Authentic Leadership in the ECEC sector in the UK

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This session is dedicated to Jill Rodd for writing the first book I read on Early year’s leadership.
A little background

Early care and education has risen in esteem as a public good, has become politicized, is expected to produce results, must organise itself as an effective delivery system and currently lacks the capacity to meet public expectation.... however, the early years sector is ‘at a crossroads and this defining moment calls for leadership’

Goffin and Means (2006, p3)

The increased emphasis on accountability and the ‘achievement of excellence’ means that... early years’ provision will need skilled leadership’

ELEYS study (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008)
Some issues for leaders

• 45% of staff qualified at level 3 do not hold maths and English GCSEs at grade C or above

• Poor calibre of applicants

• Hours of work and pay compared to schools

• Turnover of level 2 staff has increased to 19%, with the majority moving out of the sector

• Too few candidates with sufficient management experience

NDNA Workforce Survey (2015)
The link between leadership and quality

‘There is no doubt that effective leadership and appropriate training for the leadership role is an increasingly important element in providing high-quality provision for the early years, especially as we move to larger and sometimes more complex, multi-professional teams of staff’.

ELEYS study (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008)
And the question of professional identity

Early Years Teacher or Leader?

'I’ve always been quite self-critical... I’m the kind of person who goes to bed at night and sort of worries about what I’ve done and what I haven’t done and most of the time I worry that I’ve not done it well enough. There’s a little part of me that thinks ‘I must be good because I’ve managed to fool everybody so long,’ but always round the corner I think ‘Somebody will find me out.’ Everybody thinks I’m very confident, you see, and I think that’s probably part of being a leader. You recognise that you can’t let people see that you don’t feel sure about yourself.'
Towards a typology of ECEC leadership

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Traits</th>
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<td>warmth, gentleness, enthusiasm, passion, inspiration, advocacy, caring, love, being visionary, flexible, charismatic, rational, knowledgeable, assertive.</td>
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Towards a typology of ECEC leadership

Skills

Planning and decision making, time management and communication, team work, motivation, support, role definition and goal setting, building relationships, shared decision-making empowerment of others, political awareness, interpersonal communication skills, group facilitation skills, staff development skills.

Towards a typology of ECEC leadership

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<th>Behaviours</th>
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<td>Using evidence to drive improvements in outcomes</td>
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<td>Using business skills strategically</td>
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<td>Facilitating open communication</td>
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<td>Embracing integrated working</td>
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<td>Motivating and empowering staff</td>
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<td>Being committed to their own learning and development</td>
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Sharp et al, 2012
But these are business models - leadership is context specific

The focus of accounts of ECEC leadership is on pedagogy, emotional literacy, team and community development, multi agency working and leading in times of change.

Jones and Pound (2008), Robbins and Callan (2008), Moyles (2004),
### New leadership paradigms

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<td>managerial self awareness</td>
<td>catalytic agency</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
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<td>charismatic leadership</td>
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<td>Passionate care</td>
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<td>Sustaining impetus</td>
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<td>Encouraging others</td>
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<td>ethical and authentic leadership</td>
<td>reflective integrity</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
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<td>Value based reflection</td>
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<td>Consistency and competency</td>
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<td>Multiple knowledge</td>
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<td>Emotional engagement</td>
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<td>Making a difference</td>
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<td>community leadership, leadership of place</td>
<td>relational interdependence</td>
<td>Distributed</td>
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<td>Developing a community</td>
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<td>Leading partnerships</td>
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<td>Making it happen</td>
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<td>Valuing others</td>
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What is authentic leadership?

An authentic leader is one who:

1. is self-aware, is humble, is always seeking improvement, is aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others;

2. fosters high degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework;

3. is committed to organizational success within the construct of social values’

Whitehead (2009, p850)
Why is authentic leadership a useful model for ECEC settings?

It describes an approach to leadership which is ‘transparent, morally grounded and responsive to the needs and values of others’

(Northouse, 2013 p282)

It is a type of leadership that is developed over time, as a lifelong learning process

(Luthans and Avolio, 2003)

It is shaped by life events that act as ‘triggers to growth and greater authenticity’

(Northouse, 2013 p270)
My research

A study of the life stories (personal and professional biographies) of seven ECEC leaders from a specific UK local authority.

My interest:

50 ECEC leaders in the same room, on the same leadership programme - with very different professional heritage (NPQICL)
50 ECEC leaders in the same room, on the same leadership programme - each with very different professional heritage (NPQICL)
Original Purpose of a Children's Centre

To ensure that early childhood services in their area are made available in an integrated manner at which activities for young children are provided, whether by way of early years provision or otherwise.’

‘the distinctive nature of centres is due to the collaboration and co-operation of different professional groups, and how they bring together services for children and their families in new and radical ways’

Innovation Unit, 2011, p3
Approaches to leadership

Understanding staff and relationships
Working with other agencies
Leadership style
High expectations
Making a difference

Improving the lives of others

Being a rebel
Who they are as leaders

Straightforward and honest

The role of gender

‘Are we really leaders?’
My claims

Through the telling of their life stories these leaders have demonstrated, a real sense of authenticity.

They have become heroic in their struggle to deliver services in the face of increasingly complex work and increasingly hostile contexts.

The ECEC leaders in this study see themselves as mavericks who achieve results for their communities through autonomy and freedom.

Perhaps this kind of authentic leadership offers a model for leadership elsewhere in the early years sector.
What made them into leaders

Influential childhood experiences

Mentors, sponsors and role-models

Professional heritage
This research with women identified that the heroism once recognised as a masculine trait, has turned into a much more authentic heroism in the leadership enacted by female participants.
The best ECEC leaders

'combine the toughness of the serpent with the softness of the dove, a tough mind and a tender heart'.
Questions to ask

What do we know about how early years leaders have developed their ability to lead?
How do we encourage others to lead in challenging circumstances?
What training do/should we give early years leaders?
How do we raise the profile of the ECEC sector?
БОЛЬШОЕ СПАСИБО

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Dalli, C (2005), *Reflecting on Professionalism in Early Years Teaching: Relationships, Responsiveness and Curriculum*. Early Years Lecture Series, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.


NDNA Workforce Survey 2015, Huddersfield, NDNA.


Solly, K. (2003) *What do early years leaders do to maintain and enhance the significance of the early years? A paper on a conversation with Kathryn Solly held at the Institute of Education on 22 May 2003.*
