagogy, which starts from the assumption that care and education are inextricably intertwined, it has proven difficult to conceptualize and practise an integrated approach to early childhood services' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005: 130). Yet integration is now at the heart of policy direction and strategy for services for young children and families, and the concept of pedagogy is gaining renewed interest as a cultural, professional force which could be harnessed to support integration. 'Cultural forces rely on common purposes, values, commitments, and norms that result in relationships among people that have moral overtones, relationships that ensure caring and inclusiveness' (Sergiovanni, 2001: 103). Pedagogy underpins professional practice and is based on a complex interaction of values, beliefs and theory interpreted through experience. If pedagogy is a potential unifying mechanism for the sector, the assumptions and underlying values need to be explored to arrive at a greater understanding of its fundamental nature.

Roger Smith argues that values permeate and influence all aspects of policy and practice in children's services, 'from strategic decisions, through management, planning and decision-making, to the critical point at which interventions are actually put into operation' (2005: 1), and therefore the ability to reflect on values and understand the way they can shape policy and practice is a necessary skill. He warns against any expectation that this will lead directly to solutions for problems or dilemmas in service provision but, nevertheless, believes that a heightened appreciation of the link between values and practice can support decision-making strategies. If we take this link between values, practice and management further, there is a case for developing reflective leadership practice based on the principles of early years pedagogy. A deepening consciousness of the values and principles of early years practice can then be used to inform and influence leadership thinking and action in strategic and operational development – a theme extended in Chapter 3.

Understanding the nature, purpose and values at the heart of an organization or service is not just helpful but essential for those who have a leadership and management responsibility. Drucker (1999) stresses the importance of sufficient compatibility between individual and service values and the need for self-knowledge to recognize where there are tensions between personal and organizational values:

‘to work in an organization the value system of which is unacceptable to a person, or incompatible with it, condemns the person both to frustration and to non-performance’ (Drucker, 1999: 176). It is particularly important, therefore, at a time of rapid and transformative change in early years to develop the capacity for examining values both individually and collectively.



Sharing values connects people in meaningful and productive relationships



Activity

Recognizing your own value position

Take a few moments to consider: what matters to you in working with young children? What do you hold dear and why? Who or what has influenced you in forming these values?

- What matters?
- Why? (beliefs)
- What are your influences (or formative experiences)?

Transformational change is radical. It challenges established practices and creates stressful situations (Rodd, 2006), requiring great resourcefulness and skilful human understanding from those in leadership or management positions to navigate the team safely and constructively towards a new and improved service. Roger Smith (2005) places the role of values as central in the provision of children’s

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services because of their powerful motivating effect. Where individual practice values and wider principles underpinning social policy coincide, such as children's rights, a powerful force for committed action is created. The converse is also true where unresolved, conflicting agendas compete and undermine the process of policy implementation and organizational development. Many different value positions, interest groups and power bases are at play within individual settings and across children's services. An artificial distinction between care and education is one such value position which can be divisive or inhibit collegiality and common purpose, if left unaddressed. Michael Fullan (1999) recognizes the challenge such diversity presents in achieving moral purpose, which he defines as 'making a positive difference in the lives of all citizens' (1999: 11) and identifies the need for empathy, relationship building, interaction and the creation of mutual interests to encourage collaborative cultures with a commitment to the greater good.

The early years sector carries with it a social responsibility and ethic of care for the most vulnerable member of our society, the young child. A strong sense of public service and belief in the ultimately beneficial purpose of the organization creates and sustains commitment and perseverance. Fullan suggests that, 'in post-modern society, more than ever before, a strong commitment to the role of moral purpose in educational reform is crucial' (1999: 1). A firm belief in the individual and collective ability to make a contribution which will make a difference to the lives of children and families can inspire and sustain early years practitioners, leaders and managers through difficult periods. In this respect, leadership is crucial, as it 'creates a sense of direction, empowerment and the motivation we feel when we are doing or achieving something worthwhile' (Gill, 2006: 11). A commitment to the moral purpose of the organization can provide leaders with motivation in the face of adversity, through the peaks and troughs of change and the frustrations and limitations of changing policy and resource allocation. Denhardt et al. (2002) also note this steadfast commitment as a necessary trait of the effective public service sector manager. In the context of early years settings, however, this is not a trait that can reside only in the public sector or in a single setting or in the designated manager alone. Understanding and interpretation of moral purpose needs exploring and nurturing at local level and among teams, if commitment to improving outcomes for children and families is to be sustained. This applies particularly during a period of policy change which is seeking transformation of the sector and

where the drive for raising quality and providing seamless integrated services affects the whole workforce. Values influence professional practice and commitment, and therefore a principal leadership quality and function is to draw out individual values and develop a shared service commitment in others, nurturing and fostering belief in their capacity and ability to make a valuable contribution, ensuring that each contribution is recognized.

Picture of Practice

As an early years practitioner, Kim is committed to personal and professional development. She has taken steps to ensure this for herself. After the first year of settling into the new role of supervisor, she increasingly broadened her interests beyond her own setting. She began to take part in county-wide working parties, hosted Good Practice sessions in her setting on behalf of the county Early Years Team and gained commissions for writing articles for national pre-school magazines. She enrolled on EYPS and a Masters course in Early Childhood: 'As I became more and more aware of the early years world beyond my setting, I developed opinions about government policy and initiatives.' Her personal learning made her more conscious of the beliefs underpinning her practice and increased her commitment and determination to develop that understanding in her team.

Her initial assessment was that staff needed to take professional development courses to create greater understanding of theory in order to make changes in practice. She valued formal courses because of her own successful experience and was frustrated by her team colleagues who seemed disinterested or unwilling to go on courses. Disagreements developed over practice, which turned into cliques and divisions in workplace relationships which were becoming destructive. Kim observed deterioration in children's behaviour and began to consider if the underlying causes were staff behaviour and relationships. She conducted appraisals which revealed feelings of not being valued, lack of confidence which led to feeling threatened, and feelings of being usurped by more qualified but less experienced staff.

The revelations of the appraisals have led her to recognize that if she is to change practice, she firstly needs to address the emotional climate of the workplace by discovering what matters to individual staff and showing appreciation of their abilities to contribute based on current skills, in order to raise confidence, competence, and commitment to a shared sense of purpose.

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I wanted to make each staff member feel that they were making a positive contribution and that their efforts were important to the quality of the provision. I asked each member of staff to do something to improve the experience for the children based on what they had told me during appraisals or chats or what I knew about their interests and strengths. I was thinking about how you would get the children to learn and thought that you would start with what they knew, liked, and could do already. To create a community of learners amongst the staff I wanted to do the same thing. It has made me reflect on what I mean by a learner. Is it academic pursuit, or could it also mean knowing yourself, your strengths and weaknesses and how th]hould learn too?

In this scenario, Kim sought to discover what her team valued in children's learning and in their own area of expertise. She appealed to their sense of moral purpose (to improve the experience of the children) to put this into effect by taking on a negotiated responsibility matched to their interest and expertise, thereby increasing their motivation, commitment and belief in their own ability to make a contribution. She applied principles of early years pedagogy to the leadership of her team by listening, valuing the diversity of individual qualities, starting from what they can do and giving ownership, responsibility and accountability for what they do. She has since checked periodically with the team about their progress and their feelings regarding their new responsibility and a much happier working atmosphere has been observed. For Kim, this is just the beginning of building a culture of learning and responsibility which equips her team and her own leadership of it to take on the challenges of change in the sector.

'Negative cultures are debilitating' (Fullan, 2005: 26), whereas positive cultures are empowering and are based on shared values and beliefs with sufficient common ground over what is important to maintain focus on the direction of collective action, while permitting individual flexibility within it. Sergiovanni (2001: 103), talking in the context of schools, emphasized the need for people to be bound together in 'a common moral quest', forming a community with shared purposes and values which give the school a cultural identity and the participants a sense of belonging and involvement. He argues that this connects people in meaningful and productive relationships in which they care for and nurture each other, in a bonded fellowship which engenders a moral commitment and mutual responsibility.

 Point for Reflection

Consider the view that there is a moral purpose in working in the early years setting. How would you express your own 'moral purpose'? To what extent do you think this is a common quest within a setting known to you/between different types of settings?

List ways in which you have felt a sense of belonging and involvement in a group and list things that have helped to forge that identity.

An explicit value base can both determine and provide a reasoned basis for practice in an early years setting and this applies to leadership and management practice as much as to professional pedagogical practice. A common and shared core of values which underpin the organization's operating principles provides a reference point to enable the early years manager to act visibly with integrity and employ leadership approaches which provide order and direction for systems, procedures, decision-making and everyday practice, even in the face of conflicting pressures and interests. It can provide early years managers with a compass to guide the route of service development and enhancement and help determine how that route is navigated. A single and predominant value position can, however, have serious limitations in that it restricts the ability to assess specific contextual factors which require different priorities and judgments regarding which values take precedence in different circumstances. Disagreements are to be expected and welcomed, otherwise staff relations are built on compliance and practice is unquestioned, but conditions need to be created for constructive openness in exploring different viewpoints. 'If they (leaders) show an inflexible commitment to a vision – even if it is based on passionate moral purpose – they can drive resistance underground and miss essential lessons until it is too late' (Fullan, 2005: 72). In this context, Fullan is talking about one level of leadership but conflict is met at every level and needs to be positively handled to be productive. The ability to recognize one's own value position and assess competing perspectives and their potential impact is necessary for rational decision-making. 'Successful organizations explicitly value differences and do not panic when things go wrong' (Fullan, 2005: 72). Diversity can add strength in complex situations if coupled with effective communication and positive relationships, as it encourages team development of shared and explicit value statements which are recognized as relative and sometimes competing. This can support the early years manager

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and team in dealing with dilemmas, being steadfast in pursuit of goals, being accountable for their actions and decisions and reviewing and learning after reflecting on the outcomes.

A value-based approach to managing early years settings supports the daily pragmatic functions and operations in which tensions arise between competing, and sometimes conflicting, pressures, drivers and interests such as children's interests and parents' wishes, financial constraints, the regulatory framework and curriculum requirements. The profit orientation of the private sector, for example, could be considered to be in direct conflict with putting the needs of children first. However, the tension between financial resource allocation and the quality of experience for the child is certainly not a value conflict restricted to the private sector! Such tensions exist regardless of the type of early years organization, whether private, voluntary, independent, or state-maintained, but, ultimately, no early years organization will survive if it ignores the interests of the child as paramount. The value given to children's interests was embodied in the Children Act (DfES, 2004d) and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004c) and is expressed in the theme of the 'Unique Child' in the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007a). In this, the early years sector has a guiding principle to underpin actions, approaches and decision-making and support managers to lead in a principled manner. Yet, to suggest a single focus on the child oversimplifies the early years context. In the introduction to the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), the Secretary of State broadens the focus to 'families': '...more than ever before families will be at the centre of excellent, integrated services that put their needs first, regardless of traditional institutional and professional structures'.

There is no intention to underestimate or over-simplify the task of managing early years settings, nor to suggest that appealing to a strong value base provides easy solutions to complex problems. The proposition is that leading and managing can be supported immensely by reference to the values underpinning early years pedagogy and the commitment to moral purpose which are at the heart of the sector. In Sergiovanni's terms, this creates 'communities of responsibility' which can become self-regulating as, 'not only do members of the community share a common focus, they also feel morally obliged to embody this focus in their behaviour' (2001: 61). The reflection on and review of leadership action and its consequences in relation to that value base can help self-regulation and prompt the search for strategies and principled ways of working.

Exploring the Value/Practice Relationship – application in leading and managing early years settings

Identifying values is not straightforward and, as Smith (2005) suggests, it can be unproductive, if attempted in a pure or abstract fashion. Appealing to absolute values such as truth, justice and freedom produces lists of terms which suggest ideals or result in aspirations for practice which are unachievable, partly because they do not reflect the complexity of life or support solutions to moral dilemmas where values compete. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) view the search for universal codes as dangerous, as they appeal to a technical approach to form judgements based on norms and standards and provide a yardstick for judgement or justification for action which are generally based on rules and rights, producing a legalistic approach and frame of operating. They consider that this 'universalistic ethical approach underlies much policy and practice in the early childhood field' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005: 67), but warn that such an approach undermines individual responsibility and active engagement with ethical practice.

Roger Smith suggests that we take a broader understanding of values as '*systems of principles and beliefs* which are intended to govern our approach to practice' (Smith 2005: 3). This is more helpful in that it allows scope for multiple perspectives or value positions to be acknowledged and by suggesting these systems are '*intended to govern*', it recognizes that application is not straightforward, that perspectives may sometimes conflict or compete and that a degree of interpretation is required, relative to the situation. If we replaced the term 'govern' with 'guide', then systems of principles and beliefs guiding practice would entail choice and responsibility for decisions in their application. For Dahlberg and Moss (2005), making choices and assuming responsibility are crucial elements of the ethics of care and are fundamental concerns for the early years practitioner in interpreting and fulfilling their responsibilities to others. It recognizes the uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity of the nature of early years practice by promoting active interpretation to make judgements in context, based on guiding principles. It does, however, require openness to scrutiny, reflection and review in order to learn from and improve the process of making professional judgements.

Early years settings are essentially dealing in human relationships in which there are layers and levels of responsibilities to the child, parents and carers, staff, and the wider community. The interface of these

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relationships can generate uncertainty in how best to fulfil different responsibilities, whether managerial or relating directly to practice, for example, where the needs or interests of the individual compete with the interests of the whole group or where policy directives seem to be at odds with local needs. To enable active interpretation, guiding principles need to be negotiated locally so that sufficient account can be taken of situational factors, the specific context of the setting, the agencies it works with, children and parents and the community it serves because 'it is not possible to develop, say, a localised set of professional principles and ethics in a social and cultural vacuum' (Smith 2005: 3). So, in advocating exploration of values to support principled leadership, we are not seeking a universal code, which could encourage abrogation of responsibility, but a dynamic process of individual and collective analysis of what guides our practice so that we can become more critically aware of the impact of our behaviour and learn from experience.



Activity

Consider and list what you value in workplace relationships with others:
children parents colleagues staff manager

Draw out the common words or statements and note them on a card. Place the card in your pocket during your next day at work. At the end of the day or session, take out the card and review where and how you have identified these values in your actions and relationships. What was the response of or the effect on others?

It is proposed that a key leadership function for the early years manager is to allow time and create space and support for themselves and the team to explore individual and collective value positions, principles and beliefs, in order to arrive at a greater understanding of the foundations of their practice and develop their commitment to a common purpose. The intention would be to discover where value positions overlap, agree or disagree, and to negotiate agreed positions where these are essential, while encouraging openness to difference and uncertainty so that operating principles do not become dictates or inhibit development. This is not an easy task and requires the development of an environment which nurtures trusting relationships and values individuals – a theme extended in Chapter 2. Begley (2001) points out that it is also important to achieve a balance between personal, professional, organizational and social values, not

necessarily expecting these to be internally consistent but recognizing the legitimacy of all of these in the group, and not allow overriding dominance of one. It is important that this process is not seen as seeking consensus or sameness which could potentially dilute, marginalize or push differences underground. David Clark points out that 'education has a moral quality in that it seeks to discern new values rather than simply adopt or accept uncritically those which already exist' (Clark, 1996: 84). He argues that openness is a core educational value, closely related to inclusivity. This allows for the constructive contesting of practices and beliefs without subjugating the individual to the majority. First, however, it is necessary to build a climate of openness and appreciation of the myriad of influences which contribute to the formulation of our belief systems. Listening and a constructive response is needed to encourage purposeful discussion and a willingness to consider perspectives other than our own.



Activity

Take one of the previous responses to a pause for thought and share it with a trusted colleague. Invite them to do the same.

Once you are comfortable with this, consider taking the activity to a team meeting, after examining what would be needed to prepare the team to enable a 'safe', open and constructive discussion.

Clark (1996) calls for 'an openness to learning as an adventurous and transforming experience' (1996: 8). This requires both the courage and support of others to take risks and venture into new ground based on a belief in a potentially better outcome, ultimately if not immediately. A commitment to the 'moral purpose' of making a positive difference to the lives of children and families can support such risk-taking but only if combined with trust and accountability through self-scrutiny and feedback to inform self-reflection. 'In communities of responsibility it is norms, values, beliefs, purposes, goals, standards, hopes, and dreams that provide the ideas for a morally based leadership' (Sergiovanni, 2001: 62). This type of leadership is self-governing because it is based on shared ideas and does not rely on the authority or personality of positional leadership. Both Fullan (2005) and Sergiovanni (2001) consider that person-dependent leadership does not produce sustainable commitment to learning cultures. Where a team has explored values and purpose together and arrived at a localized set of guiding principles, the leadership is grounded

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and keeps everyone 'honest'. The positional leader might provide inspiration as a role model in living out the principles in practice and acting with integrity but the shared pedagogy and moral purpose is owned collectively. The role of the positional leader is then more focused on nurturing a culture of learning and capacity to develop and respond to new challenges.

The guiding principles need to be seen as a framework rather than a prescription for actions, therefore a system is required for individuals and teams to periodically revisit, reflect, and evaluate provision and practice against their self-determined operating principles and continue the process of revision, adaptation and learning in the light of experience. This relates to the idea of 'double-loop learning' for organizational development, developed by Argyris (Morgan 1986: 88; Argyris: 1991) where the situation is not simply looked at once to correct errors or as standards of control for accountability, but to enable questioning of operating norms in a more dynamic learning process. A danger of developing statements of operating principles is that they become static and divorced from the reality of everyday practice. Argyris (1991) draws this distinction between what we say and what we do as 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use', and he suggests that individuals and groups can learn to identify the inconsistencies, recognize the reasoning behind their actions and change their theories in use (Argyris: 1991). 'Double loop learning requires that we bridge this gulf between theory and reality so that it becomes possible to challenge the values and norms embedded in the theories in use, as well as those that are espoused' (Morgan, 1986: 91). The model of principled leadership proposed in this chapter uses value-based operating principles to guide and review practice. The model bears some resemblance to 'authentic' leadership which Begley (2001: 353) describes as 'a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration. This is leadership that is knowledge based, values informed, and skilfully executed.' It provides a perspective for daily as well as strategic actions and interactions.

Point for Reflection

Using the values you have identified in the previous pauses for thought, consider how, during a day, these values are moulding your leadership approach. In the light of these reflections, how can you act to develop your leadership style?

A Framework for Developing Principled Leadership Practice

Principled leadership is not confined to the role of the manager but is potentially present in the whole team. Gill (2006) identifies leadership as both within oneself (intrinsic) and provided by another (extrinsic). 'People who have a vision, know what to do, are self-aware and are self-driven are displaying self-leadership' (Gill, 2006: 11). Sharing moral purpose and pedagogy provides the vision and the knowledge, and exploring the underpinning values and developing operating principles based on them within a team raises self-awareness and drive, thereby encouraging self-leadership within a community of responsibility. Self-awareness is heightened by the reflective review of one's own behaviour and actions in putting the principles into practice, bringing espoused theory and theory in use closer together. Shared reflective review supports collective identification of where and how to close the gap. Settings will therefore need a system for reflection which incorporates the potential for double or repeated loops of learning to support individuals and teams in reviewing the way they work in the interests of children and families.

The EYFS themes for a principled pedagogical approach offer a potential framework which can be placed in a reflective system and applied to the whole work of the setting, including leading and managing in the specific early years context. The EYFS themes can be interpreted beyond the focus on the child to include adults engaged in or associated with the work of the setting. In this way, some operating principles for leading and managing begin to emerge. Thus, the 'Unique Child' becomes the unique person and member of a team, with individual strengths to contribute and the capacity to develop. The individual is valued and seen as competent, capable and resilient. Personal learning and self-knowledge is promoted through reflection and feedback. *Positive relationships* are built on trust and openness, collaboration and support. Deliberate steps are taken by early years managers to create and sustain an ethos and working culture which enables positive relationships to flourish. The working environment is *enabling*, facilitating personal and professional development, providing appropriate challenges with support, encouraging creative thinking and opportunities to try new ways of working. *Learning and development* is recognized as relevant to the whole team and essential for the growth and sustainability of the setting in meeting the needs of the community it serves. A culture of learning is established which recognizes and values individual and professional diversity and is open to different ways of learning.

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This application of the themes to principled leadership of the setting can then be placed in a system for reflection based on the EYFS 'Principles into Practice' cards (DfES, 2007a) which offer prompts for reflection formulated into three strands:

- effective practice
- challenges and dilemmas
- reflecting on practice.

Although these cards are designed to support reflection on professional practice in relation to EYFS themes, the three strands are equally suitable for developing a system for reflective leadership practice within early years settings. The system would provide loops of learning by firstly exploring what counts as effective leadership practice in respect of the *unique person, positive working relationships, enabling environment, learning and development*. The next step would be to examine real situations, and to identify the challenges and dilemmas in putting these principles or espoused theory into practice. The third step would be to reflect on the responses to your approach or outcomes of these situations, identifying how you might adapt your approach to further align leadership principles with practice. An essential part of this stage for double-loop learning is to revisit the principles of effective leadership practice to check their validity and appropriateness in different contexts. (An example to demonstrate application is provided in the Personal and Professional Development Activity at the end of the chapter.)

Fullan (2005) advises that in order to build capacity for positive change, we need to develop leadership and this means developing collective abilities, dispositions and motivations through daily interactions, by working harder at working together. 'You need to learn it by doing it and having mechanisms for getting better at it on purpose' (2005: 69).



Summary

The early years sector in Britain is characterized by a market economy and diversity of provision which requires more than regulation and a statutory curriculum to achieve coherence and unity in assuring better outcomes for children and families. Integration of services for a seamless experience for children and families requires a unifying, motivating force which appeals to the sense of 'moral purpose' inherent in the sector. This needs to be coupled with a foundation of guiding principles for the operation

of settings, which is negotiated and relevant at local level and suited to the nature of early years. It could be argued that early years pedagogy is underpinned by values and principles which can be translated to provide a system and a reflective framework for developing a principled way of operating, leading and managing early years settings. One approach to developing a framework is to draw on and adapt the EYFS themes and principles into practice cards applicable to leadership and management.

Personal and Professional Development Activity

Applying a reflective framework for principled leadership

A useful starting point would be to:

- 1 Explore the values underpinning what is understood by *effective practice* in nurturing an *enabling* working environment in your setting.
- 2 Apply these values consciously to particular leadership and management situations, challenges and dilemmas.
- 3 Consider what happened and identify:
 - where, why, and how this contributed to effective practice as currently understood (as in point 1) in order to continue to work in this positive way.
 - where, why and how the outcomes or responses were less positive and therefore not contributing to effective practice. This needs to be followed through with the consideration of alternative approaches. What might work better?
 - whether the outcome calls into question the assumptions or current understandings of effective practice (as in point 1), prompting a return to review the values and principles which underlie the strategies and practice (double-loop learning).

Suggested further reading

Gill, R. (2006) *Theory and Practice of Leadership*. London: Sage.

This is a comprehensive text drawing on various disciplines and studies of leadership in the public and private sector. Gill proposes an integrative, holistic model of leadership.

Smith, R. (2005) *Values and Practice in Children's Services*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Smith considers value positions and principles central to children's services, demonstrating some value conflicts and suggesting strategies for making considered professional judgements in the best interests of children.