Playcentre Leadership: A Learning Story
Te Whāriki as a Leadership Framework

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Through my children, I have received the greatest and the most valued educational experience of my life.

Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of an institution of higher learning.”
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Abstract

Research into leadership in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is in its infancy. At this early stage, distributed leadership has been identified as the most common style of leadership used in teacher-led early childhood education and care services. However, as a parent-led early childhood service in Aotearoa New Zealand, Playcentre uses emergent leadership. While some Playcentres have session facilitators, these positional leaders do not distribute leadership roles; the leadership is shared rather than distributed. This sharing of leadership removes power from roles therefore, those that come through Playcentre often don’t see themselves in leadership roles and downplay the knowledge, skills, and experience they are gaining. This enquiry sets out to develop a leadership framework for reflecting on leadership skills gained through Playcentre, and to gain an understanding of which are transferable to a range of other leadership roles, for example leadership in tertiary education. Action research is used to develop the Playcentre Leadership Framework. To examine the viability of this framework along with my leadership skills, an autoethnographic case study method was employed. The enquiry found the leadership framework evolved into a matrix for examining leadership practice along with giving insight into personal leadership practices. The leadership matrix provides scope for Playcentre Leaders and other early childhood education leaders to gain insight into their leadership, and develop a leadership framework of practice.
1 The Professional Context for Playcentre Leadership Development

1.1 Setting the Scene: From new parent to confident leader

Too often, we brush aside all that we have done or learned over a period of time. But I knew this was different; I had put my heart and soul into the last 16 years; it had to count for something. It did count for something! But how to articulate that so I can use it to my advantage going forward. Reflecting with an academic lens adds weight to this solid foundation of learning. I could now operate with confidence and pride at the level of skill and knowledge my experience had given me. I was about to launch a new career.

But that was the beginning of the end, what of the very beginning?

I am welcomed with a smile and open arms, we hug. Boy I miss having this lady in my daily life. She leads me to her kitchen; Miss 3 follows chatting nonstop. In the short time I have been away from Playcentre I have forgotten how much young children talk. Miss 6 and Master 10 join us in the kitchen when I announce I have gifts. The brown paper bag with handles I have been carrying now rests on a kitchen chair beside me. I reach in and pull out one set of Poi. “Poi” I hear Miss 6 say as she reaches for them. Miss 3 looks up at me and I hand her a second set of Poi. Now for the Kakahu. I lift it slowly and gentle out of the bag, I have put so much of myself into creating this Kakahu for this Whānau. Time and effort to hand sew, a piece of me, my love for Playcentre and this Whānau. I unfold the Kakahu and lay it on the table. While I hear lots of ooo’s and aarh’s and comments about the feathers I realise what this Kakahu represents to me – all my time, experience and learning at Playcentre.

Have I slept? If so, for how long? As I lie on the sofa my 1 year old son continues to play quietly on the floor, he is my everything yet here I lie, unable to keep my eyes open, unable to muster the motivation to do what I know I need to do. I’m exhausted, it’s been a long 2 years since the accident, then the birth and now moving back home. But he deserves better and more, a mum who is awake, engaging with him and we both need others, other parents’, other children. I need to ring about visiting a Playcentre, thank goodness there is a place we can attend together. I could never leave him anywhere, what if something happened and I wasn’t there, would others keep him safe like I would, I couldn’t keep his father safe, we were just lucky he survived. Tomorrow, I’ll ring tomorrow!
I have just recounted two scenes which I feel are important, as they bookend my Playcentre journey and the significant learning and experience that has led me to want to do a Master of Professional Practice. As well as the use of vignettes in this introduction, ‘learning through reflection’ titled pieces will be dotted throughout and highlight lightbulb moments in my learning. A note to the reader; I have written the enquiry in a mix of voices, formal and informal, first and third person, as I move in and out of discussing literature and methodology and recall personal experiences.

The purpose of this Master of Professional Practice was to develop a leadership framework which can be used to examine my leadership style through reflecting on my experience as a Playcentre Leader. The framework highlighted areas of strength and weakness in my leadership and assessed the leadership environment I worked in. There is potential for Playcentre parents who aspire to be leaders to use this framework as a guide to understand the leadership environment in their centre and identify their own leadership skills and style. This introduction provides the background, context and purpose to the enquiry.

1.2 Background

In 2002 parenting became my chosen vocation, and a large portion of my journey has been within the Playcentre environment. Playcentre is an early childhood education service where parents attend with their children. By choosing Playcentre for our children’s early childhood education, I entered the education sector, a sector I have thrived in. Over the last 16 years, I have gained qualifications and experience in early childhood education and adult education as a Playcentre educator and an adult education facilitator through using Playcentres adult education programme. Playcentre has allowed me to gain skills and experience in the management and governance of Playcentre as an early childhood education service.

Unique to Aotearoa, New Zealand, Playcentre was founded in the 1940’s, to support families during the war, by offering mixed-age education sessions for children aged 0-6 years of age (Densem & Chapman, 2000). Playcentre is a whānau-led early childhood education service, which means that the parents are the educators of the children. Operating as a parent cooperative, Playcentre parents automatically become members of the centre’s Parent Council when their child enrolled. Parents are responsible for the running of each session and for the management of the centre. Playcentre’s emergent leadership model means there are regular opportunities to help with the management of the centre. If a parent sees an opportunity and is motivated to take on a role, then more experienced parents support or mentor the parent to take on the role. As a new parent, I was motivated and showed an interest in the different opportunities on offer to take responsibility for helping run my centre. The more experienced parents at the time saw a capacity for leadership in me and nurtured that capacity. With that support and encouragement, I became an educator of my own and other children at our centre.

As well as providing early childhood education, Playcentre has its own private training enterprise offering an adult education programme to its members. The programme is offered
free of charge for parents wishing to gain new knowledge and skills on how to best support children’s learning and adult learning. All parents are encouraged to gain the qualifications that are set at different levels. Each level of qualification helps with the licencing requirements imposed on Playcentres by the Ministry of Education to qualify for government funding. The qualifications gained are not a full early childhood teaching degree, therefore, the parents are not qualified or registered teachers. However, parents that complete the adult education programme can become a leader in the learning and teaching of young children in a Playcentre and/or become a facilitator on the adult education programme.

I chose to undertake the Playcentre education programme and took on leadership roles at centre and regional levels. I also facilitated workshops on the adult education programme. During my Playcentre qualification and over the years, I have used several literary resources to inform my practice. The literature that has added significant knowledge and skills to my professional practice are in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy (Jordan, 1982; MacNaughton & Williams, 2008; New Zealand. Education Review Office, 2016; New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017); child behaviour, development and learning (Connell, 2014; Cox & Healey, 2008; Faber & Mazlish, 2012; Penrose, 1998; Smith, 1998; van Wijk, 2008) communication (Conran-Liew, 2001; Dunkin, 2001; Lascelles et al., 2000) and adult education (A. Rogers, 2010; J. Rogers, 2001).

In 2018 I undertook the Bachelor of Social Services through Capable NZ, where I reflected on my learning over the previous 16 years and my roles within Playcentre. It was during the reflective process that I realised, in my role as a lead educator, I was a leader in the learning and teaching of young children and adults simultaneously. I believe this to be a specialised role within the early childhood education sector and possibly the education sector as a whole. Becoming aware of my role as a leader made me curious to understand who I am as a leader and identify the leadership skills I have gained in Playcentre. In this enquiry, I planned to develop a leadership framework that would examine my leadership experience and highlight my leadership style.

1.3 Early Childhood Education, Playcentre and Leadership

Research into leadership in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is in its infancy and is proving challenging due to the complexity and diversity of the early childhood sector; as a result, no one definition of leadership is all-encompassing (Klevering & McNae, 2019; Nicholson et al., 2018; Notman & Jacobson, 2019; Thornton et al., 2009). Aotearoa New Zealand’s diverse early childhood education landscape has several different philosophies (examples: Montessori, Rudolf Steiner) and two types of early childhood education services, teacher-led services (examples: kindergarten, education and care services) and parent-led services (examples: Playcentre, Ngā Kōhanga Reo). Teacher-led services have registered early childhood teachers, while parent-led services have parents who have upskilled through the service.
As traditional business concepts of leadership do not fit within the early childhood education context (Lockie, 2010; Nicholson et al., 2018; Roder & Jovanovic, 2008), Lockie (2010) cautions that the roles within early childhood education that are business originated, such as administration and management, are seen by some as leadership roles (Roder & Jovanovic, 2008). There is the risk that managers who incorrectly identify themselves as leaders also believe they hold power (Bishop, 2003). Education leadership concepts need to address these power relationships and recognising the social construct of leadership, particularly in early childhood education (Bishop, 2003; Nicholson et al., 2018). Leadership in early childhood education around the world has shifted from hierarchical leadership to distributed leadership (Nicholson et al., 2018). Researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand have also identified the use of distributed leadership in early childhood education (Denee & Thornton, 2017; Klevering & McNae, 2019; Lockie, 2010; Roder & Jovanovic, 2008).

Notman & Jacobson’s (2019) research into leadership practice in Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood care and education services stated a key issue was the lack of studies on leadership practices in early childhood education. The exception is Thornton’s (Denee & Thornton, 2017, 2018; Thornton, 2005a, 2005b, 2010, 2015; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014) research into early childhood education leadership which is beginning to address this gap in the literature (Denee & Thornton, 2018). What little is known about leadership practices in the diverse context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, is insufficient to indicate if one leadership model could be applied across the entire early childhood sector (Thornton et al., 2009).

Currently, distributed leadership is seen as an effective model of leadership in early childhood education (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009, 2011; Denee & Thornton, 2017, 2018; Nicholson et al., 2018; Notman & Jacobson, 2019; Rodd, 2012; Scrivens et al., 2007; Thornton, 2005a, 2005b, 2010, 2015; Thornton et al., 2009). The common characteristics of distributed leadership, includes the group sharing responsibility, valuing individual strengths, autonomy, collaborative decision making, professional growth, the relinquishing of control, and the shifting of the balance of power to the whole group (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009). However, positional leadership, for example, head teacher, still plays a role by way of co-ordinating and developing leadership within the team (Denee & Thornton, 2018). However, there is no ‘head teacher’ role in parent-led services to distribute leadership roles; instead Playcentre uses emergent leadership (Manning, 2012).

There are two aspects to emergent leadership in Playcentre one passive, where someone steps aside, allowing others to fill the role, and the second aspect is active (Manning, 2012). The active aspect of emergent leadership is the mentoring of new leaders by approaching someone directly or by sharing a leadership role, thus helping someone to emerge from the group as a leader. For experienced parents in Playcentres, their role in supporting emergent leadership is to mentor less experienced parents around pedagogical and management practices, so they take a more active role in supporting children’s learning and the operation of the centre.

Distributed and emergent leadership are more than simple concepts of shared leadership. Emergent leadership, where there is no one leader (Lockie, 2010), is about people moving out
of leadership roles for others to become leaders (Manning et al., 2011). Distributed leadership needs a person in a positional leadership role to distribute leadership roles among the teaching team (Denée & Thornton, 2018). While some Playcentres have a session facilitator who could be seen as a positional leader, a session facilitator does not distribute leadership roles. A session facilitator may encourage or mentor someone to step into a leadership role but does not distribute the leadership role to that person.

I have discussed the diversity of early childhood education and the differences in leadership between teacher-led services and the parent-led service of Playcentre at the beginning of this section. However, early childhood is still being grouped with primary and secondary education when it comes to strategic frameworks, for example the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand has developed an Educational Leadership Capability Framework (Wylie et al., 2018) as part of the Leadership Strategy for the teaching profession. The leadership capabilities are intended to provide early childhood education services and schools with guidelines for leadership development. However, Playcentre does not have registered teachers and many researchers caution the use of leadership frameworks designed for schools being used in early childhood due to the lack of research into leadership in the diverse (teacher-led and parent-led) early childhood education sector (Denée & Thornton, 2018; Klevering & McNae, 2019; Notman & Jacobson, 2019; Thornton, 2010; Thornton et al., 2009).

While leadership in early childhood education is diverse there remains one constant throughout all early childhood education services, the bicultural curriculum Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017). The following section discusses the bicultural context in which all early childhood education services operate and the application of Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) as more than a curriculum framework for young children but also a framework for leadership in early childhood education (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009; Core Education, 2018; Roder & Jovanovic, 2008).

1.4 The Cultural Context for ECE Leadership

1.4.1 Playcentre and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

In 1989 Playcentre made a commitment to biculturalism and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It set up a working party to review Playcentre in a bicultural context to identify any culturally inappropriate areas and suggest improvements. The report to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation from the Working Party on Cultural Issues – Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, in 1990, was in the form of a booklet called Whānau Tūpou Ngātahi: Families Growing Together (New Zealand Playcentre Federation. Working Party on Cultural Issues, 1990). This ‘little red book’ as it has become known, is a guide for becoming more biculturally aware at Playcentre.

Playcentre formally acknowledged Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of New Zealand in 1994 and has incorporated a Te Tiriti o Waitangi based partnership since 2006 with
the adaptation of a two-house model, *Tangata Whenua* (Māori) and *Tangata Tiriti* (non-Māori), for consensus decision making (*History*, n.d.). Then in 2011, the New Zealand Playcentre Federation changed its constitution to give equal rights and responsibilities to *Tangata Whenua* and *Tangata Tiriti* Playcentre members. As a result, many roles at national level are co-roles between each tiriti partner (*History*, n.d.).

1.4.2  Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Whāriki and Leadership

The cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand is reflected in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and impacted the writing of *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* Early childhood curriculum (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017) hereafter referred to as *Te Whāriki*. The original version of *Te Whāriki*, was written in 1996 as a partnership between both partners to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Māori and non-Māori) and its contents emphasise participation of Māori and protection of Māori language and culture. *Te Whāriki* is underpinned by four principles (Empowerment | Whakamana, Holistic Development | Kotahitanga, Family and Community | Whānau Tangata, Relationships | Ngā Hononga) and five strands (Wellbeing | Mana Atu, Belonging | Mana Whenua, Contribution | Mana Tangata, Communication | Mana Reo, Exploration | Mana Aotūroa) which were conceptualised from traditional Māori thinking and sociocultural theory (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). The principles provide the framework for the two distinct curriculum pathways, one indigenous and the other bicultural. *Te Whāriki*, therefore, unifies all early childhood education services regardless of the service type (teacher-led and parent-led) or philosophy (Playcentre, Montessori, Rudolf Steiner).

Before I go any further, I want to discuss the use of the words bicultural and biculturalism. A paper looking at the definitions of bicultural and biculturalism highlights the differing views of Māori and non-Māori towards the use of the two terms (Jenkin, 2017). Jenkin (2017) proposes the term ‘tiriti-based curriculum’ be used as it better reflects the power-sharing intention of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and makes a clear distinction from a multicultural curriculum. This makes it clear to early childhood educators that a tiriti-based curriculum needs to be implemented irrespective of the ethnicities of the children enrolled at the centre (Jenkin, 2017). Therefore, from this point on, I will use the term tiriti-based instead of bicultural.

The tiriti-based context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand supports the use of distributed and emergent leadership. This is reinforced by Hawkins (2017), who believes that distributed leadership aligns well with the Māori concept of rangatiratanga. The use of emergent leadership in Playcentre also sits well with Māori culture as a familiar way of learning to lead (Manning et al., 2011; New Zealand Playcentre Federation. Working Party on Cultural Issues, 1990).

*Te Whāriki* is suggested as a framework for leading as well as the learning and teaching of young children (Roder & Jovanovic, 2008). As *Te Whāriki* is rooted in sociocultural theory, learning through relationships and collaboration, then distributed and emergent leadership as collaborative models of leadership are sociocultural ways of leading (Jovanovic & Roder, 2008). Clarkin-Phillips (2009) supports the idea of *Te Whāriki* working for both young
children’s learning and teacher leadership. The suggestion of sociocultural theory as a leadership framework is supported by Rodd (2012), who believes it is a useful way for teachers to analyse their leadership. More recently a *Te Whāriki* Webinar on leadership (Core Education, 2018) goes one step further and suggests that those working in early childhood education use *Te Whāriki* as a framework for leadership for learning and proposes a reflective question for each of the four principles. In another example, Shearsby (2015) used *Te Whāriki* to develop a framework for the mentoring of early childhood teachers. The mentoring framework consists of the four principles and five strands with a mentoring statement for each and reflective questions for the mentor to use with the mentee (Shearsby, 2015).

Thus, the purpose of this professional practice enquiry is to develop a framework for leadership using *Te Whāriki*, which I can use to reflect on my leadership experience and analyse my leadership practice in Playcentre.

### 1.5 Purpose, Positionality, and the Enquiry

The purpose of this enquiry was to develop a leadership framework for Playcentre based on the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*. This framework is developed from my own experience both as an (informal) emergent leader and as a (formal) positional leader within Playcentre and, as such, it has relevance for emergent and positional leaders. The reader also needs to understand the positionality of this enquiry.

It is timely that I should declare my worldview and my awareness that as I conduct this enquiry my interpretation of my experiences and knowledge are at a conscious and subconscious level influenced by my own cultural lens. Thus, the perspective of this professional practice enquiry is that of a Tangata Tiriti member of Playcentre (Pākehā).

This enquiry is retrospective (reflecting on a 16-year career), introspective (making sense of where I am now), and prospective (posing a framework that is useful for myself and other Playcentre leaders in the future). Finally, the development of a leadership framework is based on my experience at Playcentre, and the application of the framework by others lies outside the scope of this enquiry.

### 1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the background, context, and purpose of the enquiry as well as the positionality on which it is based. Chapter two will outline the methodology and methods used in this enquiry, which includes action research, autoethnography, and reflective practice. The development of the *Te Whāriki* leadership matrix for Playcentre is discussed in Chapter three. and the application of the matrix using case studies of my own professional practice as a Playcentre leader. Chapter four provides five case studies, four that explore each of the four principles and one case study that covers the five strands of *Te Whāriki*. A discussion of the enquiry including limitations and recommendations, the process and professional framework of practice are in Chapter five. Chapter six uses the learning story framework to highlight the learning that has occurred from the enquiry. Finally chapter seven
begins with a summary of the transformation of my professional practice as a leader in Playcentre, an overview of the Playcentre Pathway and Leadership Practice and concludes with a discussion on where to next.
2 Methodology and Methods

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology and methods used in this enquiry, which were guided by the professional practice enquiry learning agreement. First I will discuss the research paradigm in which I operate in.

The suggested research methodology set out in the Learning Agreement template for the Master of Professional Practice is auto-ethnographic action research. I naively accepted this and set about justifying it for my research project even though I wanted to reflect on action that had occurred over the past 16 years. To gain some clarity, I decided to understand who I am as a researcher, what is my research paradigm, my ontology, and epistemology. This would then help identify the methodology and method most appropriate for this enquiry, in the hope that this would justify the use of action research and autoethnography as suitable methodology and method.

To understand ontology and epistemology, I used Patel’s (2015 Appendix A) table, which has an explanation of each research paradigm and the ontology and epistemology that supports each paradigm. Patel (2015) goes on to identify the appropriate methodology and methods for the research paradigms. To identify my research paradigm, I first looked at my ontology and asked myself the question, “do I believe there is only one truth or multiple truths?” Multiple truths, I decided. Over time I have come to realise there is more than one side to a story and that people can have the same experience but see it in a different way to others. These different views are not a case of one being right, and the other wrong but are both true to the individual and are influenced by the individual’s world view.

Next was epistemology, how do I know what is reality? Reading Patel’s (2015) explanations for epistemology, I related best to reality needing interpretation to uncover the underlying meaning. This is a good explanation of why I wanted to do further study; I wanted to interpret my experience as a leader in Playcentre to uncover meaning in a wider education context. The epistemology sits alongside my ontology and both fitted with a constructivism (or interpretivism) research paradigm. But things started to get messy when I looked at the methodology and methods that best suit the constructivist paradigm. Action research was an identified methodology; however, autoethnography was not an identified method for constructivist research. The methods suggested included; observation, with the researcher as the participant, which I was; and case study, where I could use on my own experience as a leader. I now needed to understand autoethnography to know how best to use it as a method for the professional practice enquiry.

Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011, p. 1) state:

‘Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno).’
Using this definition of autoethnography, I recorded my ‘lived experience’ in the form of vignettes to describe my experience as a Playcentre leader to evaluate the leadership framework and uncover my leadership practices. Now that I understand my research paradigm, ontology, epistemology, and autoethnography, I will discuss the methodology and methods to be used in more detail.

2.2 Methodology

Action research involves a cycle of four steps (constructing, planning, action, evaluation), which leads to a further action research cycle. Originally developed by Lewin for people to examine issues within their personal lives, it has become a widely used research approach for examining practice (Costley et al., 2010).

I am already familiar with action research, having used a form of action research when planning for children’s learning and for internal evaluation of centre practices. Planning for children’s learning is continual and consists of observing the children at play, planning for learning experiences, evaluating the learning experiences, and assessment for further learning. Occurring moment-by-moment, day-to-day, this is reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) as I go about my daily role. An action research cycle has also been developed for early childhood and care services to evaluate strategic, emergent, and planned enquiries into practice (New Zealand & Education Review Office, 2016). This action research cycle includes five steps; noticing, investigating, collaborative sense-making, prioritising to take action and monitoring and evaluating impact (New Zealand & Education Review Office, 2016). I have used this cycle to undertake several reviews, which took anywhere from six months to two years to complete. These reviews were part of the centres planning and implementation of best practice and are reflection-for-action (Manen, 1991).

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) have taken the action research cycle (Figure 1) and developed it further for researchers doing action research within their organisation.

In this enquiry, I use the action research cycle to construct and plan a leadership framework for leaders in early childhood education. To identify the best method to use when taking
action, I have used Coghlan and Brannick’s (2014) ‘Focus of Researcher and System Quadrant’ (Figure 2).

![Diagram of Researcher and System Quadrant]

Figure 2 – Focus of researcher and system quadrant

The quadrant looks at the intention of self-study of the researcher and on the organisation using scales from no intended self-study through intended self-study. The development of the leadership framework does not include self-study in action of the system, Playcentre in this case, but it does include self-study of me, as the researcher. Therefore the focus of this enquiry is in quadrant three, where the individual engages in reflective study of their professional practice. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 60), “reflective practice may be viewed as a specific dimension of action research, i.e. first-person inquiry.” Therefore, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) suggest taking a general empirical method of experience, understanding, judgement, decision, and action, to overlay a cycle of each around each step of the action research cycle (Figure 3). Thus, the use of reflective practice in this enquiry allows for reflection-on-action.
Reflective practice was first developed by John Dewey and has since been defined further by Schön (1983) as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Manen (1991) suggests a third way to reflect, reflection-for-action. The definitions for each form of reflective practice include reflection-in-action occurring during the task, reflection-for-action for planning, which is used before making change and reflection-on-action which occurs after the task (Burhan-Horasanli & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Killion & Todnem, 1991; Manen, 1991; Schön, 1983; Thorsen & DeVore, 2013). In Playcentre, reflection-in-action occurs day-to-day, for example, to extend children’s learning; reflection-for-action is used for planning, for example, internal review to implement best practice; and reflection-on-action is for learning, for example, professional development. These three forms of reflective practice occur in different time frames; short, medium, and long term, but overlap and build on each other to inform over time. This building of knowledge from reflective practice over time implies planning is occurring particularly over the medium and long term. The planning changes from operational in the short term to tactical in the medium term and finally strategic in the long term. Therefore, this enquiry can be viewed as long-term strategic learning for my professional practice as I use reflection-on-action to analyse my leadership and evaluate the leadership framework (Figure 4).
2.3 Methods

Autoethnography has been defined in section 2.1 and is generally not considered a method to use for constructivist research; however, ethnography is. If ethnography is the interaction between people and how their values and beliefs impact on their interactions, then it would stand to reason that this enquiry of my interactions with others as a leader, which is influenced by my values and beliefs, is autoethnography. According to Costley et al (2010), ethnography and reflective practice are very closely linked; thus, reflective practice could be considered ethnography in action. Therefore, reflective practice of my leadership is autoethnography in action, and autoethnography is an ideal method to document the reflection-on-action that has occurred.

Costley et al (2010, p. 89) describe case study as a method of presenting “an example in a way that is beyond its face value”. Case studies of my experience as a leader in Playcentre were used to evaluate the viability of the leadership framework. Each case study illustrated instances of my leadership practice that are relevant to the principle in the leadership framework. Thus, the case studies will have a dual role, one to evaluate the framework, the other to examine my leadership practice to identify strengths and weaknesses to inform my leadership practice.

To document some of my more significant learning that occurred during the process of undertaking this enquiry, I used a narrative framework known as Learning Stories. The framework was developed by Carr (2001) and Cowie & Bell's (1999) as an assessment framework for science classrooms of noticing, recognising and responding. Combined, these two frameworks are considered the appropriate formative assessment for children’s learning in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have taken these combined frameworks and created a template entitled ‘Learning through Play’ (Appendix 2), which
parents at Playcentre use to write children’s learning stories. However, I have adapted the learning through play template to fit with the learning through reflection undertaken during the process of conducting this enquiry. Titled ‘Learning Through Reflection’ I will document specific aspects of my experience that highlight significant learning during the professional practice enquiry. These ‘Learning through Reflection’ stories which document my personal learning will be scattered throughout this enquiry.

Thus the purpose of the enquiry is to use the methodology and methods outlined to development a leadership matrix using the Te Whāriki and the assessment framework (notice, recognise and respond). The next chapter will discuss the development of the leadership matrix. This will be followed by a case study chapter of my experience as a Playcentre leader to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership matrix in highlighting leadership skills and practice.
2.4 Learning Through Reflection

The Process

Noticing:

I am with two colleagues at the end of a presentation for the assessment of a degree. We are sitting talking when one colleague who is embarking on a masters asked my other colleague, who had a masters, “Can you explain what a masters is to me?” The colleague with the masters launched into an explanation. I listened and then said, ‘It’s all about the process’.

Later I reflected on my own comment “It’s all about the process”. Wow! Where did that come from, was it from how my colleague was explaining the masters? Or was it from my own sub-conscious? Wherever it came from I listened to my own words.

Recognising:

As I reflected further on hearing my own words there was a lightbulb moment 🎆 Of course, the PROCESS! I’ve been concentrating so much on developing the research enquiry that I had forgotten about the process I was going through being just as important, if not more important.

Responding:

I set about creating a workbook bringing together all my notes and drawings relevant to the process and reflected on my methodology and method in terms of the process. Using the action research cycle for the process of developing and implementing the enquiry I will then reflect on each part of the process – constructing, planning, action and evaluation.
3  Te Whāriki as a Leadership Framework for Playcentre Professional Development

3.1  Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the potential for the *Te Whāriki* framework of principles and strands and the assessment framework (notice, recognise and respond) to be a leadership matrix for highlighting leadership skills and practice. The next section will outline *Te Whāriki* before discussing its use as a mentoring and leadership framework. Following on from this will be the development phase of creating a leadership framework from the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*.

3.2  *Te Whāriki*

The early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand is *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* Early childhood curriculum 2017. Initially written in 1996 as a partnership between partners to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Māori and non-Māori). Its contents emphasise participation of Māori and the protection of Māori language and culture. Twenty years after its publication *Te Whāriki* was updated to reflect the very different early childhood landscape that now exists in the 21st century. The 2017 update retained the original framework of four principles and five strands.

*Te Whāriki* (Figure 5) is underpinned by four principles (Empowerment | Whakamana, Holistic Development | Kotahitanga, Family and Community | Whānau Tangata, Relationships | Ngā Hononga) and five strands (Wellbeing | Mana Atu, Belonging | Mana Whenua, Contribution | Mana Tangata, Communication | Mana Reo, Exploration | Mana Aotūroa) which were conceptualised from traditional Māori thinking and sociocultural theory (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017). These principles and strands provide the framework for two distinct curriculum pathways, one indigenous and the other bicultural. As a tiriti-based curriculum, the principles and strands have dual Māori and English names and a vision for children’s learning; the strands also have dual definitions. These dual names and definitions are ‘not, however, synonyms as they had their origins in different world views’ (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 69). Many early childhood researchers believe *Te Whāriki*, as a sociocultural framework, has application beyond that of an early childhood curriculum (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009; Core Education, 2018; Jovanovic & Roder, 2008; Rodd, 2012; Roder & Jovanovic, 2008; Shearsby, 2015). The application of the framework for mentoring and leadership will be discussed in the following section.
3.3  Te Whāriki, Mentoring and Leadership

The early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki has been suggested as a framework for analysing leadership (Clarkin-Phillips, 2009; Core Education, 2018; Jovanovic & Roder, 2008; Rodd, 2012; Roder & Jovanovic, 2008; Shearsby, 2015). It has already been used to develop a framework for the mentoring of early childhood educators as a resource for supporting professional development (Shearsby, 2015). The mentoring framework uses the principle and strand statements of Te Whāriki to create a mentoring statement with an explanation of what this may look like (Shearsby, 2015). Reflective questions are included as a guide for the mentor working with the mentee.
A professional development webinar series on the updated 2017 Te Whāriki suggests using Te Whāriki for a leadership framework from which learning around leadership can be gained (Core Education, 2018). The Webinar proposes a question for each of the four Te Whāriki principles based on the description of each principle and suggests replacing the words ‘child’ and ‘whānau’ with Kaiako (Core Education, 2018).

However, there remains a lack of leadership professional development available to early childhood educators (Klevering & McNae, 2019), and this includes Playcentre leaders. Therefore, Shearsby’s (2015) mentoring framework and the webinar on leadership (Core Education, 2018) provide useful starting points for the development of a leadership framework specifically for Playcentre.

3.4 Te Whāriki, as a Leadership Framework

Prior to developing a leadership framework from Te Whāriki, leadership themes were researched to see if general leadership themes were reflected in the Te Whāriki principles. Llopis (2013) looked at the themes leaders regarded as important and found ten common themes; managing people, propel innovation and initiative, career management, performance improvement, problem-solving techniques, change management, make more money, networking/relationships, time management, workplace culture. Eight of the ten themes could be matched to the four Te Whāriki principles (Figure 6, pg 20).

Next, I set about developing a leadership statement for each principle, based on the original principle statement. Like Shearsby (2015), the statements for leadership were based on the original principle statement by replacing the word ‘children’ with ‘leaders’ for the leadership framework. The phrase ‘early childhood curriculum’ was also replaced with a suitable description about leadership that related to the principle. The new leadership statements allow leaders to see the principles through a new lens and consider how their professional practice reflects the principle.

In Te Whāriki the principle Relationships statement is ‘Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things’ (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017). To create the leadership statement, the word ‘children’ has been replaced with ‘leaders’ to become ‘Leaders learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things’. The next principle, Family and Community, statement is ‘The wider world of family and community is an integral part of early childhood curriculum’ (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017). As the focus for my professional practice enquiry is on leadership, I replaced the ‘early childhood curriculum’ with ‘being a leader’ to create the leadership statement ‘The wider world of family and community is an integral part of being a leader’. The third principle, Empowerment, statement is ‘Early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow’ (New Zealand & Ministry of Education, 2017). A leader’s capability to empower others depends on their values, dispostion, and professional practice. Therefore, the leadership statement for Empowerment has become ‘Leaders empower others to learn and grow’. Finally, the Holistic Development statement is ‘Early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow’ (New Zealand &
Ministry of Education, 2017). As we learn and grow holistically, there are many dimensions and influences on our learning and growth as a leader including our personal values and beliefs. Therefore, the leadership statement is ‘Leader's understand the holistic way they learn and grow’.

Initially, I considered using reflective questions for each principle like Shearsby (2015) and the questions posed by the Leadership Webinar (Core Education, 2018). After developing a number of questions for each principle, I evaluated two of the principles using a case study of my own leadership experience in Playcentre. As I reflected on the questions and recorded my response, I found the questions allowed for discussion of practice rather than in-depth reflection on practice. As I wanted leaders to reflect on their leadership and the environment they lead in, I needed to incorporate a reflective practice framework that would encourage learning and action.

Kolb (1984) and Schön (1983) have developed well known accepted forms of reflective practice, and I recognised early childhood education has a reflective practice design for young children’s learning (Dreaver et al., 2004). The assessment for learning framework of notice, recognise and respond (Cowie & Bell, 1999) used in early childhood education is a part of all educators work with young children. This familiarity means they will be very comfortable working within this reflective framework. Educators notice a lot when observing and working with children, and they will recognise some learning, for example social skills. Then educators will respond to some of the learning they recognise to further support and extend the child’s learning (Dreaver et al., 2004). In the context of the leadership matrix, notice, recognise, and respond became the questions.

Combining the leadership framework with the assessment for learning framework, it resembled a matrix (Figure 6). Therefore, a leader takes an example of their professional practice that relates to the principle leadership statement and records; What is happening? Who was there? What was said? Next, the leader asks, what learning, in the form of leadership knowledge, skills, or attitude do I see in these examples. Finally, the leader responds with where to next, by asking how I can grow or extend my leadership learning in relation to the leadership principle. This matrix is essentially an individual learning plan which leaders and aspiring leaders can use as professional development. The content in the notice, recognise, and respond columns of the principle matrix are my thoughts on what each principle means to my practice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Leadership Themes</th>
<th>Framework Principles</th>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Recognise</th>
<th>Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Te Whāriki Framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Principles</td>
<td>Kaupapa whakahaere**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Relationships</td>
<td>Ngāhononga**</td>
<td>Relationships Managing people</td>
<td>Leaders learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things.</td>
<td>Building relationships Types of relationships Significant relationships</td>
<td>Effective Communication skills Values – trust, respect Collaboration Authentic Responsive Reciprocal Behaviours Differences Networking Pedagogy (Role Modelling, Mentoring, Coaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Family and community</td>
<td>Whānau tangata**</td>
<td>Culture Network</td>
<td>The wider world of family and community is an integral part of being a leader.</td>
<td>Playcentre and Tiriti-based context Playcentre Philosophy Tiriti-based context (Manaakitanga, Whanaungatanga, Kaitiakitanga, Tino Rangatiratanga, Te Reo Māori, Tikanga) External Networks Wider ECE community Education Community</td>
<td>Cultural competence Culturally responsive Enacting philosophy Significant knowledge and understanding in a wider ECE environment Partnership Others perspective Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Empowerment</td>
<td>Whakamana**</td>
<td>Change Innovation and Initiative</td>
<td>Leaders empower others to learn and grow.</td>
<td>Change Initiative Creating opportunities Emergent leadership Problem-solving Autonomy Engagement Attitude Responsibility</td>
<td>Leadership skills Pedagogy Growing capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Holistic development</td>
<td>Kotahitanga**</td>
<td>Performance improvement Career management</td>
<td>Leaders understand the holistic way they learn and grow.</td>
<td>Playcentre education Learning to parent Learning to lead Sources of new knowledge and experiences Strengths, interests Values, beliefs, biases Skills Authenticity Professional interests Change Personal development</td>
<td>Dispositions Values Transformational learning Reflective practice Critical thinker Professional Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6 - Te Whāriki Leadership Matrix – Principles**
The *Te Whāriki* framework includes five strands that I have inserted into the same matrix framework as the principles (Figure 7). Each strand has a statement, goals around the environment that children experience, and learning outcomes which a child becomes capable of. As with the principles, I replaced the word ‘children’ with ‘leader’ and reworded were needed for the leadership statement.

*Figure 7 - Te Whāriki Leadership Matrix – Strands*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Recognise</th>
<th>Respond</th>
<th>Where to next?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td>Leaders experience an environment where:</td>
<td>Over time and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The health and wellbeing of Leaders are protected and nurtured</td>
<td>Their health is promoted</td>
<td>Protecting and nurturing their health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their emotional wellbeing is nurtured</td>
<td>Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They feel safe</td>
<td>Keeping themselves and others safe from harm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Connecting links with the wider ECE community is encouraged</td>
<td>Making connections between people, places and things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders feel a sense of belonging</td>
<td>They know they have a place</td>
<td>Taking part in caring for this place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events</td>
<td>Understand how things work here and adapting to change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour</td>
<td>Show respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>There are equitable opportunities for learning and leading</td>
<td>Treating others fairly and including them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for learning are equitable, and each Leader’s contribution is valued</td>
<td>They are affirmed as individuals</td>
<td>Recognising and appreciating their own ability to learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are encouraged to learn with and alongside others</td>
<td>Using a range of strategies and skills to work and learn with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>They develop communication skills for a range of purposes</td>
<td>Expressing themselves in a range of contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The languages and symbols of Leader’s own and other cultures are promoted and protected</td>
<td>The experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures</td>
<td>Recognising concepts and using them with meaning and purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They discover different ways to be creative and expressive</td>
<td>Expressing feelings and ideas using a range of modes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Their work is valued as meaningful learning, and the importance of initiative is recognised</td>
<td>Showing initiative, taking risks and experimenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders learn through active exploration of the environment</td>
<td>The gain confidence in their own professional practice</td>
<td>Challenging themselves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning</td>
<td>Using a range of strategies for reasoning and problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They develop their professional practice</td>
<td>Generating and refining their professional practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the strand matrix differs in that the noticing in this matrix became the goals, so the leader was noticing the goal experience; for example, ‘leaders experience an environment where their emotional wellbeing is nurtured.’ The recognise part of the matrix uses the strand learning outcome so leaders could recognise what to look for that would indicate the environment was meeting the goal, for example, ‘overtime and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs.’ Leaders then respond by making changes to their centre's current leadership practice if needed. This matrix creates an assessment matrix that assesses the leadership culture and environment, highlighting if the environment for leaders is as positive and supportive as it could be.

To examine the viability of the leadership framework matrix case studies follow in the next chapter and the use of vignettes of my leadership experience as a way of recording what I have noticed about my leadership practice. I will then I go on to recognise learning from these vignettes and respond to the recognised learning with a where to next to further build or extend my leadership practice.
4 Applying the Te Whāriki Leadership Framework Matrix: Five Case Studies

4.1 Introduction

A case studies for each principle and one case study for the five strands, will be used to examine in detail my own experience as a leader in Playcentre using the leadership matrix. In the first instance, the leadership statement will be stated before I examine my leadership using the formative assessment framework style of, notice, recognise, and respond, that is used in early childhood education. Using vignettes of my own experience of each of the four principles at Playcentre, I will reflect on what I notice about each principle and what I recognise about my leadership in Playcentre. In the vignettes I have used fictitious names for adults and for children a gender title and age, so as not to identify any one individual. Finally, I will discuss how I can respond to what I recognised to enhance my professional practice further. The final case study of the strand matrix within the leadership matrix, is my response to the noticing the goals and recognising the outcomes to assess the environment in which I lead. Therefore, the case studies will following in the order of Relationships, Family & Community, Empowerment, Holistic Development and the Strand matrix.

4.2 Case Study - Relationships

The leadership statement for the principle Relationships is:

Leaders learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.

Relationships is one of my core values and sit at the heart of my professional practice, like young children’s learning from relationships, I too learn through the relationships I have with people, places, and things. However, for this case study on my relationships as a leader, I will concentrate on my relationships with people rather than places and things.

4.2.1 Notice:

Vignette 1

What a lovely morning to be outside playing, the sun is shining, and I can feel its warmth on my back. I am enjoying being back in this environment. It is so much fun to be playing alongside the children and talking with parents about their child. I hear footsteps crunching down the driveway; I look up to see who it is. Oh, a new face, I better welcome them. I stand and walk towards the gate, smiling as I greet the visitors – a mum and daughter. “Welcome to Playcentre; I’m Carleen.” I’m greeted in return with a warm smile that mirrors my own. I listen intently to the mother as she
introduces herself and her daughter. I welcome them again using their names and invite them inside to meet the other parents and children. As we walk, I ask about the age and interests of her daughter and if they have recently moved into the area. We arrive inside where I introduce her to the parents and our centre information person.

Vignette 2
I took the opportunity today to talk to our new team members as many of them were together at the Kai table, along with a few experienced parents. I talked about being a big team of six, who are relatively inexperienced, and Harriet offered to go over the induction checklist with them individually. I said I would do the leaner map with parents using the new resources during session over the coming week. I handed out the sheet about the role of the adult on session for them to take away and read. Then I gave them a rundown of a typical session. It was great that Emma re-enforced that their child comes first.

Later – This morning’s meeting appears to have worked really well as the parents took photos during the session and joined in at the end of session meeting. They engaged with the children’s diary sheets and joined the conversation on children’s play and learning during the session. Harriet and I are really pleased with how this session went, so we will endeavour to do the pre-session meeting in a group setting with experienced parents joining the meeting.

Two Days Later – It was great to hear Raelene comment that Tania (one of our new parents) had come in and set up an activity for her child. Our induction meeting two days ago must have inspired and empowered Tania to set up an activity for her own child.

Vignette 3
Sitting at the Kai table chatting with the children and parents, Emma says, “Carleen, we need to make this korowai for Miss 5 to wear on her last day at Playcentre”. Oh yes, I’ve been thinking about making one for a while but never got around to it. “Ok,” I reply. As we discuss the details, others are drawn into the conversation, asking questions about the korowai we plan to create. Then Lilly asks if we are going to get it blessed. Wow, what a great idea and culturally appropriate thing to do. Boy, this feels great, here I am with an idea that others are helping to ensure it comes to life for the children. Emma and I will purchase the materials and hand sew the korowai while Carolyn said she would ask her father-in-law a kaumatua from the local iwi to bless the korowai.

Vignette 4
I am outside and as I walk past the door, I see inside Miss 1 is in her mother’s arms while mum is having a conversation with another mum. I have been building a relationship with Miss 1 and know she loves being outside but I’m not sure if our
relationship is strong enough yet for her to trust me without mum. I decide to see how much trust she has built in me. I put my head in the door and ask Miss 1 if she would like to come outside. Her face lights up with a big smile, she wiggles to let mum know she wants down and comes toddling out to me. Together we head off to the sandpit.

4.2.2 Recognise:

These vignettes show I have an open and effective communication style that allows my relationships to be responsive and reciprocal. All this comes from relationships being a core personal value, a fundamental principle of my professional practice, and the belief that positive relationships are a necessity in a learning environment. The co-operative environment of Playcentre, the use of an emergent leadership model, and the tiriti-based context of early childhood education has meant I have developed my relationships and leadership in a power-sharing way. Therefore, I don’t see myself as a leader with power or control. Yet, reflecting on these vignettes has highlighted that while I do not perceive myself to have power, others could, particularly new parents. It is probable that new parents see me in a position of power as I have a lead role due to my knowledge and experience.

It has also become clear to me through these vignettes the kaupapa Māori values from Te Whāriki that are present in my relationships. In particular, manaakitanga is evident in my mana enhancing behaviour towards others. I express whanaungatanga as we work together to build a sense of belonging for our new whānau. Another kaupapa Māori value that is a part of my leadership is ako, the reciprocal learning, and teaching that occurs between myself and the child or parent.

4.2.3 Respond:

I have to become more aware of my professional practice when I am in a potential position of power. When I identify I am in a potential position of power, I need to use communication that indicates that I view our relationship as one of power with rather than power over.

The number of kaupapa Māori values evident in my relationships has surprised and empowered me in the knowledge that my professional practice reflects the tiriti-based curriculum I am delivering. I would like to continue to build my understanding of Te Ao Māori and develop a better awareness of kaupapa Māori values in my professional practice.

4.3 Case Study - Family and Community

This case study will highlight my own experience of Playcentre as a family and community. As I have previously done, I will state the leadership statement before examining my leadership through the use of vignettes of my own experience at Playcentre. From these experiences, I will reflect and recognise how I lead within a family and community context, concluding with
a discussion on how I can respond to develop my professional practice to adapt to different professional contexts in the future.

The leadership statement for the principle Family and Community is:

The wider world of family and community is an integral part of being a leader.

At Playcentre, we talk of our Playcentre whānau, which includes everyone who attends or works at my centre. The Playcentre whānau I consider to be my professional family and my professional community consists of the wider community in which we are located and the early childhood education sector. Both my professional family and community are part of my wider world and integral to the development and support of me as a leader.

The case study below will look at examples of the influence of my professional family and community on my leadership.

4.3.1 Notice:

**Vignette 5**

*Playcentres vision is ‘Whānau tupu ngātahi – Families growing together.’* Not long after joining Playcentre, I wrote the following statement in James Playcentre profile folder ‘Playcentre – a journey we will take together.’ Little did I know at the time that I would stay with my Playcentre Whānau, learning and growing, for a further 12 years after James left for school.

**Vignette 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matariki week</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Learn te reo Māori phrases, karakia kia, and waiata – tirama tirama nga whetu, read mātāriki stories, use singalong books and make lanterns for parade on Friday evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Te reo Māori, waiata, lanterns, read Seven Kites of Mātāriki then make kites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Te reo Māori, waiata, lanterns, fire in sandpit to cook kumara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Te reo Māori, waiata, lanterns, read Seven Stars of Mātāriki then make stars to hang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Te reo Māori, waiata, lanterns, make Māori bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday Evening</td>
<td>Whānau evening - Tui to welcome, karakia kai, shared kai, tamariki waiata, lantern walk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vignette 7**
This morning I led the children and parents on a walk through the local bush to the river, collecting rubbish along the way. On our way, we stop in the forest to look for insects in the leaf litter, and the children were encouraged not to harm the insects they were finding. “Huge bug,” says Master 3 as he looked through the magnifying glass at the insects we had found. Master 4 ran ahead, chanting, “River! River! Big river!”. Once at the river, we put rocks from the river onto white trays with some water so the children could see the invertebrates swimming around. Miss 3 was excited to find lots of “water bugs”, which with the help of her mum she identified as Mayfly nymphs.

Vignette 8

Playcentre has joined with the school community for a puppet making project. The children had two weeks to make mice and gingerbread men puppets and learn three songs to perform with their puppets. Towards the end of each session, I gather together the children and parents to learn and practice the songs and puppet actions. Finally, the day arrived for the puppet parade and show. We joined the school children in a puppet street parade to the local church hall. At the hall, the Playcentre children, with the support of parents, performed their singing puppet show for the school children. Once they had finished, they got to watch all the school classes perform their puppet shows.

4.3.2 Recognise:

The sense of family and community that I experience through Playcentre has meant I have stayed on long after the majority of Playcentre parents. I love and live the philosophy of Playcentre; it is in my blood and strongly influences my leadership practice of role modelling, mentoring, and coaching. I also recognise kaitiakitanga of the Playcentre philosophy and rangatiratanga in my daily interactions with children and parents.

4.3.3 Respond:

I need to continually promote Playcentre philosophy to new parents and support the culture of parents participating in the Playcentre Education Programme to ensure succession planning for a strong future for our centre. Therefore, when a parent shows interest in becoming a pedagogical leader, that will be the time for me to step away from Playcentre to allow that parent to take on the role of Session Facilitator.

I can see the need to continue the relationships Playcentre already has in our local community and the use of the local area for learning. I see part of my leadership role is to look for new opportunities to connect with others that will be of benefit to both communities.
4.4 Case Study - Empowerment

In this case study, I will examine in detail my own experience as a leader in empowering others. Firstly, the leadership statement will be restated, then examine my leadership through the use of vignettes of my own experience of how I have empowered others at Playcentre. From these experiences, I will reflect and recognise how I empower others, concluding with a discussion on how I can respond to enhance my professional practice of empowering others.

A leader’s capability to empower others depends on their values, attitude, and professional practice. The leadership statement for Empowerment is:

Leaders empower others to learn and grow

Empowerment is the result of my ability to build trusting relationships with others, an outcome of my professional practice framework, see chapter five. For this case study on empowerment as a leader, I will concentrate on how I empower others. For self-empowerment (or self-actualisation) see the following case study on holistic development.

4.4.1 Notice:

Vignette 9

I approached Emily about the recent workshop on young children’s behaviour she had attended. She appeared pleased and excited when I asked what she had learned, and if there was anything from the workshop, she would like to try at Playcentre. Emily describe a few activities that she felt would be suitable, and we discussed how she could go about providing them. I then suggested she go and write them on our daily planning sheets for the days she would like to try the activities out. She left me to go and write on the planning sheets, it was nice to see someone taking on more responsibility, and my interest and encouragement appeared to have empowered her to provide the activities.

Vignette 10

I am visiting Playcentre today; it is not my usual workday. I have been asked to come to the morning session to observe Master 6 and how he is interacting with the other children. I’m outside pushing a young child on a swing some distance from the two boys I am to observe so as not to look like I’m observing them. I observe an interaction between Master 6, Master 3, and Miss 1 on the bridge. As Miss 1 tries to walk across Master 6 jumps up and down to make the bridge wobble slightly but enough to make it hard and frightening for Miss 1. Miss 1 begins to cry, attracting Sarah’s attention. Sarah goes over to Miss 1, and as she settles Miss 1, she questions Master 6 and Master
about why Miss 1 is upset. Master 6 tells Sarah that Master 3 was jumping on the bridge while Miss 1 was trying to walk across. Master 3 says, “I didn’t” and runs inside. I follow him inside and head up the ramp to the family area where Master 3 is. He looks at me as if he thinks I am about to tell him off. I quietly tell him I’m not here to tell him off and ask him to sit next to me. He looks relieved and sits down. Master 3 and I have a very good relationship. Without asking him what happened, I say, “you didn’t do it did you.” His face lights up with relief, “no,” he says. He looked like a child who was finally being believed. “Master 6 blamed you when it was him who was jumping on the bridge while Miss 1 was trying to cross,” I say. “Yes,” says Master 3 and jumps up and looks at me with a big smile of relief. “I thought so, thank you, if this happens again, you need to tell mum or an adult.” Sometime later, Master 3’s Mum tells me that Master 3 now tells her when Master 6 has blamed him or another child.

Vignette 11

Miss 2 slides her cold little hand into mine and leads me over to the jumping mats. She chats away about how she is going to do jumping and wants me to count before she jumps. “One, two, three,” I count. Miss 2 jumps onto the mats. As she is getting up, she says to me, “No, in Māori!” “Ok,” I reply and wait for her to climb up onto the box and get into position to jump. Once in position, she looks at me, “tahi, rua, toru!” I say.

Vignette 12

Today I ask Peter, our new parent, on today’s education team to take photos of the children playing. I have noticed in his first few sessions on team he has stayed close to his child and not engaged with other children. He also appears to be a little lost in what to do on team and how to interact with the other children. Peter asks what is involved, as I explain he appears to relax and is happy to take this task on. At the end of the session, he wants to know how to download the photos; another parent offers to show him. Once Peter has downloaded and printed the photos, he joins the session evaluation meeting. He becomes proactive in cutting out and sticking the photos onto the children’s diary sheets and contributes to the discussion about what the children have done during the session and any learning that was identified. At the end of the meeting, Peter tells me how he enjoyed taking the photos as he got to see everything that was happening during the session. As he spoke, I could hear in his voice and see in his face and body language that this simple task had given him a sense of purpose.
Vignette 13

Morning teatime, I enjoy this part of my morning, standing in the kitchen having a cuppa and a chat with different parents each day. Today Megan asked for parenting advice on dealing with her child’s behaviour and strong emotional response. I gave her the same advice I’ve given all parents with the same issue:

- Check your own behaviour first
- Acknowledge and label the feeling you see your child expressing
- You don’t have to accept the behaviour if you think it is inappropriate for the feeling
- Consider if the behaviour is over the same issue, at the same time in the day, or when you are doing the same task

As always, I suggest she read Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish’s book ‘How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk.’ I enjoy these opportunities to informally chat with parents in-depth about specific issues they are having.

Vignette 14

Part of creating a sense of belonging for our families is asking them to share some aspects of their culture. I asked Davi if she would like to share an element of Indian culture; like food, dance, song, annual celebration, or any other tradition. Davi is keen to celebrate Diwali, a major Indian festival, also known as the festival of lights. At the end of session team meeting, Davi tells us about the different aspects of the celebration and what parts she feels we could do with the children. She thinks making patterns with coloured sand, decorating with flowers, lighting candles, and sharing food would be great ways to celebrate Diwali at Playcentre. We discuss how we will go about providing these activities; the children will bring in flowers, Davi will make some traditional Indian food, and we will make some coloured sand. On the day, Davi guided the other adults and me on rangoli making patterns with coloured sand, decorating with flowers by floating them in a large trough of water and lighting tea candles to float in the centre of the flower display. We were then able to support the children to engage with these activities. The children also got to dress in traditional sarees, try traditional Indian food, sweet carrot puree and savour rolls. At the end of the session, Davi thanked me for giving her the opportunity to share her and her children’s culture with the other children and adults, she enjoyed the session and how involved everyone was. She is keen to repeat the celebration next year.

4.4.2 Recognise:

Reflecting on how I empower others, I know I use the concept of emergent leadership to encourage others to take more responsibility. Still, until now, I did not understand how I did this. I empower others by treating children and adults with respect and giving them agency to act on ideas and develop knowledge and skills. These interactions help me build strong
relationships and allow children and adults who feel empowered, to lead other children, and adults, including myself.

My emotional intelligence has developed as I understand and manage my own emotions and those of the children and adults I work with. I tend to lead with my heart in the first instance and be guided by my head (knowledge and experience). Leading with my heart is underpinned by my values such as family and relationships and my empathy for people, in this case, parents and children.

Cultural competency is developing as I continue to learn how to implement a tiriti-based curriculum, and Playcentre becomes more multi-cultural. The learning from implementing Te Whāriki has helped me to acknowledge and include other cultures in our curriculum and has had several benefits, including creating a sense of belonging for the new family, teaching our children about different cultures, and my own personal development around other cultures.

I can see kaupapa Māori values from Te Whāriki in my professional practice when I empower others. Manaakitanga is evident in my empowering of others, which enhances their mana, and in enhancing their mana, I enhance my own. Whanaungatanga is expressed as we work together to build a sense of belonging and connection for our Playcentre whānau. Another obvious value is Rangatiratanga, which is apparent in my interactions with the children and adults at Playcentre, and I lead them to learn and grow.

4.4.3 Respond

One thing I need to be mindful of is that parents coming into Playcentre do not have the depth of knowledge and experience I have about child development and learning. Therefore, when communicating with parents, I need to make sure I am clear and concise with the information I give them, and it is at a level that they will understand.

To continue to strengthen my cultural competency of Māori culture, I will investigate Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori courses and use te reo Māori more frequently on session.

4.5 Case Study - Holistic Development

This third case study will continue to examine in detail my own holistic development to becoming a leader. Again, I will start by defining the leadership statement then examine my leadership through the use of vignettes. From these experiences, I will reflect and recognise the holistic way in which I have learnt and grown my leadership and how I can respond to further enhance my professional practice in leading others.

We all learn and grow holistically and there are many dimensions and influences on our learning and growth as a leader. Our holistic development is about understanding self and is guided by our personal values and beliefs; thus, the leadership statement for Holistic Development is:

Leader's understanding of the holistic way they learn and grow.
Holistic development is underpinned by the dimensions that make up the whole person, including physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual. This complexity of development is influenced by the contexts in which we live and work. Therefore, learning and growth can come from anywhere and everywhere, and as such, this case study will look at different examples of personal learning of leading.

4.5.1 Notice:

Vignette 15

From my Bachelor of Social Services:

I realise now that the values I identified in my childhood have guided all aspects of my life. Through my Playcentre career, my values have driven my professional practice. I have reflected on how I use my values in my professional practice

**Family** – working alongside whānau to educate their children.

**Relationships** – building receptive and responsive relationships with the children and whānau.

**Happiness** - ensuring children are as happy as they can be at Playcentre so that they are in the best position to learn.

**Freedom** – allowing children the time and space to choose their play and direct their learning.

**Respect** – showing respect for children’s interests, ideas, and feelings.

**Stability** – offering a place that feels familiar and safe.

**Calmness** – maintaining a sense of calm when dealing with children’s feelings and negative behaviour.

**Security** – creating a place where children feel safe and secure, so they can freely play and engage with others.

**Caring** – encouraging care and nurturing towards others.

**Tolerance** – of children’s growing abilities and behaviour.

**Independence** – supporting children to become independent from their parents to explore.

**Resourceful** – creating items or bringing ideas to life from the resources at hand to extend and support child’s learning.

**Kindness** – showing kindness and encouraging kindness.

Over the years, I have developed the following beliefs about children’s learning and development which link strongly to my core values – family, happiness, relationships, and freedom:

*Family is the first and best educators of their child.*
A child needs to be happy before they can learn.

Relationships need to be built on trust.

Play gives a child a feeling of freedom.

Vignette 16

“Not everyone thinks like you,” Kate tells me as I talk to her enthusiastically about all I am learning and observing about child development, behaviour, child-initiated play, and parenting from the Playcentre education workshops I am attending. Looking back, I couldn’t understand why people didn’t have the same passion for Playcentre and child development as I do. Don’t they love their children? Now I know it isn’t because the other parents don’t care; it is because my values and beliefs align so well with Playcentre philosophy, and I have a deep interest in child-initiated play and child development.

Vignette 17

I am exhausted! I sit down at the table where a child is playing with the playdough. I’m heavily pregnant, and the Education Review Office (ERO) is here to observe the session. I know I should be more involved, especially as an ERO woman is observing my interaction with this child. I engage briefly, then go quiet. The child eventually replies, and we continue to engage spasmodically while we are being observed. I felt I should have engaged more, but I just didn’t have the energy. I was disappointed in myself as I thought they didn’t observe a quality interaction. Weeks later, the ERO report came out, “Effective interactions were observed when adults gave children time to think and respond to situations, questions and other challenges” (ERO Report 2005). Wow! Was this comment about me? I didn’t realise I should be giving a child so much time to respond.

Vignette 18

I’m standing in the main room and see Master 4 come down the ramp claiming loudly that Master 2 had bitten him. Master 4’s Dad walks up the ramp towards his son, “show me!” he says, Master 4 holds out his arm, his Dad says, ‘I can’t see anything.’ Wow I would have reacted quite differently. I would have jumped in without knowing the context or looked for evidence.

Vignette 19

I enter the room and take a seat. There are already a few people here, and more chairs set out than for other workshops I have attended. The room slowly fills up, and it
includes several older ladies who appear to know each other. The workshop begins, and the facilitator introduces herself and the older ladies. They are all here to sit in on this new workshop on recording children’s learning using the new assessment framework. I participate in the workshop activities and ask questions. We break for lunch, and as I’m getting out my lunch, I’m approached by one of the older ladies. She introduces herself as Jackie from Bells Playcentre and tells me I should consider standing for the Otago Playcentre Association executive committee. Jackie goes on to say how I would be good with the policy portfolio. Wow! She can see I have potential to be involved at a regional leadership level. She leaves, and I eat my lunch feeling proud and empowered that someone I have only just met has seen potential in me that I didn’t know I had.

4.5.2 Recognise:

I can see my values sit so comfortably with Playcentre philosophy, and I enact them in my professional practice. My values being so aligned with Playcentre explains why I have become so heavily involved in Playcentre, staying long after my children left. But this also highlights that we all have our own values and beliefs, and this acts as a reminder that not everyone has the same values and beliefs.

Critical reflection is obvious in some of these vignettes and has become a critical capability within my professional practice. I regularly reflect on what is working and what is not and ask myself why. I try to evaluate the situation, issue, or experience as objectively as I can to consider if change or new learning is needed. This evaluation can occur in the moment when working with children or whānau or after an event.

I have been empowered by others who see potential in me that I didn’t even know I had, which has given me the confidence to put my hand up for roles I would never have considered previously. For example, standing for the Otago Playcentre Association Executive Committee and being elected, then putting myself forward for President. This support and encouragement of me by others gave me the power to take control of my professional life and create a career out of my Playcentre learning and experience.

4.5.3 Respond:

I need to be aware when engaging with whānau that my values and beliefs may not align with theirs and that I do not enforce my values on them. Thus, as I develop a relationship with whānau, I need to learn and understand their values and beliefs around their child’s learning and development.

Over my time at Playcentre I have learned a significant amount and emerged as a leader. I need to clearly identify the leadership skills and style I possess and understand how I can take these skills into other professions if I want to move beyond Playcentre.
4.6 Case Study - Strands

The final case study is to use the Strands of *Te Whāriki* as an assessment of the environment in which leadership occurs. For example, examining the likes of a leaders’ ability to experience wellbeing and belonging in their workplace. To create an assessment matrix from the Strands, I have taken the strand statement, goals, and learning outcomes from each strand and changed the word ‘children’ to ‘leaders.’ The goals have become what a leader should notice about their experience in their workplace, and the learning outcomes indicate what a leader should recognise as a result of the ideal environment express in the goal. Leaders record their response to what is happening in their work environment, which will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the workplace environment. Leaders can then look to how they can continue, enhance, or improve the workplace environment in which they lead, thus ensuring a positive and supportive work environment for others.

4.6.1 Wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td>Their health is promoted</td>
<td>Protecting and nurturing their own health</td>
<td>Due to the ratio of adult to children usually around 1:2 on session, I can easily meet my personal needs and have time for a short break, which allows for informal discussions with parents. There is always cover if I need to take time off for illness.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their emotional wellbeing is nurtured</td>
<td>Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs</td>
<td>I’ve always felt emotionally supported and have been fortunate enough to have Parent Council representatives that I am comfortable to approach to discuss any emotional issues or needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They feel safe</td>
<td>Keeping themselves and others safe from harm</td>
<td>The centre has always had such a welcoming culture and good health and safety checks that keep me mentally and physically safe, allowing me to keep parents and children safe too. However, at times I have felt the pressure of the</td>
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</table>
responsibility and of what would happen if something significant occurred. How accountable would the Ministry of Education see me as the nominated “person responsible”? I need to have this clarified.

### 4.6.2 Belonging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Leaders experience an environment where:</td>
<td>Over time and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of:</td>
<td>Through the annual staff appraisal process, I have always been encouraged to look out for and take on professional development opportunities with the wider early childhood community, attend hui’s with other centres and maintain a strong connection with the local school. Over time I have found I learn less from professional development opportunities, but it often positively reinforces my professional practice. Once my children left the local school, I found it harder to maintain regular contact as I was no longer going to the school daily. I found parents who currently have children at the school, in particular children in the new entrance class, are in a better position to keep the connection strong between the Playcentre and the school, so I liaise with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Leaders feel a sense of belonging</td>
<td>Connecting links with the wider early childhood community is encouraged</td>
<td>Making connections between people, places and things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They know they have a place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking part in caring for this place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | | | In the beginning, I was warmly welcomed and quickly built positive relationships with parents and children, which
gave me a strong sense of belonging. Because I live the Playcentre value of families learning together, I have a strong sense of pride in my centre. I, therefore, want to take care of it, so it continues to be a welcoming place for families as it was for my family.

They feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events

Understand how things work here and adapting to change

Over the years I have been involved there have been several changes, including the assessment of children’s learning, Playcentre’s education programme, the relicensing of all early childhood centres and the restructure of Playcentre. I have seen these changes as opportunities to learn and grown. However, the recent restructuring of Playcentre, and its education programme have left me feeling burnt out, reluctant to embrace the changes, and feeling the level of responsibility a burden. I will look for ways to re-energise while I look for new opportunities outside of Playcentre.

They know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour

Show respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others

While I have always worked within the rules, there have been times when I have questioned and challenged changes, sometimes we could continue as we were; other times we had to change. Often, I would see these enforced changes as a new challenge to learn and grow. I have always put the rights of the children and their families first and treated them with the utmost respect.

### 4.6.3 Contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Recognise</th>
<th>Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strand</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Learning Outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leaders experience an environment where:

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of:

**Contribution**

- Opportunities for learning are equitable, and each leader’s contribution is valued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Opportunities for learning are equitable, and each leader’s contribution is valued</th>
<th>There are equitable opportunities for learning and leading</th>
<th>Treating others fairly and including them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are affirmed as individuals</td>
<td>Recognising and appreciating their own ability to learn</td>
<td>In recent years I have recognised my ability to quickly learn and incorporate new skills and/or knowledge into my professional practice. I now appreciate that this is due to my curiosity and interest in children’s learning and behaviour. I realise not everyone is as interested in these areas as I am. I continue to read to keep up to date with new theories and best practice.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>They are encouraged to learn with and alongside others</td>
<td>Using a range of strategies and skills to work and learn with others</td>
<td>I have had to develop a wide range of strategies and skills to work alongside, learn, and lead parents and adults. This includes a range of pedagogical</td>
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</table>
practices for working with both children and parents simultaneously.

4.6.4 Communication

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notice</td>
<td>Recognise</td>
<td>What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>The languages and symbols of leader’s own and other cultures are promoted and protected</td>
<td>Leaders experience an environment where:</td>
<td>Over time and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They develop communication skills for a range of purposes</td>
<td>Expressing themselves in a range of contexts</td>
<td>I believe relationships are at the core of my professional practice. Therefore, I have developed effective communication skills to build positive relationships with children and parents over a short period. I believe that parents and children need to quickly feel a sense of wellbeing and belonging before the parent commits to the centre and the child feels relaxed and free to play. Most of our parents use social media as their main form of communication, and I feel I need to upskill on the use and communication style of social media apps like Facebook and Instagram.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures</td>
<td>Enjoy hearing cultural stories and using cultural symbols and concepts with meaning and purpose</td>
<td>Over the years, I have encountered several different cultures through our families. I encourage families to share their culture so we can all learn. Along with their guidance, we can incorporate aspects of their culture (music, stories, food, culturally significant celebrations) into our sessions. During my time at Playcentre, I have slowly developed my pronunciation of te reo Māori. However, my lack of comprehension and</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
limited opportunities to be around others who speak fluent te reo Māori means my effort to speak te reo Māori on session is tokenism at best. This is an area in which I need to strengthen through attending te reo Māori classes.

They discover different ways to be creative and expressive

Expressing feelings and ideas using a range of modes

I have enjoyed incorporating new best practice ideas into the centre. Many ideas have allowed me to be creative in the way I present these new practices to parents and children. I have been particularly proud of the implementation of our group learning focus, and tiriti-based curriculum focuses and display board. While I initiate and lead this work, to begin with, I need to ensure the work involved in these cycles is sustainable for the centre and does not rely on one person.

4.6.5 Exploration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Recognise</th>
<th>Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strand</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Learning Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Leader experience an environment where:</td>
<td>Over time and with guidance and encouragement, leaders become increasingly capable of:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leader learn through active exploration of the environment

Their work is valued as meaningful learning, and the importance of initiative is recognised

Showing initiative, taking risks and experimenting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They gain confidence in their own professional practice</th>
<th>Challenging themselves</th>
<th>I have always had something to challenge me and keep me interested while working at Playcentre. It was the challenges that motivate me daily and added to my enjoyment of work. I was always on the lookout for new knowledge or skills relevant to Playcentre. I have found that I have very few challenges now, so I have begun to look for opportunities outside of Playcentre. As a result, I have become involved in a committee that gives industry advice to lecturers teaching early childhood education.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning</td>
<td>Using a range of strategies for reasoning and problem solving</td>
<td>I have built up a good tool kit of strategies and techniques for working with children and adults. These have helped me to identify what is happening in any given situation and being able to explain it to others or problem solve on the spot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They develop their professional practice</td>
<td>Generating and refining their professional practice</td>
<td>After 16 years of continuous learning and experience in early childhood education, I have developed my own professional practice, which has relationships at its core. The years of experience have refined my practice, in particular, my communication and observation skills. I will continue to learn and refine these and other skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 Learning Through Reflection

Cultural Competency

Noticing:

While taking notes from Jillian Rodd’s book ‘Leadership in Early Childhood’ I wrote my own response to each statement around cultural competence in red.

Recognising:

💡 I am culturally competent!

Responding:

There is always more to learn about other cultures, especially Māori culture including te reo Māori. Therefore, my next step could be attending a more in depth te reo Māori course.
5 Enquiry Discussion

5.1 Enquiry Summary

This enquiry has investigated the use of Te Whāriki as a leadership framework combined with the assessment framework used in early childhood education to develop a leadership matrix. The leadership matrix created is for Playcentre leaders to examine their own leadership and assess the environment in which they lead. To evaluate the practicality of the leadership matrix, my own experience as a leader in Playcentre was used as case studies.

The outcome of the case studies is twofold, the viability of the leadership matrix for use by Playcentre leaders and aspiring leaders, and the examination of my leadership capability using the framework. Before looking at the impact of the enquiry on my leadership, I will discuss the limitations and recommendations of the leadership matrix.

5.1.1 Limitations and Recommendations

A major limitation of the research is not having other Playcentre leaders participate in this enquiry to evaluate the true worth of the leadership matrix. By using myself as a case study and having developed the matrix myself, therefore, the outcome of the enquiry is open to my bias. I also realised that using the matrix on my own meant my interpretation and understanding of the principles in terms of leadership was limited to my knowledge and experience. Not only is it possible that my own bias has impacted on my use of the matrix, but there is potential for me to have unintentionally looked at my experiences through rose-tinted glasses rather than critically reflect on practice. If, however, I had worked with others to reflect on the matrix as a group and had discussions of each principle, the interpretation of each principle could have been far broader and deeper. This would have opened up the potential to view my leadership practice through a different lens. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the matrix be trialled with a group of Playcentre leaders and aspiring leaders. Should this prove successful, then the leadership matrix could be trialled with early childhood leaders outside of Playcentre. There may even be value in other education leaders, such as primary school teachers who may use Te Whāriki in their classroom, trialing the matrix.

5.1.2 Insights into Professional Practice

While I consider myself to be an experienced leader in Playcentre who uses critical reflection as part of my leadership practice, at times, I felt it would have been of great value to discuss my interpretation of each principle. However, I still regard the process as having given a valuable insight into my leadership. In determining my interpretation of each principle, then recognising aspects of my leadership and responding to the principles and strand matrix, I had several insights into myself not just as a leader but as a person. There was one light bulb moment where I realised that I was culturally competent, a term that has become common
in early childhood education. Until now, I was not sure of what it meant to be culturally competent. Rodd (2012) defines culturally competent to mean understanding your own world view, positive attitudes towards cultural diversity, understanding of cultural practices and ability to interact and communicate.

Insights from case studies on my leadership practice made me aware of the position of power that I am in. I need to be aware of this when communicating with others, even though I don’t see myself as having power over them. The case studies also highlight the compassion and empathy aspects to my leadership roles. These insights have contributed to me becoming more self-aware of how I lead and, therefore, willing to make changes to my practice to be a better leader. I have developed a strong sense of emotional intelligence and see the world differently, no longer through the eyes of a parent but through the lens of a leader.

5.2 Reflecting on the Enquiry Process

The process of constructing the enquiry was one of frustration, to begin with. Throughout this enquiry, my emotions towards my learning journey have ebbed and flowed. From the lows of frustration, lack of motivation and a feeling of “I’m just making shit up!”, to the highs of driving motivation, light bulb moments and a feeling of elation for what I was producing. Of course, I knew this ebb and flow of feelings is natural after spending many years supporting post graduate students, but that did not make my journey any less bumpy. However, the understanding and learning has come from the end of the journey as I bring everything together and gain clarity, I know I will continue to learn from this enquiry long after it has been completed.

In the beginning I found I just had to write, even though I had not planned out my enquiry. My head was swimming in a sea of ideas, existing and new knowledge from readings. But I always had a little niggle at the back of my mind “Te Whāriki more than an early childhood curriculum.” My attempt at writing was bringing together my knowledge and experience to form a strong foundation, but the reality was it just was not giving me the clarity I was craving.

After four and a half months, it was time to park my enquiry, have a break over Christmas and then tackle the beast again. But you never really park something like a master’s, and it continued to make its way into my thoughts. Finally, it came to me; I had to go back to the drawing board and visually work this out. I have come to realise that I need to visualise my thoughts and ideas in both pictures and diagrams to translate my thoughts and ideas into words. The outcome was to plan and develop a framework to explore leadership in Playcentre.

As I went about planning the framework, it became apparent that using Te Whāriki was the most logical framework to use to examine leadership, as it was effectively purpose-built. As I developed the framework and produced the matrix, I felt questions were needed for the principles in the framework. I created questions for each principle that would help the early childhood leader look at their professional practice in leading others.
Now to take action and begin my enquiry. I started with trialling the questions on my own experience as a leader. While I was happy with what I had produced, I had lost my ‘voice’ in addressing each question and, therefore, my authenticity. I decided to scrap the original questions and look at what each of the Te Whāriki principles meant to me using case studies of my experience for each principle. As I began, I started to wonder how I was going to include the tiriti-based context of early childhood education. It became apparent pretty quickly that kaupapa Māori values in Te Whāriki would naturally be woven throughout the case studies.

In the end, the leadership matrix I developed highlighted that my professional practice is heavily influenced by Te Whāriki. Therefore, as Te Whāriki is a sociocultural framework, then mine, too, was a sociocultural leadership framework of practice.

5.3 Professional Framework of Practice

As a Pākehā, Te Whāriki has made a significant impact on my leadership and my framework of practice. The principles and strands of Te Whāriki make up my framework of practice, which explains why I have always believed Te Whāriki is so much more than an early childhood curriculum. Therefore, as Te Whāriki is a sociocultural framework (see sections 1.4.2 and 3.2), and I conduct my leadership in a sociocultural context, I have a sociocultural leadership framework of practice (Figure 8, pg 46).

I have used a heart shape for the drops of water, as I have come to realise I lead with my heart, I lead with empathy, I lead with emotional intelligence.

The pool of water represents my relationship with one person in a professional context, therefore, the more interactions (single drop/heart), the larger the size of the pool of water. The size of the pool of water indicates the growing relationship, and the elements of my relationship with that one person go through as the relationship builds trust. The deeper the colour blue in the drops and ripples the stronger the trust in the relationship.

With any new relationship, communication is key and will determine if there is a relationship to be had and how strong it will be, so I need to be an effective communicator. As the relationship grows in our early interactions, I try to build a sense of belonging and support their wellbeing. Once the person has a sense of belonging to the Playcentre family and community, they feel empowered to contribute. When the person feels empowered and is contributing I encourage them to explore and take risks within the safety of our Playcentre family and community context.

I am aware that it is not just my direct communication that builds trust and strengthens our relationship, but also their observations of me when I am communicating and working with others. These include observations of my pedagogical practices such as role modelling, mentoring, and coaching.
Relationships are at the heart of my professional practice. Each raindrop (heart) represents an interaction that builds a relationship.

The leadership matrix I created from *Te Whāriki* and the formative assessment method used in early childhood have allowed me to examine my own leadership, and develop my framework of practice. The case studies have allowed me to see my areas of strengths and where enhancement or improvements can be made in my leadership practice. For example, when communicating with others be mindful of values, beliefs and if there is a power dimension to the relationship.

The outcome of the case studies, my framework of practice, and the professional practice enquiry process have all contributed to enhancing my professional practice as a leader in Playcentre and beyond. The following chapter highlights the learning from the enquiry process and findings.
6 A Learning Story: Noticing, Recognising and Responding to Leadership

6.1 Noticing

In the beginning, all I wanted to do was interpret my experience as a leader in Playcentre; to put my leadership experience into context, a leadership context. I wanted to understand my leadership skills and practice and to know if they would be of use beyond Playcentre. Two things kept playing on my mind in the early days of this enquiry, *Te Whāriki*, which I believe is more than an early childhood curriculum and has application beyond early childhood education. Secondly, the cultural context of the curriculum delivered in Playcentre and other early childhood services.

My starting point was to determine what was known about leadership in early childhood education, including what I knew about Playcentre leadership. I was aware of the diversity of early childhood education services; teacher-led services, parent-led services and different philosophies. However, I was not aware of the complexity that resulted from this diversity when trying to determine a leadership model for early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Section 1.3).

Distributed leadership had become the most accepted model to date, but it relied on positional leadership also being present. Positional leaders are usually ‘head teachers,’ but Playcentre does not have head teachers as it is Parent-led. Instead, Playcentre has its own model of leadership, emergent leadership.

Emergent leadership is about parents stepping up or being encouraged and mentored to step into leadership roles, but after a period, stepping aside for others to emerge as leaders. Experienced parents or those in leadership positions like President or Session Facilitator identify and encourage or mentor new parents to step into leadership roles. The power is shared in emergent leadership; however, positional leadership roles such as President or Session Facilitator do not distribute leadership among parents. Instead they look for leadership potential and encourage and mentor others to become leaders, even replacing the positional leaders. Therefore, in the emergent leadership model, leaders are in a role of power-sharing rather than power over others. This power sharing explains why I never regarded myself as a leader until my children left Playcentre, and I stayed on. I was no longer part of the parent council but employed by the parent council as a session facilitator, however, I still operated like an experienced parent and shared the leadership.

As I researched leadership, there was a constant call for more leadership research and leadership professional development. As well as researching a leadership model in early childhood education, I began to look for leadership frameworks that would give guidance to what leadership in early childhood education looked like. The educational leadership capability framework that had been recently released was developed as part of a leadership strategy for teachers in early childhood education services and schools (section 1.3). Early childhood education needs its own specially designed framework due to its diversity and
complexity. With Playcentre being a parent-led services, this is a greater reason to not use the existing framework but develop a specific framework instead.

Enter Te Whāriki and its potential to be more than an early childhood curriculum. Te Whāriki had already been used as a mentoring framework, and several researches over the years have pointed to the suitability of Te Whāriki as a leadership framework (section 3.3). One way a researcher suggests using Te Whāriki as a leadership framework was to use four questions around leadership that related to the four principles of Te Whāriki (section 3.3). These questions were more suited to teacher-led services, again not an ideal framework for Playcentre.

Now, this is where my enquiry steps in to fill a gap and provide a leadership framework suitable for Playcentre. Ok, so where to start? Create a leadership statement. Now what? Questions? What type of questions? So many questions I could ask? This all got me thinking about what the right question would be and if there was a right question. Then it came to me; notice, recognise, and respond to the leadership statement! It fits so well, in Playcentre and in other early childhood services. We already know how to notice, recognise and respond to children’s learning why not notice, recognise and respond to our own learning of leadership?

This was no longer a framework; this was a working matrix that I and potentially others could use. But will it really work? I decided to use case studies of my own leadership experience at Playcentre to evaluate the leadership matrix and to highlight my leadership practice.

6.2 Recognising

…and it worked! Well, for me, it worked.

Oh, the things I recognised about my practice and the leadership skills I could see I had...

Relationship is a core value of mine and at the heart of my framework of practice as a leader. I do see my relationships as responsive to the children and adults I work with and, in turn, are reciprocated. These relationships are built using open and effective communication to develop trust with both children and adults. However, from this enquiry and on completing the leadership matrix, I recognise that I am in a position of power regardless of how I feel about power. I believe I share power with the children and adults I work with. But I cannot control how others perceive my position or feel when we interact. The position of power has made me acutely aware of the power relationship that exists and how it could impact on the relationships I have.

Coming across an explanation of cultural competence was an enlightening moment, as I realised, I was culturally competent in my leadership role at Playcentre. Being culturally competent should not have surprised me as the Kaupapa Māori values are throughout Te Whāriki, which means there are Kaupapa Māori values throughout our entire curriculum and practice and they have naturally become embedded in my own professional practice.
I enjoy empowering the children and adults I work with. It is a delight in seeing the adults grow and become competent and confident in their roles at Playcentre. I love to observe the children’s natural expression of feelings and increased confidence when they are empowered - a joy to be a part of daily. As I reflect on the different ways I empower others, there is a sense of self-awareness around my emotional response and particularly around empathy for others; always wanting to help by offering to support, taking on a task or working with a difficult child.

As I began to reflect and examine the holistic way we grow and learn, I started to see connections across parts of myself, which further contribute to my whole self. It was while examining the Playcentre philosophy that I began to recognise so many of my personal values aligned with the Playcentre vision and values. It became increasingly evident that this alignment of personal values with Playcentre philosophy was the reason I felt a strong sense of belonging and remained involved in Playcentre long after my children had left. Being empowered by others, my values, and a sense of belonging to Playcentre, drove a natural curiosity and interest to progress into becoming a Playcentre leader. This strong sense of belonging to Playcentre and wanting to contribute, gave me a sense of purpose.

Finally, I recognise the transformation that has occurred through becoming a parent and attending Playcentre. Being a parent and attending Playcentre, I have become self-aware through critical reflection of my interactions with children and parents, both inside and outside of Playcentre. My natural curiosity about child behaviour, development, and learning has sent me on a journey of lifelong learning. As my experience, knowledge, and skills have developed, so has my leadership as I took on different roles. The reflection that has occurred in my studies (Bachelor of Social Service, Master of Professional Practice), has made me realise I am a leader. My leadership framework of practice is heavily influenced by Playcentre and Te Whāriki, which I believe will serve me beyond Playcentre. Thus, the transformation of my professional practice has been from Playcentre parent to a culturally competent leader who operates in a sociocultural framework of practice enacted with empathy.

6.3 Responding

Firstly, with regards to the leadership matrix and the response to it working as a matrix for me, it remains to be seen if it would work for other Playcentre leaders or early childhood education leaders, but this is outside the scope of this enquiry.

The completion of the matrix has met the learning outcomes from my learning agreement. Reflecting on my own journey to notice aspects of learning to lead, or as a leader, means I now understand the pathway I took to becoming a leader. Through emergent leadership I have become a positional leader and share leadership with parents. I continue to use emergent leadership to encourage and mentor parents to become leaders. Due to the nature of working with parents I have a very empathic leadership style. The use of the matrix also highlights how the tiriti-based context of early childhood education is reflected in my
leadership at Playcentre as I could identify a number of Kaupapa Māori values through my practice.

In response to the insights gained from completing the matrix, I have made the following goals for my professional practice and career. Immediate implementation to my practice includes being mindful when communicating with others as their values, beliefs, and knowledge about child development, learning, and behaviour may differ to mine. Acknowledging that I am in a position of power that could influence how someone responds and the development of our relationship. In the short term, I will investigate Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori courses and begin succession planning for others to take on the session facilitator role in the future. Long term, I need to be looking for opportunities beyond Playcentre as the weight of responsibility of many years as session facilitator is beginning to sit heavy on my shoulders.

The following chapter will conclude this enquiry with a look at my personal transformation, an overview of the pathway through Playcentre from new parent to Playcentre Leader and discuss where to next.
7 Reflective Summary

Throughout this written portfolio, I have woven a critical reflection of the enquiry. However, there is a need to provide a critical commentary after the experience to gain insight into the learning gained from the enquiry outcome and the process itself. Therefore, the reflective summary will highlight the transformation of myself as a researcher and my professional practice.

7.1 Mapping Leadership Pathway Through Playcentre

A sphere of influence is used to show the pathway of influence through Playcentre. It is aptly named due to the influence of others on my journey through Playcentre and my influence as a Leader of Profession on others. The sphere of influence (Figure 9), incorporates the pathway through Playcentre, leadership models used in Playcentre, the leadership matrix case studies, and my sociocultural leadership framework of practice.
When the sphere of influence is drawn out and viewed sideways (Figure 10 pg 53), my pathway from new parent through Playcentre and beyond can be seen more clearly. The pathway stands as a guide to others who feel inspired to lead in Playcentre and beyond.

Viewing the spheres from the side and starting at the left is where I started, and where a new parent enters Playcentre. For each of the Playcentre spheres I will give an overview of the general experience for a child, parent and/or colleague in the sphere and how my practice contributes. For the regional sphere I will discuss how my practice contributes to the greater Playcentre community, while the Leader of Profession sphere will cover the potential for Playcentre as a profession.

The first sphere, titled New Parent, is when the new family visits the centre for up to three sessions before deciding to enrol. On arrival the family is welcomed into the centre, given a tour, and introduced to other parents. A Playcentre parent offers to be the new family’s buddy and supports them to explore the centre and answers any questions the family may have. During these visits I look for opportunities to engage the child(ren) and find out their interests from either the child or parent. If a parent sees their child is being included, respected, and engaged by myself or other parents then they are more likely to enrol. Vignette 1 in section 4.2.1 gives an example of how I engage with new families.
Figure 10 – My Playcentre Pathway and Leadership Practice Model
The second sphere, Playcentre Parent, occurs after enrolment when the parent is inducted into Playcentre life as a member of the Parent Council and part of a session education team. As the session facilitator I work with a different team of parents each session to provide the curriculum and support for children’s learning. Each team includes parents with a range of experience in supporting children’s learning. As new parents join the team I introduce them to the team and give them an overview of what is expected. In the pre-session meeting I ask each parent what activities they want set up for their child or what their child’s current interests are, and make suggestions for activities which then informs the session plan. To encourage parents to contribute to the session I will ask them to either set up an activity or take photos of the children at play during the session. Taking photos is the best way for a new parent to get to know the other children on session as they move around the centre to take photos. At the session evaluation meeting experienced parents and I will start the discussion on the learning observed during the session. New and experienced parents are asked about what they observed when taking photos or at an activity they set up. Throughout the session, I role model playing with the children, showing the child respect and empowering the child. Examples of how I work with Playcentre parents and children are in section 4.2.1, vignette four; section 4.4.1, vignette’s eleven and fourteen; and section 4.3.1 vignette five.

Formal learning for parents can begin in the third sphere, Playcentre Adult Learner, but not all parents move into this sphere. Playcentre’s adult education programme delivers the New Zealand Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 4 and 5). It is highly recommended that parents take up this free educational opportunity, but many parents say they are too busy with other commitments to take up the opportunity. Those that do undertake the certificate gain significant insight into early childhood education through workshops and assignments. I deliver some of the workshops required, which I will discuss further in sphere five, regional educator. Parents on the session education team enrolled in the certificate often need to deliver an activity and observe the children playing. I support and encourage parents by having discussions about identifying children’s learning, how to support children’s social skills and how to deal with negative behaviour. Vignettes sixteen - nineteen in section 4.5.1 are examples of how I learned as a parent, giving an insight into how parents could be learning from me. The examples where parents have learned from me as a leader are vignette two in section 4.2.1 and vignettes nine and twelve in section4.4.1.

Emergent leadership operates across these first three spheres with less experienced parents encouraged to step up into a leadership role or mentored by session facilitators or centre leaders to take on a leadership role. I use emergent leadership to take parents beyond their capabilities and lead them in a direction that is empowering.

Playcentre Leader is the fourth sphere which includes leadership on the parent council (governance and management) and on session (education). Experienced parents on session share the leadership of the session with myself, the session facilitator. Very few experienced parents take on the session facilitate role, preferring to share the leadership of the session but not have the responsibility that the session facilitator role has. Fewer parents are staying long enough at Playcentre to complete the qualification and even fewer become session facilitators. Experienced parents who I share the leadership of the session with, are
considered colleagues and, along with the other session facilitator, attend a fortnightly planning meeting. The regular planning meeting is for long term planning and cover trip planning, children’s current interests, parents’ aspirations for their children’s learning, and any behaviour issues that have arisen. The planning meetings are often a chance for me to coach others on how to deal with situations that are occurring on session. The main area of coaching is dealing with behaviour, particularly four-year-olds and boys’ behaviour. As a session facilitator, my main role is to provide pedagogical leadership to the teams of parents I work with in each session. I provide pedagogical leadership through role modelling, mentoring, and coaching. The following vignettes give examples of working with others and planning, vignette 3 section 4.2.1 and vignette’s 17-19 in section 4.5.1.

My leadership in the Playcentre Leader sphere involves building effective relationships of trust and empathy, being a good listener, and an effective communicator. Parenting young children is challenging; so many parents ask me for advice about how to deal with disruptive behaviour in their own or other children. Often these conversations are straight forward, and I make some suggestions and recommend a parenting book that many other parents and I have found useful. If these conversations happen on session with other parents, the more experienced parents will offer examples of how they have dealt with the behaviour in their own child. The difficulty comes when the conversations are about another child, and this often happens with a parent who has not yet experienced the behaviour in their own child due to age or gender. Many parents who have an issue with another child find themselves having to deal with the behaviour in their own child a year or so later. However, the hardest conversations are the ones where you need to discuss the possibility of the child with behavioural issues, delayed development or learning difficulties that may need outside intervention. Vignette’s 6 and 9 in section 4.4.1 and vignette 11 section 4.5.1 give examples of my leadership.

At a regional level (fifth sphere) there are two leadership pathways; one is management and operations, the other is adult education. Prior to the restructure of the New Zealand Playcentre Federation and the amalgamation of the regional associations, many of these leadership roles at regional level were voluntary and involved governance. Since the induction of Playcentre Aotearoa in 2018, governance has been centralised with a regional hub for operational management roles. The governance role at the local level is now clusters of Playcentre presidents who meet and report at national governance meetings. Therefore, the structure is different from the one I was involved in where I was a member of the regional executive committee and became co-president then president. Very few parents got involved at regional level under the old structure. During my time on the executive committee, as co-president and president, I led the relicensing of 38 Playcentres. This involved overseeing 11 staff who were providing operational and management support to Playcentres to prepare for the relicensing of the centre by the Ministry of Education. Due to the increase in documentation around health and safety requirements, I wrote several procedures for centres to use thus, reducing the workload required by centres to get ready for the relicensing visit.
I have also spent some time as a workshop facilitator on the adult education programme delivering workshops for the old Playcentre diploma qualification and the new certificate in early childhood education and care. Working with the Education coordinator and several other workshop facilitators, I lead the review of workshop content and delivery. After delivering workshops that I had taken over, I initiated a rewrite of the content to better reflect the learning outcomes and suggested changes to the delivery. A trial change of the delivery of the workshop from a meeting room to onsite at Playcentres or online was very successful. Parents enjoyed workshops during sessions where they could bring their children. On session workshops also allowed for observation of children to see the workshop content in action. The online workshops provided value in that all participants could engage and see each other’s responses to questions, unlike face to face workshops where not everyone has a chance to have their say during every discussion due to constraints like time.

Playcentre Leader and Regional Leader/Educator sphere’s operate using shared leadership. As Playcentre is a parent co-operative shared leadership occurs between experienced parents who have emerged as leaders and then stand aside for new leaders to emerge. Postional leadership also operates in these sphere’s as some parents are in positional roles such as session facilitator or president. However, these positional roles continue to use a shared leadership model and support emergent leadership. Positional leaders do not distribute leadership roles as would happen in a teacher-led service by the head teacher.

The final sphere is Leader of Profession, where a small number of parents who have come through the spheres to the leader or regional sphere have remained in Playcentre after their children have left. Parents who remain in Playcentre at centre or regional roles have gone through a transformation where they regard Playcentre as a profession and become professional leaders inside and outside of Playcentre. I have also made this transformation and as a professional Playcentre leader and have contributed to the early childhood sector as an industry advisor to an early childhood education programme and as a short-term casual lecturer on a level four early childhood education and care certificate.

However, at some stage parents look to transition out of Playcentre using the knowledge, skills and experience they have gained through Playcentre. Many of the parents who have travelled a similar path to me through Playcentre go on to do a degree in early childhood teaching. I considered a teaching degree, but I did not have the passion to be involved in early childhood education outside of Playcentre. However, adult learning remains an interest, and I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to become an assessor of mature adult learners who have undertaken a work-based learning programme for the Bachelor of Applied Management or Bachelor of Social Services. With the work-based learning, I can see many parallels with the play-based learning I was involved in at Playcentre, and these parallels are an interest I want to follow.

The leadership matrix and my sociocultural leadership framework of practice are woven together around the sphere of influence. For the simplicity of viewing, the sphere of influence has been unwrapped to expose the weaving of principles, strands and assessment for learning framework. The principles and strands span the spheres where they are most important and start with relationships and work down to exploration. The assessment for learning
framework; notice, recognise, and respond are incorporated into the weave to create the leadership matrix.

Relationship building is the first and most important aspect of welcoming a new family. When new families arrive at Playcentre, I use open communication to build a sense of belonging. As the relationship grows and the sense of belonging develops in the Playcentre parent, I begin to build a picture of the family’s wellbeing. I ask myself the question, “does this family need any additional support over and above what we would normally give?”. If a need is identified, then discussions are had, and early intervention is initiated. As other parents and children build a relationship with the new parent and child, the new family become part of the Playcentre family and community. Becoming a session education team member and being encouraged to enrol in the adult education programme, the new parents’ confidence grows, and they begin to feel empowered. When a parent feels they are empowered, they are then more willing to contribute to Playcentre life. Holistic development is occurring as the parent learns, and finally, they begin to explore all that Playcentre has to offer them and their children.

The weaving of my sociocultural leadership framework of practice and the leadership matrix around the sphere of influence completes the Playcentre Pathway and Leadership Practice model.

7.2 Transformational Learning

Part of the enquiry has been a reflection on transformation that has already occurred. The transformation happened both as a sudden event and over a prolonged period. The sudden transformational event that occurred was the birth of our first child which instantly made us parents. The prolonged transformation occurred as a result of being a parent and attending Playcentre. A third transformational event occurred part way through the enquiry when I was offered two opportunities. The first opportunity was a casual lecturing position in early childhood education at the local Polytechnic, which I accepted while remaining at Playcentre as the casual work fitted round my Playcentre role. The second opportunity was an assessing role on degree courses, and it was at this point that I resigned from Playcentre. Effectively the Master of Professional Practice had served its purpose before the enquiry had even started.

Transformation is complete! I have come to realise that Playcentre is a profession and has offered me the chance to learn and grow my leadership skills which I can transfer to other professions as I move beyond Playcentre. My sociocultural leadership framework of practice and the leadership matrix which are woven around my journey through Playcentre (sphere of influence) are like a Kakahu wrapped around me and is embedded with my knowledge, skill and experience. The Playcentre Pathway and Leadership Practice Model symbolises the two worlds of Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori and non Māori. Each world has its own view on education, the Māori view on education is reflected in the weave of the kakahu which wraps around the sphere of influence. The sphere of influence reflects the western world view of
education which is compartmentalised. These differences have impacted my view on education, creating a personal tension with the current education system.

The Kakahu from the first scene in section 1.1

7.3 Where to next?

The enquiry has contributed to changes to my professional practice such as; being aware when communicating with others that their values and beliefs differ to mine, being mindful of whether I am in a position of power in the relationship and considering enrolling in Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori courses. Other outcomes of this enquiry include; ongoing advice, workshops, on session support for Playcentres and the publication of the leadership matrix in the Playcentre Journal or other relevant early childhood education and leadership publications. A future outcome could be the development of a personalised parenting service which could be face to face, through social media or web based. This reflection on the outcomes of the enquiry project and process has made me value my profession as a Playcentre educator and leader. Therefore, the Master of Professional Practice has made Playcentre professional when it is often seen as the poor cousin of teacher-led early childhood education due to its professional framework.

Finally, six months into this enquiry, I responded to several opportunities outside of Playcentre and resigned once the succession plan was in place. I will leave the last words of this enquiry to a beautiful waihine and the whakataukī she delivered at my Playcentre farewell...
Ma te kahukura ka rere te manu a ma to tautoko, to awhina, to aroha, to manaaki ka piki ka rere te mana o nga tamariki nei o nga pakeke hoki.

“By the aid of the wing the bird shall fly”.

Carleen’s support, love and knowledge sharing are the wings that have enabled our children and us adults to fly.
8 References


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## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1 – Research Paradigm

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<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positivism</strong></td>
<td>There is a single reality or truth (more realist).</td>
<td>Reality can be measured and hence the focus is on reliable and valid tools to obtain that.</td>
<td>Postivism Post-positivism</td>
<td>Experimental research Survey research</td>
<td>Usually quantitative, could include: Sampling Measurement and scaling Statistical analysis Questionnaire Focus group Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructivist / Interpretive</strong></td>
<td>There is no single reality or truth. Reality is created by individuals in groups (less realist).</td>
<td>Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted. It is used to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities.</td>
<td>Interpretivism (reality needs to be interpreted) - Phenomenology - Symbolic Interactionism - Hermeneutics Critical Inquiry Feminism</td>
<td>Ethnography Grounded Theory Phenomenological research Heuristic inquiry Action Research Discourse Analysis Feminist Standpoint research etc</td>
<td>Usually qualitative, could include: Qualitative interview Observation Participant Non participant Case study Life history Narrative Theme identification etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatism</strong></td>
<td>Reality is constantly re-negotiated, debated, interpreted in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations.</td>
<td>The best method is one that solves problems. Finding out is the means, change is the underlying aim.</td>
<td>Deweyan pragmatism Research through design</td>
<td>Mixed methods Design-based research Action research</td>
<td>Combination of any of the above and more, such as data mining expert review, usability testing, physical prototypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjectivism</strong></td>
<td>Reality is what we perceive to be real</td>
<td>All knowledge is purely a matter of perspective.</td>
<td>Postmodernism Structuralism Post-structuralism</td>
<td>Discourse theory Archaeology Genealogy Deconstruction etc.</td>
<td>Autoethnography Semiotics Literary analysis Pastiche Intertextuality etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical</strong></td>
<td>Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence.</td>
<td>Reality and knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society</td>
<td>Marxism Queer theory feminism</td>
<td>Critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography action research ideology critique</td>
<td>Ideological review Civil actions open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, and journals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title:

**Noticing** What was happening, who was there, what was said?

**Recognising** What Learning did you see? Learning dispositions, working theories, schema, bicultural values

- **Mana Atua | Well-Being**
- **Mana Whenua | Belonging**
- **Mana Tangata | Contribution**
- **Mana Reo | Communication**
- **Mana Aotūroa | Exploration**

**Responding** What activities or experiences would continue to support and extend this learning?