Carol Aubrey

Leading and Managing in the EARLY YEARS

Second Edition

LEADING AND MANAGING IN THE EARLY YEARS

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CAROL AUBREY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Aubrey is Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood in the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. She trained as a primary school teacher and then as an educational psychologist. Later, she spent a number of years in primary teacher education with a particular focus on the early years, first at University College Cardiff and then at the University of Durham where she directed the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (Primary) and for a time was Deputy Director of the School. Thereafter, from 2001, she worked at Canterbury Christ Church University where she led the Centre for International Studies in Early Childhood (CISEC). Her research interests lie in the area of the policy to practice context of early childhood care and education in national and international contexts, early learning and development, with a particular interest in early mathematics and inclusion/special educational needs. She has been convener of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Special Interest Group for Early Childhood Care and Education and a member of the BERA Executive Council from 2004 to 2007. She was UK editor for *Journal of Early Childhood Research* from 2003–2009.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

The investigation that forms the backdrop to this book emerged from a preliminary leadership seminar hosted by the University of Warwick with local early childhood leaders. It began at a time when early childhood and leadership had never been higher on the English national agenda. The range of leaders we worked with were responding to this agenda in a variety of settings in their local contexts. Their settings were all unique but firmly embedded in the development of children's centres, integrated services and extended schools.

The leaders in the study took the opportunity to reflect upon their leadership practice. They reviewed the challenges of an external change agenda that was running at a faster pace than internal organizational change. The activity of videoing 'A day in the life' had simple beginnings but proved to have a powerful impact on the leaders. Their own self-evaluation and the dialogue with interviewers and peer professionals provided them with opportunities to reflect on their successes and to identify areas for development. It was very apparent that the opportunity to reflect on and self-evaluate in a supportive climate is not available to many leaders. Where successful mentoring was provided within the organization or externally, leaders were in a more powerful position to move forward and respond to the demanding challenges of their roles.

Through the continuing support of the University of Warwick we are able to share the outcomes of the study with a wider group. We offer it as a means of support and challenge to our current early childhood leaders and to those who aspire to succeed them. As one who no longer works on a day-to-day basis with children, I would like to express my admiration for our early childhood leaders who have overseen and implemented *the revolution*. Our youngest children deserve the best leaders to prepare them for the challenges they will face as they move forward into adulthood.

Anne Nelson
Formerly Chief Executive of the British Association for Early Childhood
Education (Early Education)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

It may seem strange to be revisiting definitions of leadership, management and administration when a book focused on leading and managing reaches its second edition. Nevertheless, as Handy (1999) pointed out, organizations are micro-societies and those who lead them have to understand the needs and motivations of people who work in them. At the same time, those who lead do so with the tacit agreement of those who follow, and this raises issues of power, influence and the working of groups.

Ten years ago Handy (1999: 96) was suggesting that leadership as a topic had a 'rather dated air about it' as he revisited trait theories (that relate to characteristics of the leader), style theories (that normally operate on the authoritarian–democratic dimension) and contingency theories (that take account of other variables in the leadership situation, in particular the task, work group and position of the leader within that group) that, in the final analysis, he regarded as failing to explain sufficiently the difference between effective and ineffective leadership. He proposed an extension of the contingency theory called 'best fit approach' that took account of the style preference of leader and followers, and the demands of the task that might range from tight or structured to flexible and supportive that 'fitted' the environment or organizational setting. This clearly locates leadership within a set of dynamic and reciprocal relationships and requires a core set of practices or activities. Hence, as noted by Rodd (1996: 126) a typology of an early childhood leader will include qualities, skills, roles and responsibilities. Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2000) proposed that each of these areas could be applied to administration, management and leadership.

Nivala (2002), however, has suggested that there is no overall agreement as to how notions of early childhood leadership, management and administration should be defined. Different theories have advanced, different values espoused, different practices have emerged and discourses have been generated in order to articulate these. Indeed, roles and responsibilities of early years professionals have been redefined and explored afresh by many different writers, and since the first edition of this book was published there has been a crop of new explorations of early childhood leadership, for example, Jones and Pound

(2008); Moyles (2006); Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2006) and a third edition of Rodd (2006).

What stands out as most salient to changes in early childhood leadership in the twenty-first century, however, are the effects of globalization. On the one hand, there is an increasing diversity of young children and their families through migration, change and breakdown in traditional family structures, adverse effects of poverty and disadvantage, who comprise the client groups. On the other hand, there are continual changes to organized work that is becoming less stable and less fixed, with virtual collaborative teams and knowledge communities linked electronically to the means of production and global markets. Inevitably in these conditions traditional views of leadership and management give way to a distributive leadership model (Waniganayake, 2000) in which children's centres may be virtual, with professional knowledge at the centre that is shared and made explicit, and leadership located at the confluence of multiple spheres of activity.

Carol Aubrey

GLOSSARY

Children's centres provide multi-agency services that are intended to be flexible and meet the needs of young children and their families. The core offer includes integrated early learning, care, family support, health services, and outreach services to employment advice. Children's centres offer interesting models of multi-agency and partnership working. At the heart of this is high-quality learning and full daycare for children from birth.

Daycare for birth to 1-year-olds is provided for approximately 20 per cent of children, predominantly in licensed private day nurseries and with childminders. Most 1- to 3-year-olds are also in childcare provision in private day nurseries. State-funded nursery schools and reception classes are required to have children in the care of a qualified teacher. In childcare settings, staff qualifications vary, with 50 per cent in day nurseries having Level 3 qualification or above, 20 per cent with higher education qualification and 20 per cent with no qualification. Sixteen per cent of childminders are qualified to Level 3 or above (OECD, 2006), although a Childcare and Early Years Providers survey (DCSF, 2008b) revealed that this had risen to 36 per cent. Too few childcare staff have appropriate training however and high staff turnover can be a threat to children's consistent care.

Early excellence centres were set up in 1997 to develop models of good practice in integrating services for young children and families. They offer high-quality practice in 'one-stop-shop' integrated education and daycare for young children and services for parents, carers, families and the wider community both directly and in co-operation with other providers.

Extended schools set out a core offer of services that all schools were expected to provide for children to access by 2010. This includes a variety of support such as homework clubs, high-quality childcare on the school site from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. all the year round, parenting programmes and access to a wide range of specialist support services such as speech therapy or intensive behaviour support, as well as adult learning and recreational facilities for the wider community.

Foundation stage units are intended for nursery and reception-aged children (5-year-olds in the first year of formal schooling) where practitioners work on

what has been a distinctive 'early years foundation stage' phase (for birth to 5-year-olds) to an agreed pedagogical approach. Nursery- and reception-aged groups combine to form an integrated teaching and learning provision across the foundation stage age range.

Integrated centre is a generic term that refers to local facilities delivering integrated early education and childcare for children under 5 years along with parent and family support services, health services, links to job opportunities and a base for childminders. It refers to settings such as early excellence centres, family centres, and voluntary and private provision, all of which now form the basis for Sure Start children's centre developments.

Neighbourhood nurseries were introduced in 2001 to narrow the gap in childcare provision between the most and least disadvantaged areas of the country. The aim was to create new high-quality, accessible and affordable, full daycare places for children under 5 in the poorest areas of England that previously had little or no daycare.

Nurseries may be of various kinds. Some nurseries are run by voluntary or community groups. Others are run by employers or local authorities. They provide full daycare, education and play for children up to 5 years and may be open from 8.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. There are also nursery and reception classes attached to or within primary schools (see foundation stage units above). Nurseries aim to provide the best possible start to children's education by providing a broad and balanced early years foundation stage curriculum that lays the foundation for reaching their potential when they reach statutory school age.

Sure Start local programmes were first announced in 1998. Their location was in areas of deprivation but they were not confined to poor families. They expanded on an annual basis from 2000, and in 2004 it was announced that in

order to 'mainstream' the programme to all children, there would be 2,500 by 2008 and, a little later, 3,500 by 2010. The programmes brought together in a 'joined up' way, core programmes of child and maternal health, early education and play, and family support for under 4s. There was an emphasis on outreach to access 'hard-to-reach' families and autonomy for local projects to add extra services. They were locally administered by partnerships between the statutory agencies (local authorities and primary care trusts) and the voluntary and private sectors.

Note that all 3- and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year from 2010. This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday).

INTRODUCTION: THEORIZING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

This chapter outlines the current national and international context to early childhood leadership. It introduces key concepts in the field in order to link early childhood leadership to broader theories in a changing world.

Background

Over the past few years there has been growing interest in concepts of leadership in early childhood (for example, Bloom et al., 1991; Hayden, 1996; Kagan and Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 1999). Initially these concepts often tended to focus on traits and characteristics, roles and responsibilities as well as specific leadership, management and administrative skills or behaviours. Indeed, debates have been conducted on the distinctions to be made between present-oriented management and future-oriented leadership (Bloom, 1997; Rodd, 1996). In many ways such studies represented very traditional approaches to leadership in the questions that they raised, for instance, about the extent to which leadership qualities and skills are innate or nurtured through training, associated with the person or the position (Waniganiyake et al., 2000). Historically, such approaches are located within organizational development theory, such as traits theories, style theories (for example, autocratic or democratic), contingency (or

situational) theories and, more recently, the 'best fit' approach that takes account of leader, followers, task and environment (Handy, 1999).

As Blackmore (1989) has emphasized, however, organizational theorists have also characterized leadership by masculine traits of aggression, competition and independence. At the same time, in the course of investigating women administrators in the United States of America (USA), Shakeshaft (1989) contrasted this 'male-based knowledge' with research on women's leadership that focused on collaboration, power-sharing, caring and relationships. Hall (1996) on English women school leaders revealed an organizational culture of trust, openness and commitment. While Court (1994) in the New Zealand context, also built a picture of women in leadership positions who 'empowered' or shared power with others and created organizational cultures based on collaboration, communication and shared decision-making. Shakeshaft (1989) attributed women leaders' consultative, nurturing and non-hierarchical culture to Gilligan's (1982) 'ethic of caring' that contrasted sharply with ideas of 'male' competition, individualism and independence. As feminist perspectives on leadership are particularly illuminative of early childhood leadership, there is a danger in too closely associating characteristics of leadership with masculine or feminine values and qualities that leads both to stereotyping women and alienating nurturing men.

Scrivens (2002) from New Zealand, in a powerful and comprehensive overview of female constructions of leadership, suggested that there is still a lack of awareness of leadership concepts at the level of individual early childhood leaders who remain bound to male-oriented ideas of leadership and need to acquire wider frames of reference in order to think more clearly about leadership theory that confirms and validates their experience. Reay and Ball (2000) meanwhile have suggested that women behave in a supportive and caring manner at work largely because they are trapped in low-status and low-paid jobs that seldom demand competitive ways of working.

Kagan and Bowman (1997) from the USA have noted a general reluctance of early childhood leaders to identify leadership as part of their professional role and a slowness in understanding and interpreting findings and theories from other fields, for instance, business management, school leadership or women in education. Traditional notions of leadership vested in key characteristics or attributes, roles and responsibilities, power, hierarchy and influence of one person or position, rooted in a capacity to create vision and moral purpose, give direction and demonstrate effectiveness, presuppose a set of desired leadership traits, a stable set of skills and behaviours operating in a relatively unchanging environment. As noted by Kagan and Hallmark (2001: 8) such theory fails to take account of multiple, shared or joint leadership emerging in contemporary theory and has less to say to early childhood leaders of 'smaller, more people-oriented and informal programs'.

Changing world, changing theories

More recently, comparative perspectives on early childhood leadership in five countries (Australia, Finland, England, Russia and the USA) have extended

understandings and opened up fresh theoretical discussions about the early childhood leadership phenomenon in relation to context and culture (Hujala and Puroila, 1998; Nivala and Hujala, 2002). Their International Leadership Project (ILP) identified a need to understand and describe early childhood leadership in a very broad context. From this perspective, Nivala (2002: 15) argued that the contextual model of leadership is a theoretical model which 'defines the structural framework of the factors and actors related to leadership and leading'. The context model is based upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory and draws attention to the operating environments of leadership that range from the circle closest to the leader (at the micro level) to the societal values and institutional structures that define leadership (at the macro level). Between these lie the meso level that constitutes the interaction or co-operation between micro levels and the exo level between micro and macro levels having an indirect effect on leadership. This model allows consideration of intercultural similarities and differences in the leadership phenomenon at a number of levels, as well as the incorporation of other theoretical orientations, for example, Giddens's (1984) structuration theory, Berger and Luckman's (1966) social construction of reality, the situated cognition of Rogoff (1984) and 'action' as described in activity theory (Engeström, 1999). From this perspective, leadership is 'conceptualised as a situational, socially constructed and interpretative phenomenon' (Hujala and Puroila, 1998: 8). It does not reside in the leader but has to be examined in relation to social interaction in the setting, the local community as well as a wider social and cultural context. Thus, leadership will need to be considered from the perspective of the followers as much as from the perspective of the leader (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). What the ILP represents for early childhood leadership in all its multidimensionality is a real expansion of the theoretical and methodological questions being asked and research approaches being utilized.

Bennis (1999) has identified wider globalizing trends and influences on leadership. In describing a world in which political and technological complexity and change encourage collaboration and teamwork, he has also called for an end to traditional leadership or what he describes as 'exemplary leadership': 'a shrinking world in which technology and political complexities increase at an accelerating rate offers fewer and fewer arenas in which individual action, top-down leadership, suffices. The source for effective change is the workforce in creative alliance with top leadership' (Bennis, 1999: 71). His view is that post-bureaucratic organizations evolving into federations, networks, clusters, cross-functional teams and temporary systems need a new kind of alliance between leaders and the led, and a new and more indirect form of influence for leaders to be effective. In other words, leaders will have to learn an entirely new set of skills that are neither understood nor taught in business schools and, hence, rarely practised. In this 'new reality', intellectual capital rather than capital – 'brain power, know-how human imagination' – will be used as the criterion for success.

In line with current perspectives on organizations, Rost (1991; 1993) has described leadership as a dynamic relationship that is located within a group of people, leaders and collaborators working together to generate change. The leadership relationship in this context is one of influence in two directions:

leaders influencing collaborators and collaborators influencing leaders, with change that is effected reflecting the purposes of both parties. Gronn (2000) has argued that from this perspective leaders are actually more dependent upon followers than followers upon leaders. Thus the focus of leadership should be followership, followers' minds and social networks. Spillane et al. (2001) have created a framework for considering effective leadership by identifying not just the tasks completed and the actions taken, but also the influence of other people and the interactions within an organization. This 'distributed' perspective focuses on the processes of leadership as a complex relationship operating in specific social and situational contexts. It serves to underscore the importance of leadership in the early childhood field being recalibrated in line with current thought.

The world of social, economic and technological change that Bennis indicated, and characterized by Giddens (1990; 1991) as 'late modernity', is one that is destabilizing traditional family forms, school and work life, including the institutional arrangements made for early childhood, the social relationships within them and even the young children themselves. At the same time, we still have a traditionally highly structured work environment for early childhood leaders that takes too little account of the complex, contradictory and diverse demands inside and outside the contemporary work environment. As Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003: 33) have concluded, there is a need to reassess leadership theories that address contemporary challenges in a changing and globalized world, and much to be gained from looking at advances in theory and research across disciplines: 'This provides new orientations or filtration systems against which to test our own views and beliefs about any aspect of knowledge and skills relevant to early childhood.'

Waniganayake (2000) has proposed the distributed early childhood leadership model with organizational learning at the centre and the possibility of more than one leader within the organizational setting or even multiple leaders or specialists within an early childhood centre who are experts in one area or expertise or domain of operation. As she noted, for leadership to work in the organizational context, all these leaders need to work together, in order to plan in a cohesive and strategic manner this participatory and decentralized approach. Given the rapidly changing societal context, it is argued that a distributed leadership model that relies on building relationships through existing knowledge and empowerment based on competence is a way forward. By these means, leadership emerges through creating a culture of learning and shared knowledge in collaborative ways.

Our leadership investigation

This was the international early childhood leadership context as our own early childhood leadership study in England was first being planned with a group of local leaders keen to explore leadership and willing to interrogate their own practice. A corresponding interest in studying early childhood leadership came

from a team of four researchers, themselves representing a variety of interests and perspectives on early childhood leadership from school effectiveness to distributed leadership, from early childhood education to early learning and development in diverse and inclusive contexts, and working with multi-agency teams at the national and international level. What made the contemporary English context of such interest was the rapidly changing nature of the early childhood field, the sheer number of policy developments across the early childhood field over the previous few years and the particular emphasis being placed upon working together across agency boundaries to respond to the needs of children, families and the community. However, while the study itself was being undertaken at a time of great change, the challenge for the professionals involved remained the same – how better to work together in order to address more effectively the needs of young children and their families. For the researchers, the challenge was how best to capture the relationship between this context of great social, cultural and economic change, the leadership work itself and the dynamic interaction among participating staff in a set of diverse early childhood settings, its nature and significance.

► Asked where their ideas of leadership came from, our leaders and their staff held a range of views. Leaders were more likely to distinguish between learning informally from experience and formally from academic study. Their staff were less likely to have had formal training and more inclined to stress experience and personal qualities.

Practitioners' views I.1

Leaders' views concerning ideas about leadership:

- I didn't have a notion of leadership when it started. The first year was difficult. People had expectations of me as a leader. It was quite lonely. Where do you go? I was not sure who I should ask. I went on induction for leaders and did 'Headlamp' training for new heads. I contacted the University of Warwick for an MA in leadership then completed the MA with a module on leadership and management.
- Ideas of leadership came from observing other people, working with senior managers who provided role models (good and bad) and having direct links with assistant directors in previous jobs … plus academic courses, my MBA for instance.
- Ideas of leadership came from a local two-year course 'Management in the Early Years' before I came into this job but it's only in the last few years that I have begun to consider leadership and management.
- I think my idea of leadership has developed from the nature of the job …

(Continued)

(Continued)

- Well, I think that you just pick and choose the bits of management theory that suit your workplace, your environment and your team.
- You've got management skills, experience and qualifications … it's a transferable experience you are utilizing in your decision-making otherwise what is the point of learning if you are not applying? I think the process is that you assess situations and you apply all the available resources … and then you say … to my best knowledge and my best judgement …

Practitioners' views I.2

Views of staff concerning ideas of leadership:

- My idea of leadership came from theory and the practice of being in a leadership role. You have to be a different leader in different circumstances. Your workforce helps you develop as a leader.
- My idea of leadership has come from Chris (the head teacher) and Hilary (foundation stage leader) and experience. Different people have different skills. Hilary has a strong vision for leadership, a passion, an inspiration.
- Ideas of leadership are developed from the situations you find yourself in and experience, if you are confident in an area you are working in.
- Ideas of leadership come from experience of other leaders and how they manage people.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERS' AGENDA

This chapter explains the main purpose of this book, its rationale and its structure. It identifies the starting points and key questions to be addressed: what do we know already; what leadership research applies; and what do we need to know? It also outlines what each chapter seeks to do.

1.1 Introduction

This book is about early childhood leadership in England at a time of great change, with young children and their families a high priority within national debate and plans in train for high-quality integrated children's services at national, local authority and community level. Our hope is that it will also make a contribution to the international debate about new constructs of early childhood leadership. By introducing new and emerging forms of interprofesssional leadership, new realities for the field will emerge and the knowledge base will expand. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003a) and the subsequent *Children Act* (DfES, 2004a) had the overall aim to improve outcomes for all children through the reconfiguration of mainstream services around children and families. Key themes included strong foundations in the early years; a stronger focus on parenting and families; earlier interventions and effective

protection for vulnerable and 'at risk' children; better accountability and integration of services locally, regionally and nationally; and reform of the workforce. The five outcomes for children that services should help them to achieve were:

- being healthy, that is enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- staying safe, that is being protected from harm and neglect;
- enjoying and achieving, that is getting the most out of life and developing skills for adulthood;
- making a positive contribution to the community and society and not engaging in antisocial or offending behaviour; and
- economic well-being, that is, being protected from economic disadvantage that might jeopardize life chances and achieving full potential.

The 10-year childcare strategy *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children* (HMT, 2004) and the *Childcare Act* (DfES, 2006a) to implement this policy built upon the Green Paper (DfES, 2003a) and *Children Act* (DfES, 2004a) with the aim to help deliver the outcomes by providing long-term goals and clear direction. Indeed, as the research that underpins this book was being carried out, local authorities were reforming their education and social services to create integrated children's services, with children's centres and extended schools being introduced by the leaders taking part in this study, a common assessment framework and an integrated workforce strategy, and a common core of training was being introduced together with a new integrated inspection framework for the early years developed by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

The Labour government had stated its commitment to eliminate child poverty by 2020 as a high priority. This led to a policy agenda from 1997 that has generated a national childcare strategy in 1998 (DfEE, 1998) that included expansion of nursery education and childcare from birth to 14 years and generated a programme of so-called Sure Start local programmes and early excellence centres, as well as a programme of neighbourhood nurseries. Also established was the 'foundation stage' as a distinct phase of early education for children aged from 3 years to the end of reception year in school (for 5-year-olds). As well as the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000), a *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2003b) guidance framework had been introduced for all practitioners working with children under 3 years and now a single *Early Years Foundation Stage* framework (DfES, 2007) is unifying guidance from birth to 6 years, taking as a starting point the five outcomes set out above. The first ever *Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007b) was published, setting out the future for children's services, with a vision of change to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in. The needs and wishes of families were to be placed first, with clear steps set out to make every child matter. This included an expansion of free early education places and an increase in the number of graduate early years professionals.

The agenda for change in early childhood services is complex and leadership across the sector, with children 3 to 5 years in private, voluntary and state