A change agent for improving quality: The educational leader in Australian early childhood education and care

Lisa Palethorpe

Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood), Master of Education (Leadership & Management), Graduate Certificate (Business Administration)

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Abstract

Recognising the importance of effective leadership in early childhood education and care (ECEC), the Australian Government mandated an educational leader role be created within ECEC services as part of the National Quality Reform Agenda. This study seeks to understand the educational leader role and its potential for improving quality in ECEC through the lived experiences of those most influenced by this reform: educational leaders and early childhood professionals (directors, teachers, and educators who are not the educational leader) employed in approved prior-to-school ECEC services. These services include long day care, kindergarten, preschool, and family day care.

The study employed a mixed methods phenomenological approach with an explanatory, sequential, qualitative dominant design. Data were collected in two phases. Phase One involved an online national survey involving ECEC professionals from all states and territories, with analysis of this first phase \( n = 279 \) providing a broad understanding of the educational leader role from the perspective of both educational leaders \( n = 207 \) and early childhood professionals \( n = 70 \). Phase Two of the study provided a deeper insight into the role, with data gathered through semi-structured interviews \( n = 22 \), again from the perspective of both educational leaders and early childhood professionals.

The findings indicate that while the majority of participants perceive the educational leader role to be beneficial, many are concerned about how the role is being implemented and perceive the role to be working only sometimes and in some ways. A lack of attention to contextual factors influencing leadership has limited the potential of leadership provided by the educational leader. In response to these findings an ECEC Leadership for Improving Quality Framework was developed. This framework is also informed by key literature from three interrelated fields: quality in ECEC, leadership, and educational change. It is presented in the conclusion of this thesis in
order to inform the discourse around leadership in ECEC, to support the processes used to improve quality, and to inform further policy and reform.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) Signature removed
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my inspirational supervisors, Professor Beverley Flückiger and Professor Julie Dunn, for their expert guidance, wise words, patience, genuine feedback over many iterations and their long-term commitment. Thank you for believing in me, when at times I didn’t believe in myself. I am so thankful for all that you did. “It’s our job...”, I hear you say, but your commitment to all students and their learning is outstanding and commendable! You are true leaders!

There are others I would also like to acknowledge: Dr Leah Le who answered so many of my questions about statistics and the use of SPSS software, and Rachel Rolfe for supporting the graphic design of the framework presented as The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework.

I would like to acknowledge the participants of this study who provided so much information, trusted me and shared their lived experience. May their words change the future direction for this role of educational leader in positive ways.

Finally, my “village”: without the support of my mother and father this study would not have been possible. A special thank you to Anna Speers and Suzanne James, your friendship is everlasting, and your unwavering support and encouragement appreciated.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Nigel and Nancy Palethorpe. Your ever-present support, love, encouragement, and rock-solid belief in my ability have made this thesis possible!
Presentations in Support of Thesis

Findings from this research were presented at Australian national conferences:


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Structural quality

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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory (territory of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Early Childhood Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>Early Childhood Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Educational Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYLF</td>
<td>Belonging, Being &amp; Becoming. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDC</td>
<td>Family Day Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Long Day Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Quality Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales (state of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory (territory of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Queensland (state of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia (state of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Tasmania (state of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Victoria (state of Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia (state of Australia)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood professional</td>
<td>A term used in this thesis to describe a practitioner who works in an approved early childhood education and care service and who may hold the position of director or coordinator of a service, or be a teacher or educator, but is not the educational leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational leader</td>
<td>An early childhood education and care professional who leads the development and implementation of educational programs in services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>An individual who provides education and care for children as part of an education and care service (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018, p. 623).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>Provides ECEC for children in a family residence or at an approved family day care venue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>A service which aims to earn profit through its operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Formal structures and accountability procedures that inform leadership decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management structure</td>
<td>The way in which the management of a service is organized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Broad purpose and reason for existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum/program decision-making, teaching, and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool program</td>
<td>An educational program for children prior to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>An approved education and care service.</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

Flashback…

*It is April 2008 and I’m sitting at the back of the bus with a colleague after visiting an infant-toddler service in Reggio Emilia, Italy as part of an international study tour. Deep in thought, I am staring blankly at the other study tour participants who appear to be on a euphoric high: laughing, smiling, giggling. The noise crescendos as people exchange stories of what they have observed. However, through all the noise, I continue to sit in silence, almost bewildered as I think about how today’s experience contrasts with those I have had over many years working in the Australian early childhood education and care sector. I ask myself, what is so different about what I have just seen? The answer lies with one word – leadership. I realise that I have just seen what early childhood services can be like when quality leadership is in place; when too often, in the Australian system, I have seen a vacuum.*

Introduction

This thesis is about leadership within the Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) context. My interest in this topic was ignited during that study tour to Reggio Emilia (in 2008) and then re-ignited in 2009 when a national reform was introduced by the Council of Australian Governments. Within this reform, services across the country were required to identify a “pedagogical leader” to “oversee and lead other educators to implement the Early Years Learning Framework including pedagogy and curriculum decision making” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009c, p. 30). Government documents released
at the time reflected this pedagogical focus (DEEWR, 2009c). After legislation, the title shifted from pedagogical leader to *educational leader* and the educational leader role was outlined in the Education and Care Services National Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a). The following description comes from the legislation, and became a requirement in 2013:

The approved provider of an education and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual as educational leader at the service to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the services. (2011, p. 133)

This study is an attempt to understand the perceptions of Australian ECEC professionals about this role. In particular, it aims to determine how the role has been implemented and to identify ECEC professionals’ perceptions of the value and impact this change has had on the quality of leadership in the sector and the services offered to Australian children, their families and carers. Further, this study will consider what is required to maximise the benefits of this role towards improving quality.

**Rationale for the Research**

It is widely acknowledged that leadership is one of the determining factors that help to support positive outcomes for children in education and care services (Brownlee, Nailon, & Tickle, 2010; Jorde Bloom, 1992; Nupponen, 2005; Rodd, 2006, 2013a; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). However, it is only in recent times that a surge in interest about leadership within the ECEC profession has been observed. In 2013, Heikka and Hujala wrote about leadership in the early childhood landscape, stating that “published papers in this sector of education are sparse and difficult to locate” (p. 3). Since then, empirical studies have included those applying qualitative methods (Campbell-Evans, Stamopoulos, & Maloney, 2014; Douglass, 2016; Grarock &
Morrissey, 2013; Heikka, 2014; Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Thomas & Nuttall, 2014) and mixed methods (Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2014; Diamond, 2014; Sims, Forrest, Semann, & Slattery, 2015; Sims, Waniganayake, & Hadley, 2017; Stamopoulos, 2015). These papers will be discussed later in this thesis, but their recency suggests that the notion of leadership in ECEC is an emerging one.

The importance of leadership and the connection to outcomes for children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) has been the impetus for policy change both in Australia and overseas. In particular, the mandatory requirement to appoint a “…suitably qualified and experienced educator…” to the educational leader role (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011b, p. 133) suggests an increased focus on learning and teaching in the early childhood education and care sector (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). However, in order for this role to have influence on leadership, specifically pedagogical, or what is also referred to as leadership for learning, it is paramount that clarity is provided about the nature of the role. This thesis aims to build upon recent research (Fleet, Soper, Semann, & Madden, 2015; Grarock & Morrissey, 2013; Nuttall, Thomas, & Wood, 2014; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Sims et al., 2017) to achieve this goal.

At the inception of this research (2012) there was limited information about the role of educational leader with organisations grappling to determine how best to implement this role. This is not surprising, as anecdotally many services have declared that at the time the educational leader legislation was mandated, competing change priorities and a feeling of change fatigue meant services put little time or thought into understanding this role or into considering factors relating to the appointment of individuals to undertake the role. Of additional concern was the suggestion from the field that a number of newly graduated teachers were being appointed to the role of
educational leader based solely on their qualifications, when in fact in many cases, these individuals required professional support and mentoring themselves.

A further concern was the reliance on extrapolating from the findings of research from the school-based sector. This reliance is problematic due to the differences between the two contexts. For instance, schools have different operational models, organisational structures, management structures, physical environments, educator/teacher qualifications, and curriculum and, of course, they cater for older children with different developmental learning requirements. There is a need to develop Australian research knowledge and a theoretical base that builds upon experiences, policies and practices contextualised and specific to educational leadership in the birth-to-5 sector. Clarity and guidance are needed by the sector to determine how different models of educational leadership contribute to opportunities for quality teaching and learning, and consideration of how an appointed positional role can effect change in both leadership and quality.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

Set against this background, the primary intent of this research is to examine the perceptions of ECEC professionals about the educational leader role, including how it is enacted and the contribution this role makes to improved quality. It is also designed to identify what is and what is not working in relation to the current enactment of this role in order to identify the actions that are required to maximise benefits. In order to gain these understandings, the research makes use of two distinct phases of data collection. In Phase One, a survey designed to generate a broad understanding of the national landscape was applied. Phase Two, which extends on Phase One, involved Phase One participants in semi-structured in-depth interviews with the goal of gaining more detailed accounts.

One research question drives the study:
What perceptions do ECEC professionals hold about the educational leader and the potential of the role for improving quality in Australian ECEC contexts?

The question is supported by a series of sub-questions:

1. Who is the educational leader in early childhood education and care services and how is this determined?
2. How is the role of educational leader enacted within services?
3. How is the role of educational leader perceived as contributing to quality education and care?

Potential Significance

This study aims to contribute empirical evidence gained through the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Findings build upon the current emerging research in leadership based within an ECEC context, as highlighted in the last section. Above all else, the potential significance of this research is that it is focused on the notion of educational leadership in the field of ECEC. It specifically considers the role of educational leader, the role’s perceived benefits and the potential impact it might have on the quality of education and care. Importantly, the research provides the platform to highlight the voices and lived experiences of ECEC professionals who are the key players in this mandated reform.

The results of this research will provide much needed findings, considerations and recommendations for the ECEC field relating to enactment of the role of educational leader. Government and service operators may also benefit from this research, as the results may inform future policy and operational decisions for implementation of policy reform. The findings may also assist early childhood professionals, educational leaders, families and community members to advocate for a range of implementation models and support resources.
Researcher Background

Acknowledging and recognising the social and historical constructs that underpin who we are as a researcher is considered important to the research process (Lave & Kvale, 1995). Qualitative researchers argue that it is impossible to eliminate the effect of the researcher completely from the research process and in fact this subjectivity brings value to the research (Creswell, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). With this in mind, it is important to outline how my background has influenced this thesis.

A professional career of 30-plus years, including extensive practical experience as a 4-year university qualified early childhood teacher, working at different points across the diverse range of ECEC service types, as well as appointments to national senior leadership and management roles, have all contributed towards generating an interest in leadership within ECEC contexts. Additionally, the theoretical and practical knowledge gained through teaching and academic study, including research, have established a solid foundation for understanding children’s learning, development and wellbeing within the early years and fuelled the researcher’s commitment and desire for quality education and care for young children.

This pragmatic knowledge and understanding acquired over many years and in different roles assisted me to develop the survey used within this research and to examine the data emerging from interviews with key informants. Additionally, in undertaking this study, my background has driven me to ensure that participants’ voices are amplified, and their lived experiences used to support the reader in understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

Motives for completing this research are both professional and personal in nature. This research provides direction to the ECEC sector at a time when leadership has been mandated in the profession through regulatory requirements. However, the concept of leadership within ECEC is not readily identified or understood by educators (Woodrow & Busch, 2008), even though
leadership is recognised by research as a pivotal factor contributing to program quality (Sammons et al., 2002; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). Further, this research provides an opportunity to continue my reflection on the Reggio Emilia Infant-Toddler service I visited in April 2008 and finding ways to improve educational leadership in Australian ECEC.

Structure of Thesis

This chapter has introduced the research focus, rationale, potential significance and research questions. A brief description of the methodology was provided, as well as information about the researcher’s background and how this influenced this study.

Chapter 2 provides an understanding of the complexity and diversity of the approved Australian ECEC context. It provides the reader with an understanding of the unique nature of this provision: service types, governance and management types. This chapter also presents information about changes in community understanding and usage of ECEC in Australia. The chapter concludes with information about significant Australia national reforms and partnership agreements including initiatives designed to deliver high quality ECEC.

Chapter 3 summarises the key literature across the fields of ECEC, and leadership. The first section explores notions of quality. This is followed by an exploration of key literature relating to leadership, at first more broadly, then specific to the ECEC context. The third section considers pertinent literature relating to educational change leadership.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology employed in this study. Sampling procedures are outlined, the methods used to collect data are introduced, analysis processes are described, and ethical issues considered.

Chapter 5 outlines the results obtained from analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected in Phase One of the research, the survey. It provides a demographic profile of survey participants along with findings.
Chapter 6 builds on understandings gained from Phase One. This phase of the research goes deeper into understanding the role of educational leader by outlining the key findings determined through semi-structured interviews involving 22 key informants drawn from Phase One.

Chapter 7 draws together the findings of Phases One and Two and revisits the literature presenting a model of educational leadership to support conversations about leadership and change in ECEC at all levels. The model is used to consider the findings of this study.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, provides the conclusion. This section details the conclusion, limitations of the study, implications and recommendations, as well as suggestions for future research. The thesis ends with a concluding statement that offers a deep analysis of what these findings mean for the sector, including implications, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter Two: The Australian Policy Context

This chapter provides an overview of the Australian ECEC landscape, and the policy and reform agendas that have shaped it. It begins with an outline of the changing social context in Australia related to children’s early care and education. Next it describes the range of approved ECEC service types and their diverse governance or management structures. Then a brief account of the education and care divide that still endures in policy today is provided. The following section outlines Australian government reforms instrumental in changing the landscape of ECEC including the National Quality Framework (NQF). The role of educational leader, introduced in the National Quality Framework and the focus of this study, is then described. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Early Childhood Education and Care

The last few decades have witnessed a change in the way families are raising children, due to changes in family structure and workforce requirements, leading to a rise in demand for ECEC services (UNICEF, 2008). This change can be traced in data through participation rates in Australian approved child care funded services1 with 1,033,214 children aged birth to 12 years attending in 2013, with approximately a 20% increase in participation within 5 years, to 1,283,285. This demand for enrolments for children and increased participation has driven the expansion of the ECEC sector. At the end of June 2014 there were 14,435 approved education and care approved services operating (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2014) and 3 years later this increased to 15,574 services (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017).

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1 The Productivity Commission participation data for child care funded services includes: long day care, family day care, preschool programs, vocational and occasional care, in-home care, and budget based funded services (Productivity Commission, 2018).
In financial terms, an investment by all-of-government for ECEC was $5.4 billion between 2012 and 2013 (Productivity Commission, 2014), increasing to $9.26 billion between 2017–2018 (Productivity Commission, 2019). For many families, using ECEC services is an essential part of the family’s ecological system – for varied reasons.

First, there is increased community understanding of the benefits a high-quality ECEC program may bring for children’s school success and wellbeing (Moore & Oberklaid, 2010; Sylva et al., 2004). Additionally, the influence of research suggests that attending ECEC, particularly for vulnerable families, provides long-term economic benefits and the potential to address poverty and disadvantage (Sylva et al., 2004; Tayler, 2011). Consequently, families have been encouraged to enrol their children into ECEC programs.

Second, the argument for public investment in ECEC includes recognition of the economic benefits that women returning to the paid workforce can gain (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2014). Women’s paid workforce participation is considered an economic and social priority necessary for long-term Australian prosperity, with Price Waterhouse Cooper (2014) estimating a financial benefit of $6.0 billion (cumulative to 2050) to Australia’s gross domestic product (p. 4).

Social and economic change globally has shifted views on women’s participation in the paid workforce. Alongside other leading world economic countries, Australia has set targets to reduce the workforce participation gender gap by the year 2025 by 25%, which will potentially lead to an additional 200,000 women in the paid workforce (https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/economic-security/womens-workforce-participation). Early childhood education and care services will play an important role in supporting such increases in women’s paid workforce participation, particularly for mothers of young children (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017). To enable women to re-enter the paid workforce, access to affordable childcare of a quality standard is required, along with a focus on both the care and
education of children. In the next section the range of ECEC service types offered in Australia are outlined.

**Early Childhood Education and Care Approved Service Types**

The early childhood education and care profession uses a myriad of terms and labels to describe the service and centre types that exist within it. The current National Law and Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011b), relate specifically to family day care, and centre-based services, which include: long day care, sessional early childhood programs such as kindergarten and preschool, outside school hours care, and occasional care. This study focuses on family day care and centre-based services, excluding occasional care. The following section provides a synopsis of each of the service types.

**Long day care**

One centre-based service type, long day care as it has been traditionally known, has not been defined separately in the National Law or Regulations (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018). Originally, this service type provided a care service to support workforce participation by mothers / parents (Brennan, 1998). Long day care (also referred to as child care) typically provides all-day or part-day care for children attending on a regular basis for children aged from 6 weeks to 6 years, and may include outside school hours care with school-aged children attending the service. Children accessing programs in long day care generally have an early childhood professional who leads the program and who holds a vocational qualification such as a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. In some jurisdictions such as New South Wales, and currently as part of a Universal Partnership Agreement (discussed later), funding for approved long day care services provides support for an educational program to be delivered to four-year-olds by a university qualified early childhood teacher (Fox & Geddes, 2016).
**Kindergarten and preschool**

Another centre-based service, preschools and kindergartens are also not defined in the National Law or Regulations (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017). However, under the National Partnership Agreement (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2014), a preschool program is recognised and defined as an early childhood program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children the year of two before school that can be delivered in a range of services.

The terms kindergarten or preschool are often used interchangeably and have historically provided sessional early childhood education programs for children in the year before they enter school. Prior to this this century, some kindergarten service types provided 2-day kindergarten programs to children aged approximately three, and 3-day preschool programs to children the year before formal school (Fazldeen, 1997). Kindergarten service types are often located in stand-alone or shared facilities, co-located on school sites (Fox & Geddes, 2016; Tayler, 2016b), in environments specifically designed for 3- and 4-year-old children. These services operate in school hours during school terms, with children attending 15 hours per week. The programs offered have traditionally been understood by community and the education and care sector as educational, unlike long day care that has been considered as only offering care. The programs within kindergarten and preschool are delivered by university-qualified early childhood teachers (Elliott, 2006; Fox & Geddes, 2016). Within this research, information about kindergarten and preschool service types has been collected and reported separately to enable opportunity to minimise any issue that may arise due to nomenclature, and to provide opportunity for further analysis, particularly if there are different service management and governance arrangements with these service types.
Family day care educators and services

Family day care has an educator employed by, or registered with, a family day care service to provide ECEC for children in a family residence or at an approved family day care venue (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018). Family day care educators hold or are working towards an approved vocational qualification such as a Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care. Family day care services are the collection of two or more educators that provide ECEC to children and operate from two or more residences, or an approved family care venue (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018). Most often, family day care services provide administration and guidance to individual educators (Fox & Geddes, 2016).

The four service types represented in this study have been detailed to highlight for the reader the significant differences amongst the services. The next section provides detail about another classification often used to differentiate between ECEC services.

Early Childhood Education and Care Service Providers

Early childhood education and care services in Australia are often classified according to the range of providers with differing missions, management structures, and governance. Similar to other Western countries, the Australian ECEC sector includes a diverse and complex mix of market providers comprised of public or not-for profit services such as those governed by a parent and/or community-based committee, management staff at the local council, or social-purpose organisation with an appointed board of directors. These services often have a mission that incorporates social service (Penn, 2018), and reinvests profits into the service and or the local community, whereas the privatisation of the ECEC sector since the introduction of the Child Care Act, 1972 (Attorney-General’s Department, 1972) has enabled for-profit services run by individual providers, private businesses, and corporations, often with a differing mission to that of social
purpose, such as a purpose to generate profits for individuals or shareholders (Brennan, 1998; Tayler, 2016b). Waniganayake et al. (2012) suggest that this ownership, whether public/not-for profit or private/corporation, may influence the governance, “the overarching formal structures and accountability procedures that inform leadership decision-making” (p. 60). Governance has the potential to influence not only day to day operations of a service, but also the work of the educational leader.

**Education versus care in Australia**

Quality services are considered to include both care and education (Van Laere, Peeters, & Vandenbroeck, 2012), yet ECEC in Australia has traditionally been considered as having two different functions: child care for the care and welfare of children (Kaga, Bennett, & Moss, 2010), and kindergarten and/or preschool providing education in preparation for school and life (Elliott, 2006; Gibson, 2013; Kaga et al., 2010; Osgood, 2012). The divide between education and care is reinforced by differences in contexts (environmental factors, age groups, pay and conditions) (Gibson, 2013; Kaga et al., 2010).

Recommendations in OECD Starting Strong Reports (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015), urged the Australian Government to integrate ECEC services (Cleveland & Colley, 2013). This provided some impetus for policy direction to overcome the divide between education and care. Financial commitment to the provision of universal access (discussed in detail later in this chapter) further assured that there should be no educational difference between ECEC services, regardless of the type (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2014).

Despite efforts to integrate the different ECEC service models (see previous section), tensions in ECEC that view education as separate to care, continue to exist. This ongoing tension is reinforced by such factors as qualification requirements, pay disparity, and work conditions. There is evidence that for these reasons, many early childhood teachers choose not to work in long

Research by Thorpe et al. (2011) identified that university students completing an early childhood degree valued high quality ECEC services for children aged birth to school age entry, along with the child-centred approach in child care. The findings of the research highlighted a positive shift in students’ perception of the value of early childhood education for children from birth, but also emphasised how pay and work conditions remain a real barrier for students considering employment in child care. Additionally, the professional isolation that results from being the only degree-qualified staff member within the service, provides a further disincentive for graduates to choose to work in long day care.

Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) found that the formation of professional identity begins during teachers’ pre-service training. This finding, as well as results of studies (Thorpe et al., 2011) highlighting a preference for graduating professionals to work outside of long day care, are concerning, especially for the professional identity of those graduating ECEC professionals who do not gain employment in schools or what are traditionally considered “education” type services (preschool and kindergarten). Further research is needed to consider the effect on professional identity of those working within traditional care services (long day care, family day care) within the early childhood field.

A recent report that reviewed and provided advice to all state and territories on how to improve outcomes for Australian children (Pascoe & Brennan, 2017), and two Productivity Commission Reports about ECEC (Productivity Commission, 2011, 2014) raised the issue of ECEC professionals being underpaid and undervalued. The first report (Productivity Commission, 2011) recommended an increase in wages to meet the urgent demand for professionals with higher qualifications in the sector. Such reports are significant as status, pay and conditions, training, and
qualifications are factors that build and shape professional identity (Dalli, 2008; Moloney, 2010; Thorpe et al., 2011; Urban, 2008), and contribute to the ability to attract and keep ECEC professionals (including teachers) in the workforce.

However, not all share this view, with some choices exacerbating the education and care divide in Australia. For example, a 1996 decision by the Queensland industrial relations tribunal found teachers employed in long day care were not educating, but rather providing developmental programs, and were therefore not entitled to pay parity (Burton & Lyons, 2000). More recently, the Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report by the Australian Productivity Commission inquiry into ECEC (Productivity Commission, 2014) challenged the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b) reforms. The report declared that there was no evidence from large-scale quantitative research studies to support the perceived long-term benefit to infants and toddlers being educated and cared for by a qualified educator, and a recommendation was made to reduce the required qualifications for ECEC professionals working with children under 3 years of age. This statement by the Productivity Commission is at odds with OECD recommendations, as well as commentary by Elliot (2006) who, in a review of the child care sector, argued the importance of integrated services. Elliot suggested that the union of ECEC would bring “long-term social and economic benefits for Australia and its children” (p. 5).

This section has highlighted the long-term divide that exists between service types traditionally considered as education or as care. The identified differences impact on professional identity. Australian government reforms to unite care and education are examined in the following section.

**Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Reform**

Following international trends that recognise the importance and value of quality ECEC programs for children, families, society and the economy (Thorpe et al., 2011), the Australian
Government made early childhood reform a national priority in 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). By signing a National Partnership agreement, commonwealth, state and territory governments committed through the National Early Childhood Development Strategy to national early childhood development reforms to support the diverse needs of Australian children (birth to 8 years). The agreement aimed to improve the health, safety, early learning and wellbeing of all Australian children, better support for disadvantaged children, and address inequality (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). The following target was set: “by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 13). This target was ambitious, and the implementation of reforms expected to occur quickly (Fenech, 2013). Table 1 presents some of the major reforms and initiatives of the early childhood reform that relate to ECEC.

Table 1.

Initiatives and Reforms to Improve Early Childhood Education and Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Reform Initiatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>● A National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>● The National Early Childhood Development Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● A National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Committee on School Education and Early Childhood, 2012)</td>
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Several of the initiatives listed above generated a significant paradigm shift in the thinking about and implementation of practices within ECEC (Tayler, 2012) including: the Melbourne
Declaration; the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (also known as the Universal Access National Partnership or UANP); and the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda. In particular, services offering care (long day care, family day care) were required to include a strong focus on children’s education, development and wellbeing. Further, services traditionally focused on education (preschool and kindergarten), were challenged to consider how they could meet the needs of working families. Further details in relation to each of the initiatives are presented in the following section.

The Melbourne Declaration on educational goals for young Australians

This declaration produced by and agreed to by all Australian Commonwealth and state ministers, set the direction for schooling for a ten-year period, 2009 to 2018 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, n.d.). For the first time, ECEC was included within the broader education portfolio and was the stimulus for several monumental changes to ECEC in Australia (outlined following). The Melbourne Declaration not only committed the nation to strengthening ECEC provision (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008), but also highlighted a shift in policy to ameliorate the perceived divide between care and education. This declaration is currently in review, and endorsement of a revised declaration due December 2019.

National partnership on universal access to early childhood education

additional Commonwealth funding for states and territories to ensure all 4-year-old children attend ECEC programs (15 hours per week, 600 hours per year). These programs are required to be based on an approved learning framework delivered by university-qualified early childhood teachers (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2014) and are conducted in a variety of service types including preschool, kindergarten, and long day care services. This National Partnership Agreement was considered a policy success (Irvine, 2018), as indicated by the increase in participation to 91% of 4-year-old Australian children. This was estimated to be a 12% increase in participation by 4 year olds since 2008. This is a positive result given the benefits of attending quality ECEC, particularly for (Melhuish et al., 2015), the one in five Australian children who start school developmentally vulnerable (Australian Government, 2018a). However, Australian participation rates are still on average below other OECD countries (Early Learning: Everyone Benefits, 2017), and despite the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education considered to be a success, at the time of finalising this thesis there is no ongoing commitment to Universal Access funding beyond 2020 (Australian Government Department of Education, 2019).

**The National Early Childhood Development Strategy**

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), with a strong vision for Australia’s children (detailed previously), provided the plan for the establishment and integration of a range of early childhood education, health, and family services. The strategy responded to evidence on the importance of the early years and to enable all children to benefit from an early childhood education. Further, it aimed to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. With a change of government (2010) and policy direction, initiatives such as a permanent National Agreement on Early Childhood Development had not been achieved (Pascoe & Brennan, 2017). The effect of the current short-term focus is that there is no long-term
future funding. As well as no ongoing commitment to Universal Access funding, a recent shift in the funding for the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority raises concerns within the ECEC sector about the national commitment to quality (Early Childhood Australia, 2019; Work + Family Policy Roundtable, 2019). Following are details about initiatives under the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b).

**The National Quality Framework (NQF)**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) includes a suite of reform initiatives to provide better educational and development outcomes for children, these include: The National Law and National Regulations (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017); national approved learning frameworks (DEEWR, 2009a; Department of Education and Training, 2011), The National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c); an assessment and quality rating process; a regulatory authority in each state and territory responsible for the approval, mentoring and quality assessment of services in their state or territory; and a national body (ACECQA), which guides the implementation of the NQF and work with regulatory authorities.

**The national law and regulations**

A critical component of the National Quality Framework was the development and agreement of a consistent national law and regulations to replace a federated model in which each state and territory had their own idiosyncratic law and regulations. The new law and regulations brought many changes including changes to required staff qualifications and ratios.

**Staff qualifications and ratios**

Informed by research evidence that indicated higher qualifications led to quality outcomes for children (Sylva et al., 2004), the regulations ensured that from 2014 all approved ECEC services employed at least one degree-qualified early childhood teacher, with a second to be
employed in 2020 by those services with more than 60 children (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, n.d.-a). Additionally, all educators working within the sector required a vocational education and training qualification (Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care or equivalent) as a minimum and 50% of educators were to hold a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (or equivalent) (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013). These educators were required to execute new standards of quality with a focus on the learning and development of children. Principles, practices and learning outcomes were introduced in Australia’s first national early years’ learning framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009a).

*Early years learning framework*

Belonging, Being and Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (2009a) was introduced in 2009 to guide the pedagogy and practice of all ECEC professionals teaching in ECEC services. The teaching principles and practices articulated in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a) include: high expectations and equity; respect for diversity; ongoing learning and reflective practice; holistic approaches; responsiveness to children; learning through play; intentional teaching; cultural competence; continuity of learning and transitions, and assessment for learning.

The EYLF was developed to assist ECE professionals to provide opportunities to maximise children’s potential and encourage “…extend and enrich children’s learning…” (DEEWR, 2009a, p. 5); note the use of the word *learning*, reinforcing the alignment between care and education. With an expectation that all services would implement the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a) and therefore include learning and teaching in their program, many educators, particularly those traditionally focused on care, have grappled with the implementation of the framework (Akers & Fraser, 2016; Tayler, 2011).
A professional learning program, together with resources to assist ECEC professionals comprehend concepts in the learning framework and support theory-to-practice-links have been provided by Early Childhood Australia (www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/), funded by the Commonwealth government.

**Rating and assessment process**

An overhaul of the existing national child care accreditation system was undertaken. The new system which includes a process of self-assessment and ongoing continuous improvement was broadened to include all approved early childhood education and care services, with kindergarten and preschool included for the first time. A regulatory authority in each state and territory was established to be responsible for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their state or territory against the National Quality Standard.

**The National Quality Standard**

The National Quality Standard (NQS) (DEEWR, 2009c) was implemented in 2012, to set a national benchmark for the quality of education and care. The National Quality Standard, 2012 (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011) included seven quality areas, containing 18 standards and 58 elements against which services were assessed and rated. The quality areas include:

- education programs and practice;
- children’s health and safety;
- physical environment;
- staff arrangements;
- relationships with children;
- collaborative partnerships with families and children; and
leadership and service management. (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013)

Of particular interest to this study is the seventh and last quality area, titled leadership and service management, which includes the standards:

- Standard 7.1: Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community;
- Standard 7.2: There is a commitment to continuous improvement; and
- Standard 7.3: Administrative system enable the effective management of a quality service. (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013)

One element of Standard 7.1 focuses specially on the role of an educational leader. This element (7.1.4) is the focus of this study.

In 2018, a revised version of the National Quality Standard was published after community and sector consultation. This version of the Standard (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018) is primarily designed to reduce the overlap between elements and standards experienced in the original versions (2011, 2013), provide greater clarity to concepts, and for ease of use. The revised National Quality Standard (2018) maintains the seven quality areas but is reduced to 15 standards and 40 elements (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017c).

When comparing Quality Area 7 in the two versions (NQS, 2013 and 2018), key changes include: the replacement of title from Leadership and Service Management to Governance and Leadership; the removal of a preamble that provided a stronger emphasis on leadership; a reduction in the number of standards from three to two (7.1 Governance and 7.2 Leadership); fewer management concepts; and the number of elements reduced from 13 to six (Australian Children's
Education & Care Quality Authority, n.d.-b). Discussed next is the focus of the educational leader role in the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b).

The Educational Leader Role in the National Quality Framework

To assist in understanding the role of educational leader, the following policy statement is provided. The National Regulation: Regulations 118 states:

An approved provider of an education and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual as educational leader at the service to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the services. (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a, p. 133)

As a policy statement, it is not prescriptive in how to implement the role, and is open to multiple interpretations, particularly in relation to constructs of “suitably qualified” and “experienced”. Providing no real additional explanation, the National Quality Standard (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013), Quality Area 7, Leadership and service management, Element 7.1.4 states:

Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for learning and teaching. (p. 169).

In comparison, the descriptor of educational leadership in the National Quality Standard 2018 (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017a), element 7.2.2 states: “The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle”. This time, an emphasis appears to be on the notion of support – supporting the educational leader.
To support the Standard (NQS, 2011), the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority has published *The Guide to the National Quality Standard* (2011, 2013), that includes implementation considerations. However, with such a major change, the information provided is insufficient:

**What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.4**

Effective curriculum development requires ambitious goals and clarity of purpose. It requires attending to the principles, practice and outcomes of the approved learning framework. The role of the educational leader is to work with educators to provide curriculum direction and to ensure children achieve the outcomes of the approved learning framework. (p. 178)

The focus on leadership, and the role of educational leader within the National Quality Standard (Australian Children’s Education and Care Authority, 2018, 2011), have been detailed in this section to assist the reader to understand the change. Whilst the 2018 edition of the National Quality Standard is current, data collection and analysis for this research study were conducted in 2013, and therefore draw upon the National Quality Standard and the Guide to the National Quality Standard published in the period 2011 to 2013.

**The Workforce Strategy**

Evidence from international studies has found improved child outcomes and quality are associated with higher ECEC teacher qualifications (Sylva et al., 2004). This has led to a National Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Committee on School Education and Early Childhood, 2012) which aims to “deliver a sustainable, highly qualified and professional workforce” (p. 3) and is fundamental if government is to achieve its 2020 vision for all children (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).
Higher expectations of the ECEC workforce, along with increased qualifications, are evident within the National Quality Framework (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018), with many of the initiatives included in this strategy aimed at building a more knowledgeable and capable workforce. Initiatives include: removing vocational training fees for ECEC qualifications; recognition of prior learning; fee supports for university education qualifications; professional development programmes for long day care, and a national ECEC workforce census to better understand the workforce and its needs.

Like many of the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b) initiatives, this 5-year workforce strategy, which began in 2016, has been discontinued, although several states have instigated local workforce plans. Whilst the National Early Years Workforce Strategy addressed some workforce needs, it failed to address core issues related to employment in the sector, particularly in terms of wages and conditions, and teacher isolation (Sumsion, 2005).

**Early childhood education and care funding reform**

Since 2009 ECEC policy has been focused on a vision for all of Australia’s children (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). In 2017, the Commonwealth Government introduced a Jobs for Families Package (Australian Government, 2018b), which seemed to shift the focus from away from quality ECEC and its benefits for all Australian children. This funding package replaced child care benefit and subsidies, and became effective in July 2018 (Pascoe & Brennan, 2017). This policy change focused on affordability of child care (note the policy nomenclature back to child care) and strategies to support entry into the paid workforce. This shift in policy seems to have had unintended consequences, with a reported reduction in the number of vulnerable families attending ECEC because they do not meet funding eligibility criteria (Baker, 2018, September 9).
Chapter Summary

This chapter, as a positioning chapter, has provided the reader with the opportunity to gain an understanding of the ECEC context within Australia. The section traced how public policy has created a shift in the sector, from one that was multifaceted with services having different functions, to a sector where all approved ECEC services are required to focus on education and care. At the start of this study (2012), many of the policy initiatives detailed in this chapter were relatively new – initiated to lift the quality standard and strengthen the provision of ECEC in Australia (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). In returning to finalise this chapter, many of these initiatives are now in a mature phase, and for some in review, with potential to embrace the findings and recommendations of this study.

In the following chapter, the first section of the literature review sets out the current research and literature about quality and early childhood education and care. The significant public policies implemented in Australia through the National Quality Reform (DEEWR, 2009b) are detailed in this current chapter, to demonstrate the focus on improving quality in ECEC. An essential part of this quality agenda is the assessment and rating process and the commitment to continuous improvement. Not so obvious is the focus on leadership. Effective leadership is recognised as a necessary component of quality. The requirement to appoint an educational leader to each service is a policy that deliberately attempts not only to provide leadership in services, but also to focus attention on the educational program. Section two of the literature review explores the notion of leadership, first more broadly and then with a focus on the ECEC context. The final section highlights research and literature about change leadership, the leadership required to support effective and sustainable change.
Chapter Three: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of an extensive literature review framing the research topic. It comprises three sections: (a) quality and early childhood education and care, (b) leadership, and (c) educational change. The first and smaller section of this chapter details the literature about quality in ECEC. This inclusion is important because leadership is considered an important element of quality, with improving quality being the end goal of the educational leader. The section examines the notion of quality including an understanding of what defines quality in ECEC. International research is presented to demonstrate the benefits of quality ECEC to child outcomes and to society.

The second section reviews the research and literature about leadership, first discussed broadly, then with a focus on leadership in the ECEC context. This literature is important because it is through the state of being a leader, and through the enactment of leadership that the educational leader will support improvements.

The third section of this chapter details pertinent literature relating to educational change. This is different from the literature above because educational change is focused on the premises considered necessary to be enacted by a leader and manager to support sustainable educational reform. Additionally, this section provides context for understanding how the educational leader has been implemented in the sector to best drive change.
Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

The educational leader has an influential role in supporting quality in ECEC. Part of this study investigates ECEC professionals’ perspectives of the benefit (impact) of this role towards quality. Understanding quality is a logical beginning point for the literature review.

Importance of quality

Early childhood education and care has received unprecedented attention globally, particularly by governments of countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) attribute this focus to an ever-growing body of international research that prioritises the early years as a significant period in human life and provides evidence of the beneficial effects of quality ECEC for children before school (Becker & Mastrangelo, 2017; Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Naudeau, Kataoka, Valerio, Neuman, & Kennedy-Elder, 2011; OECD, 2001, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The research literature on the benefits of high quality ECEC can be categorised into two main areas: long-term social and economic benefits (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Melhuish et al., 2015; Moore & Oberklaid, 2010; Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2014; Wall, Litjens, & Taguma, 2015), and children’s educational and wellbeing outcomes for school and life (Siraj et al., 2017; Sylva et al., 2004; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2011). A brief synopsis of the findings from key research about the benefits of ECEC related to each of these areas is provided below.

Long-term social and economic benefit

Cost benefit analyses, typically applied in business and economics, have been pertinent in the argument for public investment into the early years, as they compare long-term investment benefit (educational effect) with the investment cost. These analyses have revealed which
educational investments yield the highest return for each dollar invested (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Heckman, 2011; Heckman, Grunewald, & Reynolds, 2006; Heckman & Lochner, 2000; Ludwig & Phillips, 2007; Lynch, 2005; Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2014). For example, Heckman and Raut (2013) considered the economic benefit from the universal provision of preschool and its educational effect. Their findings indicate that participation in a preschool program enhances children’s cognitive and non-cognitive skills, which they believe may have a long-term beneficial effect on the level of schooling and the labour market potential of individuals later in life.

Three quality ECEC programs in the United States – High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, Carolina Abecedarian Project, and Chicago’s Child-Parent Services – have provided longitudinal evidence for Heckman et al. (2006) to draw upon. These researchers concluded that children from disadvantaged families who participated in these programs enhanced their learning and developed social skills and motivation to enter the workforce. From the data, it was estimated that the overall annual social rate of return to the Perry Program was in the range of 7-10%, ranging from $7-$12 (US) dollars for every $1 invested (Heckman, Hyeok-Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz, 2010). More recently, it was predicted that by 2050 pre-kindergarten programs in the United States could yield $8.90 in benefits for every dollar invested, with a total benefit of $304.70 billion (Lynch & Kavya, 2015).

Locally, Price Waterhouse Cooper (2014) applied a similar cost benefit analysis to the Australian ECEC context. They suggested that the estimated benefit of investing in ECEC is an increase of $7.0 to 9.3 billion to the national gross domestic product (GDP). This investment benefit relates to increased female workforce participation, benefits for children receiving a quality education and care program, and benefits of increased participation of vulnerable children. Jenkins (2014) provides additional strength to the economic benefit argument for investing in the early
years, through discourse related to the development of productive citizens (Jenkins, 2014; Millei, 2008). Investing in early childhood education is considered essential to secure a future skilled local workforce, particularly relevant for countries like Australia with an aging population. Investing in the early years is also seen to address issues related to disadvantage and poverty, thus facilitating more equitable outcomes for all (Melhuish et al., 2015; Moore, 2006; Siraj et al., 2017).

Educational benefits for all children

Substantial research (Melhuish, 2014; Melhuish et al., 2015; Sylva et al., 2004) provides a clear message on the importance and benefit of children participating in high quality ECEC for disadvantaged families, along with the benefits of the universal provision of ECEC for all children (Sylva et al., 2004, 2011). A review of current research by Siraj et al. (2017) indicates that children who attend quality early childhood education and care “… are more likely to experience better behavioural and learning outcomes than those that do not attend” (p. 4).

The construct of quality

Recently, I was involved in a discussion where 35 four-year Bachelor trained early childhood education and care professionals were asked what was important for children participating in ECEC programs. The word “quality” was the dominant response. However, when asked to explain or describe in more detail what quality was, this group of ECEC professionals struggled to articulate what quality was, or why the emphasis on quality was so important.

Defining quality is complex, and surprisingly, an agreed definition and understanding about quality in ECEC does not exist (Jones, Osgood, Holmes, & Urban, 2016), even though evidence about the importance of high-quality ECEC has been the impetus of policy reform in many OECD countries (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). While some embrace the notion of quality, others warn the construct is elusive, contentious, and even “value-laden” (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014, p. 272). Thinking about quality has highlighted a number of paradigms at play (Dalli
et al., 2011; Fenech, 2011; Logan, Press, & Sumsion, 2012). Dalli et al. (2011) suggest two distinct streams of discourse: “a philosophical line and an effectiveness [and] impact measurement line” (p. 25). This philosophical discussion about the meaning of quality has emerged through the pioneering work by Gunilla Dahlberg, Peter Moss, and Alan Pence (1999, 2007) in Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Postmodern Perspective and in the subsequent revised edition (Dalli et al., 2011, p. 31). Their thinking, generated as a response to what they considered as a problem with the concept, argued “quality was a choice” (Moss, 2016, p. 8) and that it incorporated subjectivity, values, multiple perspectives, and understanding. Adding to this thought, Moss (2016) suggests that the many varied contexts and perspectives through which the concept of quality is viewed render it meaningless.

Dahlberg et al. (1999) argue the alternative discourse about the meaning of quality is a reductionist approach emerging from a positivist research paradigm. They warn that where this paradigm is accepted, quality becomes increasing standardised, often with regulations based on universal standard quality control, or control by quality (Moss, 2019). This idea of quality linked to universal control is supported by others who suggest it is an attempt to “pin quality down” and results in the construct also being “meaningless” (Jones et al., 2016, p. 3).

A contrasting view suggests there is a need for multiple perspectives about the meaning of quality in ECEC (Hutchins, Frances, & Saggers, 2009; Logan et al., 2012). Research conducted by Hutchins et al. (2009) questioned the conceptualisation of quality ECEC from an Indigenous perspective and warned of serious inconsistencies in the national systems applied in Australia due to a singular perspective. Sylvia et al. (2003) claimed quality is contextual and can depend “on national curricula and cultural priorities” (p. 46). This section has highlighted the complexity and the multiple perspectives held about the meaning of quality that influence the ECEC sector. Next,
drawing on discourse that is underpinned by a perception that quality can be measured, literature about the components of quality are detailed.

**The components of quality in early childhood education and care**

Drawing on one perspective about the meaning of quality, Wall et al. (2015) separate quality into three forms: structural quality, process quality, and orientation quality, and suggest that each of these can influence pedagogy, and vice versa. Along with others, Torii, Fox, and Cloney (2017) have separated structural quality from the original form of system quality (OECD, 2006). Flückiger (2018) has adapted the earlier work by Torii et al. (2017) to focus attention on each of the four components of quality (process, structural, orientational, and system). Figure 1 provides the components of quality, with the elements that make up the components. Following, a discussion about each component is provided.

Process quality

The components of process quality relate to the processes that occur in ECEC services, such as the interactions between child, space and resources, including: interactions between children and ECEC professionals; interactions between families and ECEC professionals;
implementation of curriculum; and the learning experiences or activities involving children and/or adults. According to Slot (2018), structural factors are established to create the conditions necessary for process quality. Pianta et al.’s (2016) research indicated that process quality is where positive difference can be observed for children and where benefits ongoing from prekindergarten through to third grade are ensured. This research suggests that the specific process qualities influencing children’s development include: “teachers’ sensitivity to individual needs, support for positive behaviour, and stimulation of language and cognitive development” (p. 119). Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), as part of a longitudinal study titled Effective Pre-School and Primary Education 3-11 project (EPPE 3-11), Sammons et al. (2008) found evidence that process quality led to better linguistic skills. The OECD (2015) reports an increase in countries striving to improve process quality for the benefits it affords.

**Structural quality**

Structural quality is the main focus of statutory regulations (OECD, 2015). In Australian ECEC, this is the National Law and National Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a). Figure 1 indicates that structural quality pertains to the characteristics that are determined by organisations delivering ECEC services and includes: group size; child-to-staff ratio; professional qualifications required by ECEC professionals; learning framework that guide educational program planning and practice; building design and use; professional development and support; health and safety measures; staff working conditions and wages; support for home learning partnerships; resources available for children; and educational leadership (Flückiger, 2018). Of note, research by Pianta, Downer, and Hamre (2016) found little evidence that structural quality influenced children’s development. However, Siraj et al. (2018) suggest that investment in staff support such as pedagogical guidance and
capacity building, along with favourable structural conditions are necessary if implementation of curriculums, such as EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a) are to be successful.

**Orientational quality**

The fourth form of quality, orientational quality, refers to professional priorities, teaching goals and curriculum decisions. It includes the underpinning beliefs and values of the ECEC professional, the workplace culture, as well as the values and beliefs underpinning the collective service philosophy (Wall et al., 2015).

**System quality**

According to Urban (2012) the system surrounding ECEC influences quality. System quality relates to the activities of the regulatory agencies and organisations that govern the ECEC sector. For instance, in Australia this involves both commonwealth and state government departments who influence quality by providing and directing funding to ECEC. As reported in Chapter 2, both levels of government were instrumental in the development of National Law and Regulations to form benchmarks of quality. Since its formation, the Australian Children’s Education and Care Authority monitors this quality through the Assessment and Rating process, monitoring quality to the National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c).

Another activity of system quality includes the regulation and quality control of preservice ECEC professional training both at a vocational and tertiary level, along with requirement for teachers to maintain currency through ongoing professional learning (as part of teacher registration). In summary, the model proposed by Flückiger (2018) (see Figure 1), suggests that system quality includes: investment, funding, regulatory standards and governance.

Reflecting upon the four components of quality (system, structural, process, orientational), it is evident that professionals have a key role to play in implementing government reform
initiatives and raising quality, with the educational leader having the greatest potential to influence process and orientational quality.

**Studies on quality in early childhood education and care**

With increased attention on quality in early childhood education and care, many countries are now investing in research to provide evidence to guide or influence policy and future investment. A desktop search of online databases revealed a vast array of research studies focused on quality. The following four pertinent research studies about quality in ECEC were selected due to their relevance; and influence of findings to policy development. The findings of these studies are provided.

*Study 1: Child-parent centre education program (Reynolds Temple, Ou, Arteaga, & White, 2011; United States)*

A longitudinal study from the United States (US) provides evidence on the long-term effects of preschool attendance for learning and well-being outcomes. The US study involved 1400 participants and evaluated the effects of the Child-Parent Centre Education Program (Reynolds, Temple, Ou, Arteaga, & White, 2011) and was conducted through a quantitative, quasi-experimental design with groups matched on age, eligibility for intervention, and family poverty. Total sample included an intervention group and a comparison group, one having attended ECEC and the other, not having attended. The evidence highlighted that there was an ongoing effect from preschool participation until the end of the third decade of life; benefits were the strongest for males, for disadvantaged children and for children of parents who did not complete high school.
Study 2: The effective provision of pre-school education (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004; United Kingdom)

Evidence identifying the importance of investing in the early years was also gathered through findings of a longitudinal study conducted in the U.K. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al., 2004) was one of the largest studies undertaken in the early years and examined the effects of early childhood settings on children’s learning and development. This study of 3,000 children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds collected qualitative and quantitative data in preschool, as well as primary school entry (age 5), in Years 1 and 2 (age 6 and 7) and in Year 6 (age 11).

One of the major findings of this study was that high-quality preschool experiences had positive effects on children’s intellectual and social development up to age 11 (Sylva et al., 2011). The research not only highlighted the importance of a quality early childhood preschool experience, but one-follow up inquiry also provided interest for my research. The Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector: The ELEYS study by Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) highlighted the important link between leadership and quality. This leadership study included twelve case studies conducted in early childhood settings where children were identified as having positive learning and development outcomes from their experience. The case studies investigated the characteristics of effective practice through detailed observations of staff pedagogy, structured and targeted observations of children’s learning and documentary analysis.

The ELEYS study (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) concluded that “in the most effective settings better leadership was characterised by a clear vision, especially with regards to pedagogy and curriculum” (p. 13). Although Siraj-Blatchford and Manni did not provide a definition of leadership, they described the elements identified in the research that lead to effective leadership practice:
• A collective vision;
• Shared understandings, meanings and goals;
• Effective communication;
• Encouraging reflection;
• Commitment to ongoing professional development;
• Mentoring and assessing practice;
• Distributed leadership;
• Community of learners and team culture;
• Community partnerships; and
• Leading and managing.

The findings of this study challenged ECEC professionals to consider the connection between quality and leadership and to recognise the practices of these quality services.

*Study 3: E4Kids (Tayler, 2016a; Australia)*

An Australian longitudinal study, E4Kids (2010 - 2015) (Tayler, 2016a), examined (among other things) the benefits of high-quality programs in ECEC on children’s development. In this research, the focus was on *process quality*, which includes teachers’ behaviours and their interaction with and between children. The study, conducted in the states of Victoria and Queensland, gathered information from observing 2,494 children aged 3 and 4. The children attended early learning services (long day care and kindergarten) and were tracked through to Year 3 in school. These children were compared to a group of children (*n* = 157) who did not attend an early learning service. The longitudinal quantitative study applied a multi-level design and measured structural and process quality. Findings of E4Kids confirmed the results of an earlier study by Warren and Haisken-DeNew (2013) that attending a quality early childhood education and care program with a qualified early childhood professional increases child outcomes.
Researchers also suggested that ECEC professionals directly influenced children’s learning and development. Some key aspects of teacher leadership were identified as drivers of child achievement and included such factors as opportunities with professional networks and teams to review purpose, practice and what it means to promote children’s learning. The study suggests that there is opportunity to make substantial differences to children’s cognitive development before school by having ECEC professionals undertake professional learning in promoting children’s learning.

**Study 4: Fostering Effective Early Learning (Siraj, Melhuish, Howard, Neilsen-Hewitt, Kingston, de Rosnay, Duursma, Feng, Luu, 2018; Australia)**

A recent Australian research study, Fostering Effective Early Learning (FEEL) (Melhuish et al., 2016; Siraj et al., 2018), investigated through a cluster randomised controlled trial how ECEC professional practices can be modified through professional development programs that enhance the quality of ECEC interactions and provide evidence that improved professional practice can enhance children’s learning outcomes. In the FEEL study, 90 long day care and preschool services in the state of New South Wales (Australia) were selected, with the intervention group (n = 45) compared to a group of ECEC professionals with no extra professional development (control group, n = 45).

As part of this study, a review of research studies considered quality in ECEC programs in delivery, pedagogy, and child outcomes. This review by Siraj et al. (2017) identified the key factors of ECEC professional practice and professional development (PD) needed for ongoing quality practice. These key factors are summarised below:

- A sustained focus on process quality is necessary for PD to bring about changes in the quality of child/teacher interactions;
- Use of recognised tools to assess quality and to inform PD;
• Practice changes aligned with outcomes;

• Qualifications and PD include strong grounding in child development research and theory to respond appropriately to children’s unique needs;

• Formal qualifications play a strong role in preparing the workforce and PD requires clear structures and learning strategies, to ensure that professional learning gaps are reduced;

• ECEC professionals need a strong knowledge base of high-quality curriculum and a sense of purpose, which implies continuous learning and value adding to their work;

• ECEC professionals need content knowledge and theory as well as the skills for appropriate interactions with children. Modelling these skills is considered essential;

• Changing practice requires on-going support aligned with strong leadership for learning; and

• High quality ECEC requires professionals to meet the unique needs of individual children, families and communities and embrace their differences.

The FEEL study found several direct and indirect benefits of participation in the PD program, such as improvements to pedagogical leadership which lead to positive changes in ECEC quality and professional practice, as well as improved child outcomes (Siraj et al., 2018).

Understanding what quality is, and then considering the findings from the FEEL study, provides insight into the ECEC sector requirements for quality and the plausible implications for the educational leader in relation to what it means to lead and improve the educational program at an individual service level. In summary, this section of the literature review has considered the notion of quality in ECEC, with particular emphasis on studies that focused attention on the importance of ECEC to the benefit of children, families, and society. To achieve the documented benefits of ECEC, a requirement for quality service provision was a consistent component
identified in the research (Siraj et al., 2017). Four components of quality were presented: system, structural, orientation, and process quality. Evidence suggests that of these four components of quality, process quality has the greatest impact for child outcomes.

Understanding the importance of quality, along with knowing the factors identified through the recent work from the FEEL Study (Melhuish et al., 2016; Siraj et al., 2017; Siraj et al., 2018) about ECEC professional practice and the requirements of professional development that are needed for ongoing quality (such as modelling), all highlight the crucial role the educational leader plays in supporting the sector to achieve not only process quality, but also orientational quality. An understanding of the current leadership practices conducted by the educational leader that influence process and orientational quality will enrich the knowledge base about this role, and may provide further direction to policymakers.

**Leadership**

The second and most substantial section of this Literature Review explores leadership. According to a growing number of researchers (Pascal, Bertram, Goodman, Irvine, & Parr, 2019; Rodd, 2006, 2013a; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), leadership in ECEC is a necessary element of a high-quality service, and central to achieving the goals of education reform. This realisation has led to a focus on leadership in ECEC by government, driven policy, and research in this area.

This section of the literature review is structured in the following manner. First, the difference between leadership and management is discussed, including how the two notions are often entwined. Next, several enduring traditional and contemporary models of leadership that focus heavily on a leader-centric approach are outlined. Following this, a shift from leadership by one leader to leadership by many is examined. The final section about leadership then considers the influence of context.
It is important to note that through this section of the Literature Review, literature and research from both business and schools, as well as ECEC will be presented. This decision has been taken in spite of the concerns expressed in the literature (Morgan, 1997; Rodd, 2006, 2013a; Thomas & Nuttall, 2014) about the relevance of research from outside ECEC. These concerns are based on the idea that this sector is unique. However, while this perspective is acknowledged, the current study aligns with a number of other researchers (Fenech, 2013; Garvis, Pendergast, Twigg, Flückiger, & Kanasa, 2012; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004) who recognise the contribution possible from considering research and literature about leadership more broadly. Schools and ECEC services are different; however, some parallels exist. For example, both seek leadership for learning, with improved child outcomes being the goal. In addition, consideration of the literature more broadly is necessary, as at the time of conducting the literature review that guides this study, some areas of leadership research in Australian ECEC, such as pedagogical leadership and leading change was limited.

What is leadership?

As an area of inquiry, leadership is both diverse and multifaceted (Northhouse, 2016). It is often considered a “big picture” notion, where individuals motivate members of the organisation to work towards a stated or shared vision. Definitions of what constitutes leadership are numerous (Waniganayake, 2014). Northhouse (2016) defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). He explains this statement by suggesting that there are common components central to the phenomenon of leadership:

a. leadership is a process;

b. leadership involves influence;

c. leadership occurs in groups; and

d. leadership involves common goals. (p. 6)
In contrast, rather than providing a definition, Webster and Clouston (2011) pose the following questions about leadership:

Is leadership defined by a position?

Is leadership defined by a person?

Is leadership defined by achievements?

Is leadership defined by how things are done? (p. 85)

These questions seem relevant when considering the role of educational leader as the Australian National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c) suggests that leadership is “…a relationship between people and the best leaders are those who are able to empower others” (p. 171). With a slightly different perspective, The Early Childhood Australia Leadership Capability Framework (Early Childhood Australia, 2017, p. 7) suggests “leadership is an influence process enacted by individuals and teams as we connect with one another to make the changes that reflect shared vision and purpose”. This commercial product has been developed specifically for ECEC professionals, inclusive of all service types, and aimed to support leadership at all levels. Although its use is voluntary, and cost for some perhaps prohibitive, the initial intent of the resource was to support the sector to find its way through the complexity of leadership, as illustrated by the lack of a commonly accepted definition (Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Hard, 2005).

With no clear agreement on an accepted definition of leadership, it is not surprising to find that the terms “leadership” and “management” are often conflated. Work by Kagan and Bowman (1997) suggests that leadership practices in ECEC can be categorised within five distinct areas: administrative (day-to-day operations or management of the service); pedagogy; community; conceptual; and advocacy. Clearly, some of these practices relate more to management; however, there are those who oppose this combination, such as Kotter (1990) who argues that “… people cannot manage and lead” (p. 104). Management, according to Rodd (2013a), includes the
management of “functions, processes and people” (p. 19). Activities associated with management often include strategic planning, planning, budgeting, and organising staff, whilst Rodd (2013a) suggests that leadership requires the ability to interact with others and includes activities such as building a team culture, generating a vision and mission and influencing others to follow towards shared goals, and enhancing professional growth. Acknowledging that the word leadership is considered abstract in nature (Waniganayake, 2014) and that management is often a component of leadership, this research will consider leadership as activities such as those highlighted by Rodd (2013a).

The preference to integrate leadership and management is evident in the National Quality Standard (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013), discussed in Chapter 2. As mentioned, the National Quality Standard (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013) consists of seven quality areas with accompanying standards, which early childhood education and care services are required to meet. Services are assessed through an assessment and rating process, and standards used as a benchmark to monitor performance as part of a cycle of ongoing continuous improvement. Within the original standard (now revised, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018), area seven focused on leadership and management, “effective leadership and management of the service that contributes to quality environments for children’s learning and development” (p. 169). When considering the standards that make up this quality area, in the light of definitions of leadership and management by Rodd (2006), two standards could be considered a function of leadership, with one focused on management.

Given the differing perspectives about leadership and management, it is not surprising that Burns (1978) asserts that “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomenon on earth” (p. 2). Leadership behaviour and the way it is perceived by followers (in
this case, early childhood education and care professionals) has a direct effect on service outcomes such as job satisfaction and effectiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It is therefore important that ECEC professionals have clarity about leadership, as well as the relationship between leader and follower, and the diverse models of leadership.

**Leadership models**

The following section presents the different models or approaches to leadership that have emerged from research and, where possible, provides insight into the benefits and constraints of these approaches for ECEC.

"Great man” theory

One of the earliest conceptualisations of leadership suggests that leaders (mostly men) were born with heroic leadership traits and natural abilities related to power and influence (Daft, 2015). This model projected top-down boss style management, with power and control the enablers of leadership. During a period of rapid change between 1995 and 1998 (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007), a study about the experience of female leaders in three Australian education sectors (universities, TAFE institutes and schools) highlighted the strong influence of this “great man” theory still in action. During the reform, behaviours and practices associated with “managerial masculinity” became part of organisational culture. Behaviours included traditional authoritarianism (bullying and fear), or what Sinclair (1998) referred to as the “gentleman’s club” (p. 61). This research was notable as it highlighted that this “power over” was not just used against women, but also affected men who were considered “less tough”.

Leadership conceptualised as the lone heroic great man is concerning as it is not viewed as a role that can be enacted by many (Ladkin, 2010). Furthermore, it presents an image that most early childhood education and care professionals are unable to identify with or relate to, and thus as a consequence, strongly resist (Hard, 2005).
**Trait and behavioural theories of leadership**

Identification of the great man theory was followed by attempts to identify the characteristics of a good leader. First iterations of this theory implied that leaders were more intelligent, more capable and possessed different personality traits, including power and influence, than their followers (Daft, 2015). However, recent thinking about personality traits of effective leaders considers two types of categories: general personality traits such as integrity and trustworthiness, and task-related traits emerging from behavioural theories (Dubrin, Dalglish, & Miller, 2006; Poole, 2011). Current understanding of trait and behaviour theories is reflected in most position descriptions developed for roles, such as ECEC professionals (directors, teachers and educators), which outline the traits and behaviours expected of the person holding the position (Dubrin et al., 2006). Further, understanding of traits and behaviour theories has led to the realisation of the potential of networking and mentoring. For example, David Hopkins suggests (2008) “system leaders are seen to share characteristic behaviours and skills that represent the actions of the best educational leaders” (p. 32). Two studies that examine ECEC leadership by applying trait theory are detailed following and provide opportunity to consider the findings, including characteristics that best support leadership.

**Study 1: Leadership and management in child care service: Contextual factors and their impact on practice (Nupponen, 2005; Australia)**

One Australian qualitative study examined the characteristics of effective management and leadership practices in child care services through a case study approach of eight child care directors in South East Queensland (Nupponen, 2005). Research data was gained through semi-structured interviews on two occasions within a 3-month timeframe. The study adapted a conceptual framework that views leadership as part of a social system and was strongly influenced by the work of Jorde Bloome (1991), discussed in detail shortly. Findings suggested that the
directors had a strong pedagogical focus within their role and required strong management and administration skills. Based on this finding, Nupponen (2005) recommended professional learning opportunities for future leaders to build business and management skills.

**Study 2: Dispositions of a responsible early childhood education leader: Voices from the field (Davitt and Ryder, 2018; New Zealand)**

One mixed-method research project from New Zealand examined how effective early childhood leaders supported the leadership development of themselves and their teaching teams, and the dispositions best supported to achieve this. The first step of the research was a national survey, followed by qualitative case study research involving seven teacher-led ECEC services. This phase involved collecting data from interviews and observations. The findings that emerged through the application of thematic analysis indicated six leadership dispositions that support ECEC leaders to understand the complexities of leading and responding appropriately; the effective dispositions of a responsible ECEC leader being a skilful communicator, relationship focused, caring and supportive (team unity), a leader of growth and change, and being a critical friend (Davitt & Ryder, 2018). According to Davitt and Ryder (2018), these dispositions can be learnt and should be nurtured and supported. This study concluded by highlighting the importance of professional learning that is rigorous, ongoing, and dialogic to support leadership development.

Other studies have explored leadership traits and behaviours including by Rodd (1996) and Hayden (1996). Rodd’s study reviewed the findings of Victorian studies of child care coordinators and their leadership attributes and skills, considered to be associated with effective leadership. The findings concluded that coordinators’ leadership was generally limited and recommended leadership training as a priority.
Situational leadership or contingency theories (Fiedler, 1964)

In contrast to trait theories, situational leadership suggests that no one leadership approach can suit all situations, and that adaptation of leadership styles and approaches is necessary to support the context in focus. Fiedler (1964) developed a contingency theory of leadership, which considers how the context influences the style of leadership required for the situation. A good leader analyses the context and situation and adjusts their leadership style accordingly. Note the emphasis on one leader. Despite acknowledgment of the influence of context on leadership, contingency theorists have developed a range of leadership capability frameworks. Rather than focusing on leadership style, capability frameworks focus on the general skills, roles and the capabilities good leaders require to undertake their work in various contexts. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (www.aitsl.edu.au) has developed national standards for principals that outline what principals are expected to know, understand and do to succeed in their work. Similarly, there is a leadership capability framework that sits within Early Childhood Australia’s Leadership Program, developed for early childhood education and care professionals; discussed following this section.

Next, two pertinent Australian research studies have been selected for consideration. The first, conducted to understand how leadership is understood in the ECEC sector. This study provides opportunity to consider characteristics and situations that have enabled or limited leadership opportunity. The second study examines the effect that context and situation have on leadership and provides opportunity to consider how these factors may affect the educational leader role.
Study 1: How is leadership understood and enacted within the field of early childhood education and care? (Hard, 2005; Australia)

Studies have been conducted to examine how context within the Australian ECEC field affects leadership. A study by Hard (2005) investigated how leadership was understood and enacted within a range of ECEC services. The study involved twenty-six participants from various states (Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania) and these participants identified themselves as preschool teachers, family day care educators, academics, long day care directors, and allied organisational workers. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, and artefacts provided by participants, which helped to build an initial understanding about the resources supporting and influencing the participants’ leadership. Next, two focus groups were conducted to explore themes that had emerged from the earlier data collection. Symbolic interactionism provided the methodological framework for this study, with standpoint feminist theory applied to inform the analytic process. While this study has some similarities to my study, one of the major differences between the two is the process through which the data are analysed. Hard elected to apply feminist theory, while my data will be viewed through leadership and change leadership lenses.

Hard’s (2005) research found that the enactment of leadership was strongly influenced by both internal and external factors, including professional identity and participants’ leadership activity or inactivity. Furthermore, what was apparent from this study was the strong influence of culture. Two competing elements were obviously at play, including a discourse of niceness (where the culture expected everybody to be nice, nice ladies), and horizontal violence (everybody expected to conform, behave, and think, as per the group’s status quo). This study is useful to my research because it provides a depth of understanding about leadership in the Australian ECEC
context, and flags to me the importance of being aware of the influence of culture to leadership, when listening to the lived experiences of my research participants, and when analysing the data.

*Study 2: The perceptions of principals of their leadership role with pre-primary (Stamopoulos, 1998; Australia)*

Research conducted in Western Australia highlighted the effect that context has on leadership when a new classroom innovation policy combining year one and pre-primary aged children based in primary schools was implemented (Stamopoulos, 1998). In this investigation, leadership was affected by contextual factors, including uncertainty about how to integrate pre-primary and primary, heightened by the confusion about philosophical, curriculum and pedagogical differences (Stamopoulos, 2003). This research suggests that for leadership to occur, policy needs to be developed, and training and support offered to professionals, findings concurred by other researchers (Fullan, 1998; Katz, 1994; Metz, Halle, Bartley, & Blasberg, 2013).

*Transformational leadership*

In his book *Leadership* (1978), James MacGregor Burns introduced transformational leadership as a process by which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (p. 20). Traditionally, the task of leading was seen as being accomplished through vision making: the leader establishing a vision and then motivating others to achieve that vision.

Transformational leadership has evolved from this traditional form, to now include collaborating with others in the process of co-designing the vision, and at the same time gaining collective ownership and motivation towards achieving the vision (Colmer, 2008; Fullan, 2006a; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). The notion of vision building is considered important in all leadership functions, including ECEC as it creates a sense of possibility for making a difference

For many years, transformational leadership has been considered the ideal leadership model and continues to be highly regarded (Aubrey, 2011; Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Hard, 2005; Nupponen, 2006; Rodd, 2013a), particularly because it is considered more reflective of feminine leadership styles (Nupponen, 2006). In a paper on leadership during times of reform, Fenech (2013) stressed the importance and fit between ECEC and transformational leadership. This notion is supported by research (Brownlee et al., 2010) that concluded that transformational leadership was the most frequent model of leadership utilised within services, with some nine services out of 15 in her study using a combination of transactional and transformational leadership.

However, setting a collective vision and establishing goals is not sufficient. Bass and Riggo (2006), as well as Fullan (1998, 2006a, 2007b) warn that transformational leaders need to build the capacity of followers to enable the vision to be achieved, an activity that may provide challenge to some ECEC services, particularly with financial constraints, and workforce issues that often prevent ECEC professionals from attending professional development.

*Transactional leadership*

Transactional leadership considers the relationship between leader and follower (Daft, 2015). In simple terms, transactional leadership is about a trade between leader and follower. It could be argued that the western world is led by transactional leadership, as people go to work and, as a reward wages are received.

From my own experience, transactional leadership is often utilised in ECEC. A service receives a certain rating in the Australian Assessment and Rating process (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018), and the service manager receives a bonus. When
reflecting upon this type of leadership for ECEC, it seems most suitable. However, Dubrin et al. (2006) caution that at some point transactional leadership may be limited because once the transactions have occurred and the reward (such as the centre director bonus) is no longer relevant or desired, the purpose of the relationship ceases.

Research from the field of nursing (Mahmound AL-Hussami, 2008) investigated the relationship of job satisfaction to organisational commitment. Results found organisational support, transactional and transformational leadership, and level of education are all factors conducive to organisational commitment. However, organisational support was found to be the strongest contributor to job satisfaction, with transactional leadership the weakest. These findings may have relevance to ECEC in relation to whether the organisational support provided to these professionals is sufficient to support job satisfaction. Further research in ECEC contexts is needed to determine this.

Leadership theories discussed so far, have been leader-centric, held by a single person. However, this notion of leadership is contested by some researchers (Colmer, 2008; Rodd, 2013a; Waniganayake et al., 2012), who recognise the benefits of other ways of leading.

**Distributed leadership**

The notion of distributed leadership was first introduced by Gibb (1954) as an alternative to leadership by a single leader, with its accompanying emphasis on the person, their traits and personality. Instead, Gibbs believed leadership could be enacted by a group, and directed the focus of leadership on practice. Further thinking by Harris (2008b) suggests that leadership in organisations results from multiple interactions by people at different points in an organisation. In schools, this means that leadership is distributed through positional leaders and teachers (teacher leadership will be discussed shortly). She goes further to explain that distributed leadership is a
form of lateral leadership where the practice of leadership is shared among organisational members, governed by the interactions of individuals rather than individual direction.

Similar views about distributed leadership also exist in ECEC, with this approach to leadership considered a natural fit (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). Rodd (2013a) suggests that distributed leadership “… focuses on growing knowledge and expertise through openly or subtly dispersed responsibility …” (p. 42). This idea is also supported by Ho (2011) who suggests it provides opportunity for empowerment of both ECEC professionals, and at times parents.

Much research on distributed leadership has focused on both schools (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Gronn, 2002, 2008; Harris, 2008b; MacBeath, 2005; Spillane, 2005, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) and ECEC (Colmer, Waniganayake, & Field, 2015; Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Fasoli, Woodow, & Scrivens, 2007; Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011; Heikka, Waniganayake, & Hujala, 2012; Kangas, Venninen, & Ojala, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). A review of literature by Heikka et al. (2012) about distributed leadership in ECEC in Finland suggests that leadership has positive impacts on education, teachers and the leader. From an Australian perspective, Colmer (2008) recommends leadership groups most suitable for ECEC, and foregrounds a distributed model as providing opportunity for autonomy and control around the decisions ECEC professionals make in their learning spaces.

Action research was conducted within a New Zealand child care service that embraced a distributed leadership approach and investigated its impact on children’s dispositions of enquiry. All staff were considered leaders and worked collaboratively to plan for all children. Jordan (2008) considered the impact of this distributed model of leadership on children’s disposition to inquiry through the use of field notes, document analysis, reflective journals and video footage which was analysed alongside the staff member concerned. This video footage supported the ECEC
professionals to reflect with the researcher on each pedagogical decision. The findings demonstrate the power of this model within a context, concluding, “Educational leadership, both formal and informal, formed the bridge between the community of practice, the teachers’ work and outcomes for children’s learning” (p. 83).

Although several researchers champion the benefits of distributed practices, others have raised concerns around the use of this model. Considering the lessons learnt from within the school-based sector about distributed leadership, MacBeath (2005) and Harris (2008a, 2008b) caution that this leadership approach needs to be considered with thought and is not about removing formal leadership structures within schools or making them redundant.

Distributed leadership is considered by some researchers (Harris, 2008b; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) to provide potential for collective change. However, research involving ECEC professionals in Tasmania found that although administrators felt distributed leadership could be a benefit, teachers did not share the same enthusiasm, suggesting that the leadership responsibilities would be a distraction from their core work (Boardman, 1999).

The school sector has identified barriers to the successful implementation of distributed leadership, including distance, culture and structure (Harris, 2008a) with similar findings in ECEC. For instance, data gathered through focus group discussions in Australian ECEC research suggested that horizontal violence existed. Hard (2006) believes such a form of workplace bullying whereby ECEC professionals were expected to conform and behave according to group agreement could be attributed to the lack of leadership within the field. She suggests that until culture is changed, ECEC may not gain benefit from a distributed model of leadership. Another finding worth noting from the same inquiry was the notion of a “discourse of niceness” (Hard, 2005, p. 47), another ingrained culture of expectant behaviour that may also negatively influence this approach to leadership.
Teacher leadership

Anchored in scholarly literature on distributed leadership is the discourse about teacher leadership (Heikka, Halttunen, & Waniganayake, 2018; Ho & Tikly, 2012). Simply, teacher leadership means “leadership exercised by teachers regardless of position” (Ho & Tikly, 2012, p. 18). Extending from the original work of York-Barr and Duke (2004) who examined 140 studies about teacher leadership, Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) concluded from studies in schools that teachers lead work with colleagues to improve student learning and teaching. They suggested that this was often achieved informally and highlighted the importance of relationships in bringing about organisational change to achieve stated goals. Interestingly, and similar to ECEC (Boardman, 1999; Hard, 2006), Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) found that teachers working in schools were reluctant to see themselves as leaders or to be referred to as leaders.

Recently, a small number of international studies about teacher leadership in ECEC have emerged. Heikka et al. (2018) conducted research with early childhood professionals investigating perceptions of teacher leadership in three ECEC services in Finland. Findings indicated that teachers held a sense of “pedagogical responsibility” (p. 143) and felt that this was important due to the absence of a director who had responsibilities across a number of services. Additional to expectations of self, expectations of leadership were also held by each of the teachers’ room teams particularly for staff who were not early childhood qualified. This study found that local structural factors (time available, staff numbers and qualifications) supported or constrained the opportunity for teacher leadership and in turn pedagogical improvement. Interestingly, concerns about qualifications and experience of staff in a distributed approach have also been raised in other studies (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007; Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004).

Further research from Heikka, Halttunen, and Waniganayake (2016) investigated enactment of teacher leadership, again in three early childhood education services in Finland. The
researchers highlighted how systems and characteristics within Finnish early childhood education services did not support early childhood teachers to have strong leadership. This finding supports existing research in other countries (Ho & Tikly, 2012).

Like most economically strong nations, Hong Kong has also invested in significant early childhood reform, with teachers considered the change agents. Li (2015) conducted a quantitative inquiry with 625 participants that examined teacher leadership in preschools in Hong Kong. The study detailed the shift in long-standing culture from one of authority and power held by the principal of the school and/or early childhood service, to regulatory requirements positioning the need for a more participatory leadership model.

Findings indicated that although new policy required a shift in leadership model, teacher leadership to support organisational learning and the development and drive towards a vision was non-existent (Li, 2015). Instead, avoidance of leadership was evident and rather than distributing leadership as required by the reform, leadership was minimised. Reflecting upon similar findings from Australian research (Hard, 2006), this study also found evidence that teachers who enacted teacher leadership were seen as “stepping out of line” (p. 443). Li (2015) highlighted the tension created by a “we are all the same” (p. 443) mindset.

Research conducted in Australia and abroad demonstrates that this form of leadership is popular with ECEC professionals as well as early childhood policymakers, with Sims et al. (2017), declaring that the development of the educational leader role was “clearly influenced by the idea of distributed leadership” (p. 3).

Pedagogical leadership

To help understand the term pedagogical leadership, this section will first consider the meaning of pedagogy. Although widely used within Europe (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009) the term has only been adopted more broadly in recent times (Dahlberg et al., 1999), and misunderstanding
about the meaning common. Siraj-Blatchford (2010) and colleagues involved in the UK EPPE project defined pedagogy in ECEC as, “… the full set of instructional techniques and strategies that enable learning to take place in early childhood that provided opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions” (pp. 149-150). Wood (2004) suggests the term pedagogy also includes how environments are designed, and the techniques and strategies used by ECEC professionals to provide for children’s learning.

Pedagogical leadership is an essential component of leading an educational organisation to improve the teaching and learning (Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1998). The work of Waniganayake, et al. (2012) found that pedagogical leadership involves specialist knowledge about program planning, resourcing, engaging with children and families, and contributing to the understanding of the importance of early childhood education and care (p. 94). The leader therefore requires a strong understanding about pedagogy to lead and in order to lead pedagogical change within a service (Fonsén, 2013). According to Sergiovanni (1998), pedagogical leadership is about capacity building for children and also educators, an idea supported by other researchers (Harris, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) who suggest pedagogical leadership is achieved through the development of others. According to Fonsén (2013), pedagogical leadership is the core responsibility of leaders and is shared with other ECEC professionals. This is a notion supported by Semann (2019), who suggests that:

effective pedagogical leadership is a collective journey, which includes all staff working together to identify strategic direction they hope to work towards, clarifying the support they require … and creating spaces of democracy where discussions are centred on developing ideas together. (p. 55)

Such leadership needs structure and time to enable educators to come together – to discuss and reflect (Fonsén, 2013), and without guidance or clear expectations by government about the role
of educational leader, or for time and structure, the work of the educational leader relies on the discretionary decisions of service providers to enable these opportunities.

The term pedagogical leadership is often referred to as leadership for learning—particularly in school settings (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009), and Sims, Waniganayake, and Hadley (2019) state that the term pedagogical leader and educational leader are one and the same. In reviewing the literature about pedagogical leadership, this means all three terms must be considered. This chapter includes literature about pedagogical leadership and later in the chapter a focus on the implementation of the educational leader role. Next, two studies focused on pedagogical leadership are outlined. These studies are relevant to this research as they provide insight about key considerations about pedagogical leadership.

*Study 1: Pedagogy, the silent partner in early years learning (Stephen, 2010; United Kingdom)*

To be effective leaders, ECEC professionals need to have the competence to be able to understand and articulate their pedagogical practice. This research has been included within this section, as it highlights a current capability need of professionals working in the UK sector, and provides impetus for thinking about the leadership of pedagogy in Australia. Stephen (2010) identified that although ECEC professionals’ practice demonstrates strategies that reflect effective pedagogy, many ECEC professionals are reluctant to discuss or find it difficult to articulate the rationale for what they do to support learning and teaching with young children and in fact ECEC professionals rarely considered educational theory.

This research included two studies involving children aged 3-6 years and their ECEC professionals [teachers or educators]. *Interplay*, the first part of this research project, aimed to enhance young children’s engagement with technology in preschool settings and included 14 ECEC professionals for a period of 1 year. Data collection involved a cyclical process whereby researchers made observations through video recordings of children’s encounters with a wide
range of technologies. These vignettes were shared with ECEC professionals who then were asked to plan further opportunities for the children based on the knowledge gained from the footage. The researchers captured a plan-do-review cycle of teaching that was repeated twice within the course of a year. The data collected included footage of the classroom environment, learning and teaching, and interviews with practitioners of their review processes.

Despite ECEC professionals utilising a range of pedagogical practices, when they were asked to discuss their decision making, they were unable to do so. Stephen’s (2010) research highlighted that even though teachers often use quality pedagogical practices, they are either not consciously aware they are doing so, or are unable to articulate their pedagogical practices, which limits the opportunity to lead pedagogy, and support the professional learning of others.

Study 2: Developing Pedagogical Leadership in Early Childhood Education (Ord et al., 2013; New Zealand)

The Developing Pedagogical Leadership in Early Childhood Education (Ord et al., 2013) study conducted in early childhood settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand trialled a mentoring and coaching methodology that was expected to support positional leaders (responsible for learning and teaching). A model of distributed leadership was applied, whereby positional leaders created opportunity for teachers to be the leaders. Two theoretical frameworks were applied to this study: kaupapa Māori theory and expansive learning theory (incorporating third generation activity theory). In brief, the notion of expansive learning – the identification, surfacing, and analysis of contradictions – forms the core of expansive learning (p. 37). The findings of this study indicate pedagogical leadership within these settings was enhanced through: the incorporation of expansive learning theory, activity theory and utilizing a well-designed professional learning model. The study concluded that pedagogical leaders made sense of themselves within and against their developing understanding of expansive learning theory by:
1. working more systematically;
2. gaining a framework for bringing contradictions to consciousness;
3. redistributing knowledge and decision making across the collective; and
4. having a tool for leading pedagogical dialogue in their centre.

Pedagogical leadership arises through a focus on teaching and learning and makes a significant difference to children’s achievement outcomes. Based on the study above, Ord (2013) and colleagues, suggest pedagogical leadership in ECEC is enacted through contemporary leadership models, such as distributed leadership, along with well-designed professional-learning models and mentoring frames that support understanding and learning, and work against the silence of pedagogy as described by Stephen (2010). The role of educational leader is responsible for leading pedagogical leadership in the Australian ECC landscape and how this leadership is being enacted will be examined.

Contextual leadership

Similar to a distributed approach to leadership, contextual leadership steers away from the focus on a central leader and towards a notion that considers the influence of context on leadership (Hallinger, 2018; Moir, 2009; Oc, 2018; Osborn, Hunt, & Lawrence, 2002; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Hallinger (2018) notes from examining schools that leadership must be considered in context, and his recent paper highlights growing consensus in the research field about the importance of leadership practices adapted to meet the individual needs of each context for successful leadership.

Another recent scholarly reference to the influence of contextual leadership authored by Oc (2018) suggests that Fiedler’s (1978) contingency theory, which argues that leadership depends on situation, was one of the first to advocate that leadership did not occur in isolation, or a vacuum, and recognised the influence of a match between traits and situational factors for organisational
outcomes. Osborn et al. (2002) further assert that leadership is “socially constructed in and from a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters” (p. 798). The focus on context therefore includes: each situation and context, time, history, process, and organisational and social culture, all seen as integral parts of this collective leadership. When thinking about context and ECEC, Waniganayake et al. (2012) simply suggest person, position, and place are the leadership elements. Also in reference to ECEC, this time from the United Kingdom, Penn (2018) is firm in suggesting leadership is always contextual.

Porter and McLaughlin (2006) advocate that while there is no agreed set of components, it would appear that the following are considered important: culture/climate, goals/purposes, people/composition, processes, state/condition, structure, and time. Oc (2018) applied a slightly different categorical framework, adapted from the earlier work of Johns (2006) to support understanding of how these factors shape leadership behaviour, viewing context as having two categories. The first of these, referred to as omnibus (broad or collective), included: the “where” (national culture, institutional forces and type of organisation), “who” (demographic differences), and “when” (economic conditions, organisational change and crisis). The second category referred to as discrete (the more granular), included: task related (job characteristics, tasks), social (networks, teams) physical (location, physical distance between leader and follower) and temporal (time pressures). Importantly, both of these models (omnibus and discrete context) seem to influence and define effective leadership practice.

Oc (2018) further explains contextual leadership by declaring that it examines “whether situational or contextual factors lessen or enhance the impact of leadership practices and explores how leadership takes place in specific contextual settings” (p. 218). For example, this model recognises that leadership in early childhood education and care settings will be different from school or other organisational settings.
A similar definition that also views leadership as embedded in context suggests that the demands, constraints, and choices for leaders stem from context (Osborn & Marion, 2009). Osborn et al. (2002) point out from their thinking that, “leadership and its effectiveness, in large part, is dependent upon the context. Change the context and leadership changes, as does what is sought and whether specific leadership patterns are considered effective” (pp. 797-798). The idea of a ripple effect created through the changing of one component in a context was also agreed by researchers considering ECEC services (Jorde Bloom, 1991; Nupponen, 2005). Influenced by the thinking about the ECEC sector, Hujala (2013) defined contextual leadership as “based on the same paradigm and same goals as the core tasks included in the mission of the organisation” (p. 51).

There is a growing body of research that has documented the effects of contexts on leadership by applying a system perspective. According to Moir (2017), this model of contextual leadership explains the “nested micro, meso and macro interrelated social forces that combine to influence perceptions and expectations for the social phenomena known as leadership” (p. 2). This system perspective has also been applied to research based within ECEC services, (Hujala, 2013; Jorde Bloom, 1991; Nivala, 1998; Nupponen, 2005).

Underpinning all of these ECEC studies, the literature about the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) has been influential and the following provides a brief explanation of this Ecological System model. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that the environment consisted of a series of nested systems that interact with each other in complex ways through dynamic and reciprocal influences. The ecological system model emerged as a series of systems of contextual influence: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), with a later system added referred to as chronosystem.

According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem is the inner most system and incorporates interactions between the individual and the physical, social and symbolic elements of the context.
The influences of these systems are bi-directional, and they are influenced by and influencing other systems. The mesosystem describes the processes occurring between the multiple microsystems. The mesosystem places emphasis on the interconnected relationships and influences between the various elements within the microsystem. The exosystem surrounds the mesosystem and is the indirect environment. The macrosystem, the outermost system of the model incorporates societal values and broader social and political contexts that shape and influence organisations. Osborn et al. (2002) argue that the macrosystem is the system often neglected when thinking about the impact of the various systems (such as government policy), and yet is in need of the greatest attention when considering the influences on leadership across the rest of the system, including at the service level. The chronosystem, the final system, is about transitions, time and the influence of socio-historical context.

When researching leadership in an early childhood context, Nivala (1998) applied a contextual lens underpinned by the theoretical thinking of an ecological system. Within an early childhood education and care context, the micro and mesosystems included the leader, children, staff and the relationships between these, and Nivala (1998) argued that these interactions formed the organisational culture. Also applying a contextual lens to the ECEC sector, a recent paper by Hujala (2013) considered the importance of contextual leadership in a period of change for ECEC, where the author suggests that the sector now has a significant role in the lives of children and their families. The paper makes reference to the phrase “society embedded leadership” (p. 50), which seems appropriate given government and external agency influences on ECEC. The paper also suggests that leadership is affected by the theoretical understandings of ECEC, as well as the mission of the organisation (Hujala, 2013), which from an Australian perspective may be driven from a social purpose, or towards reaching certain profit margins. Hujala’s (2013) view of
contextual leadership is different from the other models presented in this section and suggests that contextual leadership comprises four integrated components:

1. ECEC mission;
2. Core tasks;
3. Director’s management functions and administration tasks; and
4. Organisational vision.

From a broader perspective, an earlier model for understanding the dynamics of organisational life in ECEC provides benefits when applying contextual leadership. Similar to the four components of leadership presented by Hujala (2013), Jorde Bloom (1991) considers leadership by describing the leader’s work and the ECEC service as a social system. This system views leadership from the perspective of: environment (the outside world); people; structure (formal and informal arrangements of the service); processes (how things get done); culture (the feel of the place), and outcomes. Hujala (2013) suggests that the interactions of these contextual components establish a service culture.

To highlight the different components, and their commonalities to each other, Table 2 incorporates the five contextual leadership models considered in this chapter. Strong similarities exist across all models, with the components of people, culture and processes such as goal setting common to each of the models.
Table 2.

**Important Components of Contextual Leadership**

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<td>Processes such as planning and goal setting</td>
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Of note, when reviewing Table 2, are the three models (Hujala, 2013; Jorde Bloom, 1991; Nivala, 1998) focused on ECEC contexts as all incorporate the external environment as influencing leadership. By contrast, the two models applied to contexts outside of education (Oc, 2018; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006) do not. In these models, internal environment was the influencing component.

Tabling the components of the models provides clear sight of the influence Jorde Bloom’s (1991) work has had on the thinking about contextual leadership by Hujala (2013). This latter model incorporates many of the components identified in the model by Jorde-Bloom, and then goes further to include the vision and mission of a service, both premises considered necessary for leadership and educational change. Table 2 also highlights how when exploring leadership, one
must take into account various different components which are highly variable and context specific, a change to any of these components generates change in leadership (and vice versa).

In summary, this section has considered the literature and research about leadership. Leadership is considered diverse and complex, and an absence of an agreed definition on leadership, as well as resistance to more traditional forms of leadership, have until recently been considered a barrier to strong leadership for this sector. With substantial research indicating effective leadership is essential to quality ECEC, leadership in this sector has become a major focus for policy makers and researchers. Acknowledging the sector’s resistance to hierarchical forms of leadership, much research has been conducted about applying a distributed leadership model, and this seems to be a favoured approach.

This review of the research also suggests that leadership is influenced by contextual factors. This means that the leader needs to consider leadership in the unique context of each individual service. This would suggest that there may be no one-size-fits-all model for the leadership provided by the educational leader role. Furthermore, if a distributed leadership approach is applied, the leader will need to devolve and share leadership within the service and take stock of all of the factors of influence. Distributed leadership may be particularly relevant to this study, given service directors’ (principal, director, teacher-in-charge, family day care coordinator) responsibility to the management and operational needs of the service. Therefore, distributed leadership may provide successful context-based leadership leading to process and orientational quality by the educational leader.

**Educational Change**

A fact sheet developed by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Authority (n.d.-c) about the educational leader begins by declaring, “The educational leader has an influential role in inspiring, motivating, affirming and also challenging or extending the practice and pedagogy of
educators” (p. 1). This statement positions the educational leader as a change agent; therefore, this section of the literature review will detail what is meant by educational change. The first part aims at gaining an understanding of educational change. Next, two models of educational change are presented to highlight the components necessary for change. Following this, research about educational change conducted within ECEC is detailed, including recent studies about the educational leader.

**What is change?**

Many inspirational quotes posted on social media or in books indicate that change is the one constant in life. From this, it could be assumed that achieving change is simple. However, Fullan (2016) warns that bringing about sustainable change is a complex process that involves leaders motivating others to follow, engage in, and work towards a shared vision. Often, change involves a learning process (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008). Furthermore, change takes time (Fullan, 2001b, 2007a, 2016; Pendergast et al., 2005) and is typically considered to occur in three phases: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Fullan (2001b, p. 53) defines the initiation phase as “the process leading up to and including the decision to proceed with the implementation”. The next phase, implementation, begins with the initial attempts to use the change. This is the phase where behaviour changes and a possible transformation in beliefs, attitudes or values occurs, or the individual resist (Rogers, 2003). The final phase, institutionalization, begins when change becomes part of the everyday or the change effort is discontinued. Reform takes time, ranging from 2 to 4 years and up to 5 to 10 years for more complex change.

Recognising the responsibility of leaders to lead change, Rodd (2013a) defines six key types of change: incremental change – small day-to-day modifications; induced change – a conscious decision to implement change; routine change – effected by the leaders on an ongoing
basis to rectify an issue and to stabilise the status quo; crisis change – in response to an unexpected occurrence; innovative change – resulting from creative problem solving; and finally, transformational change – significant change to divert a crisis (pp. 186-187). This final category seems to describe the change required to meet policy changes required by the National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c) for the appointment of an educational leader. Leadership to enact reforms of the National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c) requires leaders who are knowledgeable about educational change and the processes necessary to support themselves and others towards meaningful and sustained change.

**Change leadership models**

In this section, two change models are detailed. The first model has emerged from extensive research and thinking conducted over time by Michael Fullan. This model, although developed from findings in schools, has been applied to studies in ECEC (Flückiger, Dunn, & Wheeley, 2016; Garvis et al., 2012). The second change model, emerged from the field of implementation science, and is specifically focused on supporting the implementation of evidence-based findings into practice. It has also been applied in ECEC.

**The theory of action for educational change (Fullan, 2007a)**

Successful change is supported by change knowledge, that is, an understanding of the process of change and implementation of the drivers considered necessary to support the process. Fullan (2007a, p. 32) has identified seven core premises considered necessary to support successful and long-lasting educational change, with the model referred to as the Theory of Action for Educational Change. The seven core premises are: motivation; capacity building; learning in context; changing context; a bias for reflective action; tri-level engagement; and persistence and flexibility in staying the course. Each of these are explained in more detail below.
The first premise, motivation, is considered critical to the theory of action model. Fullan (2006a) suggests that without collective and individual commitment, the change process is not achievable. Motivation and engagement are key. Part of this motivation is engaging people’s moral purpose, which means ensuring that people are aware of the “intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole” (Fullan, 2001a, p. 3). In education, societal improvement through reducing the gap between low and high performers continues to be a driving force (Fullan, 2003a). At a micro level, this means opportunity for all students; at a macro level, it refers to education’s contribution to “…societal development and democracy” (Fullan, 1999, p. 1). Similarly, according to the National Quality Framework, moral purpose in early childhood and care is about improving the wellbeing of all children and society to “… ensure the wellbeing of children throughout their lives and lift the productivity of our nation as a whole” (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2013, p. 3). Moral purpose is the goal of change but is also used as the motivation to support change (Fullan, 2007a, 2007b). Fullan (2007a) also warns that moral purpose alone is unlikely to achieve results and recommends additional motivational factors, including “capacity, resources, peer and leadership support and identity” (p. 33).

The second premise is capacity building. Fullan (2007a) highlights that for change to succeed, “… capacity building focusing on results is crucial” (p. 33). Building capacity includes strategies that increase the collective power. These may include policies and resources that support the system to move forward (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005). Change requires new knowledge, skills and competencies, and learning for change must be directly assisted and led (Scott et al., 2008). Additionally, resources to support change such as time and materials, are needed. To ensure that systems can provide capacity-building opportunities, building capacity is required at three levels: the individual, service and/or organisation, and within the infrastructure of local, regional
and state levels (Fullan, 2007a; Fullan et al., 2005). Capacity building leads to a new shared 
identity, ownership and collaboration, increasing a sense of motivation towards the change 
outcome (Fullan, 2016). Learning in context, that is learning in the work setting is the third 
premise. Elmore (2004, cited in Fullan, 2007a) states that “the process of cultural change depends 
fundamentally on modelling the new values and behavior that you expect to displace the existing 
one” (p. 34). This is followed by the fourth premise, changing context, discussed next.

Developing cultures for learning is necessary to support the transaction of new knowledge 
and skills necessary for change to occur (Fullan, 2007a; Fullan et al., 2005; Scott et al., 2008). 
Learning is considered best achieved through on the job opportunities. Establishing systems to 
encourage lateral capacity building, where people (individuals) and services can learn from each 
other, is a powerful strategy that not only maximises learning potential but also supports collective 
commitment towards reform.

The fifth premise relates to a bias for reflective action, suggesting that leaders need to think 
about what they are doing and that learning occurs best through doing, reflection, inquiry, 
evidence, and more doing. This thinking and reflection is required to enable the previous four 
premises to gain momentum. With this in mind, Fullan (2006a) suggests that the development and 
ownership of a shared vision is an outcome of a quality process and thereby challenges us to 
consider the order in which this is achieved.

The sixth premise, cultivating tri-level development, involves simultaneously shifting the 
focus away from the individual towards consideration of the transformation required at three 
levels: schools/service and community, district, and state. Focusing on changing the context within 
which people work allows more opportunity for “learning in context” (Fullan, 2005, p. 58).

Persistence and flexibility in staying the course is the seventh and final premise. It focuses 
on the leadership required for change. Leadership change requires change agents to be steadfast
and knowledgeable about the type of leadership necessary to best lead change. This premise includes seeking leaders who are innovative and possess the capacity to develop and build leadership in others and to share change knowledge.

The theory of action for educational change (Fullan, 2007a) has value for an individual, for an ECEC service, and at a system level. At an individual level, it can be used by an ECEC professional to plan a change process or for self-reflection. Similarly, within an ECEC service and at system level, it could also be utilised for planning a change process in the initiation phase or as an audit tool. Each of the seven premises has relevance to ECEC; however, premise six, tri-level engagement, recognises the systems that influence ECEC. I suggest these refer to: individual service; governance (corporation, organisation, community managed, private for profit); and government (commonwealth and state). Hence, the adoption of this theory is applicable for change within this research.

**Implementation drivers (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005)**

The second change leadership model is derived from a synthesis of the implementation literature by Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, and Wallace (2005) which was aimed at identifying the impact levers necessary to support and drive change. The authors’ interest was driven by a need to build an evidence base for effective strategies to support implementation of new evidence-based programs and practices with high fidelity in different services.

The model, represented in Figure 2, highlights the three implementation drivers and the components considered necessary to contribute to successful and sustainable change. Fixsen and Blase (2008) identify three drivers of change: competency drivers, organisational drivers, and leadership drivers; these are explained next. The authors placed these drivers around a triangle and suggested that they are integrated and compensatory, meaning that weaknesses in one area can be
overcome by strengths in another. The drivers influence staff behaviour and organisational culture and recognise that both within-organisation and wider contextual factors influence change.

One of the drivers, competency drivers, has a purpose of preparing the participants involved in the change process to have the confidence and competence to implement the change. The competency drivers include consideration of selection, training, coaching, and performance assessment. Selection includes the recruitment of the right people for the change process and consideration about the roles required; training considers the experiences required to support the knowledge and skills for the change, the “new” learning required; coaching is the support provided to assist recipients to translate new learning into practice; and performance assessment includes the criteria used for evaluating and assessing the application of new knowledge and skills into practice (Metz & Bartley, 2012; The National Implementation Research Network, 2017).

The next driver, organisational drivers, is developed and implemented by the facilitative administrators (e.g., director, principal, family-day-care coordinator, educational leader), who are the leaders of the change. Their role supports the implementation process by ensuring policies and procedures are either developed or aligned to meet the change need, and that funding allocations and the necessary support are in place for people affected by change. This involves systems intervention, similar to the premise of Fullan’s (2006a) notion of tri-level engagement. Alignment of external systems (at all levels) to the change work at service level is necessary for change to be successful and sustainable. The final component of this driver, decision support data systems,
includes the development and implementation of reports and data that provide information about the overall effect of the implementation.

The last driver of this model focuses on leadership. Leadership drivers refer to both technical and adaptive leadership strategies. Technical leadership has a strong focus on management and the organisation of the work, ensuring tasks are completed and problems resolved. Adaptive leadership, on the other hand, refers to building teams, creating consensus, vision and direction, and aligning practice.

The work of the Implementation Drivers model by Fixsen and Blase (2008) has been applied to the ECEC context through the writings of Halle, Metz, and Martinez-Beck (2013) who applied this change model, along with other notions of change, in their book *Applying Implementation Science in Early Childhood Programs and Systems*. Similar to the first change theory, this model could be utilised by both individuals and services to plan change, or for reflection.

When considering the theory of action for education change (Fullan, 2007a) and the implementation drivers by Fixsen and Blase (2008), strong similarities emerge. These are summarised briefly in Table 3.
Table 3.

Similarities Between Change Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of action for change (Fullan, 2006a)</th>
<th>Core implementation drivers (Fixsen &amp; Blase, 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building (Focus on building the capacity of others)</td>
<td>Coaching and training of staff (change agents) to support the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in context (Focus on building the capacity of others)</td>
<td>Coaching and supervision of change agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the context</td>
<td>A component of organisational drivers includes practices that align policies, procedures and practices aligned to the change. Additionally, a reduction of administration barriers to ensure a positive culture to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-level engagement</td>
<td>All systems (local, state, federal, provider and organisation) aligned to the change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fixsen and Blase (2008) are unique in their thinking about the importance of a selection process to ensure the change process is led by knowledgeable and skilled leaders. Both Fixsen and Blase (2008) and Fullan (2006a) argue the importance of strategies that promote influence and interaction across the relative systems (tri-level engagement), to ensure open systems to support effective services. These characteristics suggest that change does not just happen; rather it requires leaders who have the necessary knowledge and skills to act as change agents to lead and support people (followers) through the change process (Douglass, 2016; Fullan, 2016; Scott et al., 2008). Kotter (2007) argues that this leadership is critical for creating a sense of urgency within followers and for creating a movement where leaders and followers believe in the change and create the vision for change.
With strong similarities across both theory and model, an opportunity exists to incorporate this work to support understanding about the role of educational leaders from a system implementation perspective. Furthermore, both also provide opportunity to understand the process (or absence) of change enacted by the educational leader at a local individual service level.

**Change leadership in early childhood**

Three Australian studies were examined to consider educational change within ECEC and are detailed following.

*Study 1: Curriculum implementation decisions of early childhood teachers (Burgess, Robertson, & Patterson, 2010; Australia)*

A study by Burgess, Robertson, and Patterson (2010) sought to understand how early ECEC teachers understood and implemented curriculum initiatives. The study, a mixed-methods case study of teachers (n = 25) working in a community-based preschool in Sydney, collected data through a questionnaire. Participants indicated that change is difficult, even when perceived as advantageous. The responses to curriculum initiatives (changes) were influenced by process, content or contextual factors. Findings from this research also indicated that professionals not engaged at the commencement of the initiation phase (the initiation phase is the first phase of change, discussed on page 58) of the change process were unlikely to engage at a later stage. These research findings have been confirmed by similar research (Fullan, 1999, 2016; Pendergast et al., 2005; Peterson, 2013) and emphasise the importance of early buy-in within this initiation phase of change (Fullan, 1999, 2016). However, of note, some researchers (Kotter, 1990; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008) argue that change only occurs at the end of this implementation stage, once employees believe change has been beneficial. In summary, Burgess et al. (2010) proposed three reasons why ECEC teachers might reject a change initiative:

1. Processes related to training and/or support structures were inadequate;
2. Lack of motivation of teachers to content; and

3. Contextual factors such as timing. (p. 57)

Study 2: Evaluation of the implementation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all children from birth to eight years (Final report) (Garvis, Pendergast, Twigg, Flückiger, & Kanasa, 2012; Australia)

Garvis, Pendergast, Twigg, Flückiger, and Kanasa (2012) conducted an evaluation of the introduction of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD] & Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2009) in Victoria to understand the initial reach, engagement and impact of this curriculum change initiative, as well as to identify enablers, inhibitors and barriers to implementation. This mixed-methods study obtained data from teachers through surveys ($n = 1141$), and in-depth interviews ($n = 20$) and concluded that the implementation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework was positioned within the initiation phase, which included: visioning, policy development, resource creation, information dissemination, professional learning opportunities, independent evaluation, and early identification of enablers and inhibitors (Garvis et al., 2012, p. 13). Findings also highlighted the impact of contextual barriers to change. Barriers to face-to-face initiatives included timing; access to release staff; work conditions; capacity of services to send staff; location of experiences and selection processes for learning opportunities (Garvis et al., 2012, p. 8).

To support the researchers, the change model positioned the discussion of the findings, and the evaluation initiative applied a change model that was originally developed for reform in middle schooling (Pendergast et al., 2005). This model drew heavily on the work of Fullan (2001b) with particular focus on the initiation and development phases. The model suggested that reform typically occurs in three stages: initiation phase (1 – 2 years), development phase (2 – 5 years),
and consolidation phase (5 – 10 years). However, it is important to note that timeframes are dependent upon any barriers to change that may be present. The understanding about the phases that change progresses through, and the time required for sustainable change to be achieved, appears to be a common theme among some researchers (Fullan, 2001b, 2016; Herold & Fedor, 2008; Pendergast, 2006; Tayler, 2016b).

**Study 3: Rethinking pedagogical practices: How can teachers in early childhood settings be supported professionally to examine their practices? (Hadley, 2012; Australia)**

The third study to be presented was conducted by Hadley (2012) and involved a community-based organisation operating three long day care services in Sydney. These services appointed an academic consultant to provide professional support to teachers in their early childhood settings to support them examine their pedagogical practices. The relevance of this study is that it provides deep thinking about the role of a “knowledgeable other” (in this case a mentor), and about pedagogy. Specifically, this consultant took on the role of mentor for the qualified staff and directors in regard to planning, programming and pedagogical documentation. The study applied the theoretical change framework as proposed by Srivastva, Cooperrider, and associates (1990) called the Appreciative Inquiry model. The model used to guide the study has four stages: discover – identifying strengths and weaknesses; dream – future vision and direction; design – strategies to move the organisation to vision, and destiny – implement and evaluate the changes. Findings from this study indicated that service staff perceived the support provided by the external consultant to be beneficial. Additionally, staff perceived that this pedagogical support also generated beneficial changes for children and families.

The study confirmed the importance of professional support for qualified staff through change provided over a sustained period. Of interest, issues emerged in the study about who decided the pedagogical changes and how they would be implemented, highlighting different
expectations among between management and staff. The learnings from this study provide thinking about my research on the educational leader role, namely whether there are likely to be different pedagogical expectations at different system levels (within the individual service, the governance of the service, or state and commonwealth governments).

Each of the three studies within this section emphasises the importance of understanding the influence of contextual factors in ECEC for change, and each supports early notions about contextual leadership. The findings of the first study, highlight the importance of the initiation phase and leave me curious as to the experience lived by the educational leader through this phase, particularly given that this experience is likely to determine whether or not change is adopted. Furthermore, this study provides insight into factors that may inhibit the success of the implementation of the educational leader role. Study two confirms the benefit of applying a change model to data to assist in understanding the data and answering the research questions.

*Educational leaders in Australian ECEC*

Change leadership in ECEC often has a focus on pedagogy. The definitions of pedagogical leadership highlighted earlier within this section of the chapter lead to an assumption that pedagogical leadership is the core responsibility of the positional educational leader outlined within the Guide to the National Law and National Legislation (ACECQA; 2013) “… must be appointed to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) in the service” and “… a thorough understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Framework for School Age Care (or other approved learning framework) to be able to guide other educators [ECEC professionals] in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in their implementation practices” (p. 85). The focus of educational leadership in ECEC is about driving quality improvement (Sims et al., 2015) through the nexus of pedagogical leadership and change.
In this section, four studies are presented. Each of them has strong relevance to my research and will provide much guidance and opportunity for deep thinking. At the same time, each of these studies is different and this too will be highlighted in each section.

Study 1: Teachers’ Perceptions of their Abilities to be Educational Leaders in Victorian Childcare Settings (Grarock & Morrissey, 2013; Australia)

Due to an interest in the role of teachers in improving quality across all programs within childcare services in the state of Victoria, Grarock and Morrissey (2013) sought to understand how teachers would enact educational leadership, and what available support systems would enable this. Their study, entitled Teachers’ Perceptions of their Abilities to be Educational Leaders in Victorian Childcare Settings, was conducted “before dissemination of regulatory documents identifying future requirements for educational leader roles in all services” (p. 6). Therefore, Grarock and Morrissey were interested in teachers as leaders, rather than, leadership enacted by the appointed educational leader.

The study used a semi-structured technique to interview 11 degree-qualified teachers working in Melbourne. A qualitative methodology was applied in order to understand the teachers’ lived experiences and their perceptions of their ability to be educational leaders. After a process of member-checking transcribed interviews, thematic coding was applied to the data, with the following themes emerging and then used for reporting: making changes within their room; change across the service; barriers to change; and presence or absence of a title and/or authority (p. 7).

Teachers made frequent reference to change within their own classroom, demonstrating their ability to implement change; however, this was limited to their room. Some key barriers preventing teachers from implementing change across the service related to: lack of time due to their teaching responsibilities, and not having the authority to suggest change outside their own room, and “being concerned about overstepping their place in the centre hierarchy” (Grarock &
Morrissey, 2013, p. 11). Interestingly, teachers did not regard their qualifications as providing the right of authority or ability to lead change outside their room. The data also revealed that, similar to existing research (Hard, 2005), misconceptions in ECEC continue to exist about the concept of leadership, with teachers perceiving administration as leadership and, due to a lack of administration tasks within their role, not considering themselves as leaders. It is clear that further understanding about leadership is needed for the Australian ECEC sector. This study suggests that for teachers to act as educational leaders and to support improvements in quality across service, authority through the provision of a title and adequate time are needed. This small study closes with several final questions directed at service directors, for further research to consider. Two of these questions have the potential to be explored further within my study:

- “Do they [service directors] promote positive educational change by acting as educational leaders themselves?” and
- “How can teacher educational leadership be supported and enacted in order to be most effective within a childcare context? (Grarock & Morrissey, 2013, p. 11)

**Study 2: The Role of the Educational Leader: Perceptions and Expectations in a Period of Change**

*(Fleet, Soper, & Semann, 2015; Australia)*

The second study, entitled The Role of the Educational Leader: Perceptions and Expectations in a Period of Change (Fleet et al., 2015) built upon the research by Grarock and Morrissey (2013) to focus on the educational leader role. The aim of the study was to inform and support future change within the ECEC sector by (a) understanding the evolving conceptions of early childhood educational leadership, and (b) investigating the potential of a leadership initiative practitioner enquiry. For this research, I am most interested in the first purpose, which considered the decision-making processes involved in appointing the educational leader and the expectations
regarding the roles and responsibilities of an educational leader. The results from this study will provide an opportunity to compare my findings to these questions.

The research was applied a theoretical perspective of phenomenology and a socio-cultural orientation. Similar to my study, it is a mixed-methods study that applied a three-phased approach (online survey, workshop and practitioner enquiry, and two focus groups), to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from an online survey seeking the perspectives of both educational leaders and non-educational leaders about issues relating to the educational leader role. Different from this research, the survey was funded to include participants from both the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) \((n = 60)\) and New South Wales \((n = 146)\) and, due to funding parameters included long day care, family day care, outside school hours care (OSHC), but not preschool.

Descriptive statistics (measures of frequency and central tendency) were applied to analyse the survey data, and the findings indicated strong expectations for the educational leader. Participants identified that responsibilities they perceived as essential for the position, including being a mentor, role model, support person, trainer, community link and advocate. However, these expectations mostly came with no additional pay and no budget to support the role. The findings also indicated that a clear role definition was required, with more than half \((58\%)\) of all respondents stating that no job description existed for this role and 42\% of educational leaders considering this as problematic. The research reinforced the fact that educational leadership is not synonymous with the role of educational leader; rather, it is interdependent. These results refer to the previously discussed research by Grarock and Morrissey (2013) about workplace cultures and their impact on leadership enactment. In the study by Fleet et al. (2015) leaders must create “supportive workplace contexts that nurture all involved, while embracing change…” (p. 37), which emphasises the importance of the care needed in making appointments to the role and providing support. This study concludes by suggesting that this role may deserve industry recognition and professional
learning initiatives to support its success and suggests that further studies on this topic improve understanding.

This study is useful to my research because it provides a depth of understanding about the role of educational leaders in New South Wales and the ACT that will allow for comparison and for understanding question one of my research (Who is the educational leader in ECEC services and how is this determined?). It is different from my study because it includes all approved child care services including OSHC but not preschool; whereas my research excludes OSHC but includes preschool.

**Study 3: The role of educational leader in long day care – how do they perceive their role? (Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Australia)**

Recognising that leadership in ECEC has often been contested and is complex, Rouse and Spradbury (2016) conducted a small-scale qualitative study ($n = 5$) to investigate how educational leaders working in the same long day care organisation in Melbourne perceived their role. Their approach to this study, similar to others, included an interpretivist framework. Participants were interviewed in person using semi-structured, open-ended questions in order to gain detail about their role to gain insight into their experiences, beliefs, and understandings of the role. When asked how they were appointed to their role, participants indicated that no set guidelines or criteria were applied, and some even come to the position “unwillingly” (p. 497). Supporting initial research (Fleet et al., 2015), a lack of clarity and understanding of expectations was perceived to be a concern. Participants identified that factors such as issues of time, lack of role clarity, changes within the sector, and the level of support provided by the service director and/or management impacted this role. Findings also suggested a number of traits and characteristics necessary for appointment to this role: individuality, quest for knowledge, enthusiasm, flexibility, self-confidence, people skills, communication skills, honesty, and accessibility. Interestingly, from this
list, no mention of qualifications or levels of knowledge and understanding about ECEC appear to have been considered necessary, which seems to resonate with the earlier research by Fleet et al. (2015).

This research provides insight into the perceptions of educational leaders about their role experienced within one organisation, in one city. The findings from this study contribute to understanding this role; however, given leadership is contextual, further investigations that consider the role from different viewpoints, representing different services and states, is important to build the knowledge base about this role.

*Study 4: Educational leadership, an evolving role in early childhood settings (Sims, Waniganayake, & Hadley, 2017; Australia)*

A recent inquiry about the role of educational leader (Sims et al., 2017) investigated how the role was translated from policy and implemented. Applying pragmatism as a research paradigm and applying qualitative and quantitative methods, this mixed-methods study collected data through a national survey involving 164 educational leaders from different service types across most states of Australia. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the quantitative data, and a qualitative process was used to consider responses to open-ended questions. This included “reading and re-reading texts, identifying themes, using quotes to delineate the boundaries between themes and using quotes to exemplify themes” (p. 6). To assist analysis, the researchers applied two theoretical frames for understanding the data: Lipsky’s (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy and Weick’s (1979) concept of sense-making.

According to Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005), “Sense-making involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly” (p. 409), and where “meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action” (p. 409). Applying these theories, the researchers reported that to meet policy requirements, the educational leader had to first “make
sense of the practices identified in the legislation, policy and curriculum documents” (Sims et al., 2017, p. 1). These findings support earlier studies (Fleet et al., 2015; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016) that suggest that a lack of information and clarity available to educational leaders at the time of taking on this role, and this caused, much confusion and challenge. In response to the absence of information and support provided to the educational leader, findings indicated that educational leaders used their own experiences to interpret and implement the role based on their understanding of the policy, mostly in the form of a focus on compliance to meet assessment and rating processes. Tasks disclosed from the data included:

- Monitoring pedagogical documentation;
- Monitoring and checking programming; and
- Developing and monitoring the service quality improvement plan. (p. 14)

In sum, the lack of information, support and change readiness provided to this role at implementation has meant a narrow and often confused focus with missed opportunities for strong pedagogical leadership. While this study collects similar data to my study, the major difference between the two is the process through which the data are analysed. Rather than a lens for examining social policy and behaviour, my study will analyse data through leadership and change leadership lenses, each providing different and important insights into the educational leader role.

The four studies reviewed in this section are highly relevant and contribute to the understanding of educational leadership in ECEC, and of the educational leader role. All four studies are in agreement about the future potential of this role to improve the quality of leadership, and they recognise the importance of increasing the research base. These studies provide sound evidence relevant to the research sub-question: **Who is the educational leader in the Australian ECEC context and how this is determined?** The study by Sims et al. (2017) goes further to begin considering how the role has been enacted and applies the lenses of sense-making and street level
implementation. However, my study will apply theories from leadership and change leadership perspectives. My work will build upon these existing studies to provide further knowledge about this role, and about the educational leader role, and about its perceived benefits. This will be of great benefit, given that these four studies have all highlighted current barriers to this role.

Chapter Summary

Australian policy requires the role of educational leader in ECEC services and expects this role to lead and drive the development and implementation of educational programs. The policy requirement does not seem to consider the complexity and demands of this role. To understand the intricacies, three areas of literature were examined: quality in ECEC, leadership, and change leadership.

Exploring this literature has highlighted the importance of quality ECEC for the long-term social and economic benefits of both children and the nation as a whole, and for the educational and wellbeing outcomes for children. The review examined four components that formed quality, including: system, structural, orientational and process quality. Process quality has been identified as having the most positive effect for children. In order to gain these components of quality ECEC (the desired outcome), researchers (Pascal et al., 2019; Rodd, 2006, 2013a; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) have identified that strong leadership in ECEC is a necessary bedfellow, and in fact also a component of structural quality (Flückiger, 2018).

The chapter section about leadership highlighted that there is no one perfect leadership style; that numerous styles exist with leaders needing to draw upon a repertoire of styles dependent on context. Several researchers (Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Heikka et al., 2012; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) have argued about the importance of shared and distributed leadership for the ECEC context. This presents some challenges for ECEC, a profession that has been traditionally resistant to the notion of leadership.
Based on examining the literature, it would seem that educational leaders will need to have strong leadership knowledge and skills, and the ability to act as a change agent, also requiring knowledge and skills about driving change. From a school-based perspective, Michael Fullan (2006a) argues seven core premises are needed for this to occur. Fullan’s ideas were supported by the later thinking of Fixsen and Blase (2008) who proposed an implementation driver model that considered the importance of a leader and context for driving change. Consideration to context included the necessary support, structures and processes across the service. Fullan (2006a) adds that alignment is needed not just within the service but across an entire system to enable change. System level in the case of ECEC may include the following formation: the service; organisation or owner; and government (State and Commonwealth).

The sections on leadership and leading change highlight the high degree of knowledge and skills needed, to support service leaders, such as the educational leaders meet their responsibilities and accountabilities. The literature highlights some challenges for ECEC about leadership and change, particularly given that anecdotally, from conversations with a few working in the ECEC profession, expectations and realization for what knowledge and skills are necessary for the educational leader role and the provision of training and support to ensure employees are appropriately equipped to carry out this function is currently not a reality. These comments by professionals with consideration to the literature evokes many unanswered questions about the current state of the ECEC profession and the way forward. The following chapter outlines the research methodology and methods. It provides an explanation and justification for the research design adopted for this research.
Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

Crotty (1998) argues that there are four elements in the research process and has structured these elements into four questions:

1. What methods do we propose to use?
2. What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
3. What is our theoretical perspective that lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What epistemology informs the perspective? (p. 5)

This chapter details the approach applied to this research, beginning with the world-view. It addresses each of the research elements as suggested by Crotty (1998) but in reverse order. The chapter will first discuss the ontological and epistemological beliefs underpinning this research, followed by the theoretical perspectives. Next the chapter details the research design which can be summarised as an explanatory mixed methods approach conducted in two phases, with Phase One being a survey and Phase Two follow-up interviews. The data collection processes used in each phase, sampling, procedures and analysis processes are described. The chapter will draw to a close by detailing the research ethics applied throughout the research process, and how the information collected from participants is honoured and protected. Of note, for ease of presentation in graphs and figures, the following abbreviations will be applied: EdL (for educational leader) and ECP (for early childhood professional).

Philosophical Beliefs

Philosophical beliefs inform all aspects of research. Leavy (2014) describes a set of beliefs as a paradigm and relates this concept to “…sunglasses, with different color lenses” (p. 3). Leavy
suggests that wearing certain lenses influences what is seen, supporting the researcher to understand what is out there to know. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) provide a more detailed explanation, explaining a paradigm as “human constructions … beliefs [that] can never be established in terms of their ultimate truthfulness” (p. 183).

The ontological perspective that informs this current study is constructivist. Yin (2011) suggests that this perspective takes “the view that social reality is a joint product, created by the nature of the external conditions but also by the person observing and reporting about these conditions. Following this view, all social reality, because it is constructed in this manner, therefore assumes a relativist rather than absolute nature” (p. 308). Knowledge and truth are seen as constructed (Crotty, 1998; Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2011), a social process that is sustained through language, linguistics and resources (Neuman, 2006) and through which one understands “meaning in context” (Merriam, 2009, p. 2). The goal of constructivist research is to understand the views participants have of the phenomenon under investigation.

The difference between a constructivist and a positivist paradigm, is that from a positivist lens, reality is assumed to exist; that reality is observable and measurable (Merriam, 2009). In contrast, a constructivist lens sees that multiple realities exist and, importantly, subjectivity is acknowledged and valued. Construction of knowledge occurs and is subsequently maintained through interaction with others, rather than by examination of the world (Babione, 2014; Crotty, 1998). If constructivism positions reality within the individual, informed by social interactions and culture (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and multiple truths are seen as locally and historically constructed, it suggests that key informants in research have been influenced by their own values, beliefs, thinking and perceptions about their everyday experiences.

The constructivist paradigm was considered most appropriate for this study, as it acknowledges that the educational leader role is enacted in a diverse range of contexts and that
these contexts influence how participants interpret their experiences in relation to the enactment of this role. As such, my role as researcher was to seek to build contextual understanding in collaboration with key informants. I expected that each key informant would see the educational leader role differently and that an understanding of the role would emerge through the social encounter between researcher and key informants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

**Interpretivist Theories**

When describing qualitative research, Creswell (2013) uses the metaphor of “an intricate fabric” (p. 42) made up of different threads. He suggests that, “like the loom on which fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretative frameworks hold qualitative research together” (p. 45). Interpretivist theories aim to assist with understanding social order by listening to the lived experiences of phenomena in the world (Husserl, 1965). Crotty (1998) claims that interpretivism is linked to the thoughts of Max Weber (1864 – 1920), who suggested that in human sciences one needs to be concerned with interpretative understanding of human interaction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Crotty, 1998). Of interest are “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67).

When considering the focus of this research study, interpretivism is ideally suited with the term interpretive used to refer to the paradigm that will traditionally inform the method. It assigns the view that all human knowledge and understanding are developed and transmitted through social interaction. This knowledge creation is constructed at an individual level as people consciously engage with objects and / or phenomenon in the world. It is once again important to emphasise that this construction occurs within individuals who have differing perceptions, values, and beliefs, leading to different meanings being constructed for the same phenomenon (Babione, 2014; Crotty, 1998).
Three “historical streams” (Crotty, 1998, p. 71) emerge from interpretivism: symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology. Phenomenology is a broad term relating to a philosophical movement as well as methodological approaches. In this current study, the term phenomenology will be used to refer to the research approach and the term interpretive to the paradigm that traditionally informs this method. Researchers such as Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) suggest phenomenology is the “ideal method for experiential work within an interpretive framework” (p. 93).

**Phenomenology**

Edmund Husserl (1889-1928) is regarded as the founder of phenomenology. Klenke, Martin, and Wallace (2016) define phenomenology as “the study of phenomena: appearances of things, as they manifest themselves in our experiences, and thus the meanings things have in our own experiences” (p. 208). Our conscious mind constructs meaning as it perceives the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Shank, 2006). According to Heidegger (1962), this is our consciousness, not separate from the world but a formation of lived experiences. Patton (2015) suggests that Husserl’s (1962) most basic philosophical standpoint was “that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness” (p. 116).

Researchers explore the conscious so as to see the world from the first person (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Creely (2016) suggests that phenomenological inquiry includes seeing things from the point-of-view of the research informant, from their immediate state of consciousness. From a contrasting perspective, Moustakas (1994) warns researchers that, “No position must be taken whatsoever…nothing is determined in advance” (p.94). Researchers must recognise their own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions when participating in research, so as to allow the understanding of the socially constructed reality of the key informants to become visible, and to experience their world.
One of the main features of Husserl’s phenomenology is intentionality. Intentionality is an essential feature of consciousness and Husserl believed knowledge can only be created through intentionality. Patton (2015) argues that “intentionality refers to consciousness, to the internal experience of being conscious of something” (p. 574). As people, we are not merely “‘affected” by things: we are “aware” of the affect. According to Creely (2016), intentionality is “…metaphorically, as residing in a conduit between the experience of a person on the one hand and objects in the material world on the other” (p. 109). For example, the role of educational leader exists, while the perception of the person acting as educational leader exists in the person’s consciousness and is affected by the person’s experience, history, values, beliefs, and timing. Nelms (2014) posits that the researcher’s role is to bring to attention the experience of the participants as it appears in their consciousness (Nelms, 2014). Phenomenology assists the researcher to experience a phenomenon as closely as possible, by carefully and methodically supporting the participant to share their direct experience with the phenomenon and to “support them to perceive it; remember it; describe and make sense of the phenomenon under consideration” (Patton, 2015, p. 104).

A second key feature of Husserl’s phenomenology is the concept of bracketing. Bracketing, also known as phenomenological reduction, is a process by which a person puts to the side pre-judgements, attitude, values, and beliefs (Klenke, 2008; Nelms, 2014; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), allowing the true phenomenological belief to emerge. According to Klenke (2008), bracketing is “the process of continually identifying one’s presuppositions about the nature of phenomenon and attempting to set them aside (bracket them) in order to see the phenomenon as is.” (p. 227). Cutcliffe (2003) suggests that a strategy to assist with bracketing is writing memos throughout the data collection process, allowing the researcher to reflect and put aside their
preconceptions and to engage with the data. This idea is supported by Lincoln and Guba (1985) who encourage the use of reflexive journals as a means to enhance trustworthiness.

However, the notion of bracketing has also been criticised. Heidegger (1962), a former student of Husserl who developed his own interpretation of phenomenology, argued that bracketing was impossible and that separation of this subjectivity by researcher is not possible. However, in response, Ashworth (2015) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue that the purpose of bracketing is not to attempt to diminish subjectivity, but rather to support the researcher to become conscious of personal thoughts, feelings, and opinions and to ensure these are declared. Within this study, memo taking was used for this purpose. The development of these memos will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Research Design

A research design describes the research plan of action that leads the researcher to the desired research outcome (Crotty, 1998), in this case, understanding the perceptions of ECEC professionals in relation to the educational leader role and its impact on leadership practices and quality in Australian ECEC contexts. Several research studies have informed this research design, and these are presented upfront, including details of their influence.

Studies informing methodological decisions

When planning this study, a number of research projects were examined. A summary of these, listed in order of publication year, is shown in Table 4, detailing the theoretical perspectives guiding the studies (where published), data collection processes, and data analysis. These studies, described next, provoked consideration and gave guidance to this study’s direction.
First, Mellor, Cottrell, and Moran (2013) conducted research with university undergraduate students in allied health to gain their perspectives on learning within an inter-professional education program that was designed to improve collaboration between professionals and enhance clinical outcomes. The researchers applied a mixed-methods approach to gain a greater understanding of the aspects influencing participant attitude and behaviour. Participants \( (n = 40) \) engaged in semi-structured interviews with open and closed questions to explore perspectives on the attributes of a 4-week program that contributed to its success. Data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. This relatively new research method and analysis process was developed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) to allow researchers to capture the qualitative and experiential dimensions of human experience contained within human discourse.
and requires the following steps: “… multiple readings, recording of comments and interpretations, identifications of concepts and themes, meetings to compare emerging themes, clustering into master themes and subordinate themes…” (p. 293).

This particular study was of interest because of the method and strategies applied in relation to the role of the researcher and guided me to examine the work of Smith et al. (2009) further. Smith (2004) explains, “The participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social role; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their personal and social world” (p. 40). Following their lead, memo taking was applied by the researcher to support the research process (refer to page 140, and Appendix K regarding memo taking).

The next study to influence the current research design, and detailed in the Literature Review, was that conducted by Grarock and Morrisey (2013) within ECEC. Here semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Victorian ECEC teachers to explore their perceptions of their ability to act as educational leaders in child care. When reporting this research, Grarock and Morrisey highlighted issues of privacy when conducting interviews. The need for privacy and the possible impacts on participants’ feelings of safety were considered critical for the success of this research (refer to page 116 for details regarding privacy).

The third study informing the methodology, also detailed in the Literature Review, was the doctoral study of Hard (2005), which focused on how leadership is understood and enacted within the field of ECEC. Hard’s (2005) research was qualitative and applied an interpretivist methodology. It examined “participants understanding of leadership in ECEC” (p. 72) by applying lenses of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) to consider the data. The study was conducted in several stages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted first, followed by facilitated focus group discussions. Additionally, literary artefacts that participants identified as being useful in terms of supporting leadership were examined.
Hard’s (2005) study influenced my study in relation to the sampling design. Hard utilised opportunistic sampling at an Australian research in early childhood education conference by inviting the ECEC audience to participate in the study. This sampling strategy seemed to offer benefit and for this reason I decided to also advertise the research opportunity at the bi-annual Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Conference held in Perth. As in Hard’s work, this sampling process had the aim of broadening the geographical reach of the research.

Finally, a doctoral study by Boyd (2001) on early childhood teachers’ perceptions of their leadership roles was also useful. This study applied a mixed methods approach. In Phase One, the researcher surveyed 270 early childhood teachers in Western Australia at government schools. Phase Two involved follow-up face-to-face interviews with 20 early childhood teachers. The survey was designed to obtain data that would enable comparisons between the quantitative and qualitative responses. The instrument included three sections:

- **Section A**: Demographic questions;
- **Section B**: A 5-point Likert scale; and
- **Section C**: Open-ended questions about strategies used by early childhood teachers and the factors that help or hinder them embedding their pedagogy and philosophy.

The design of Boyd’s study highlights the value of building upon generalised information to gain more in-depth understanding of the data.

**Mixed methods**

In this study, a mixed methods approach was applied allowing for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of different types of data – descriptive and inferential statistics (quantitative) and stories and opinions of lived experiences (qualitative). While it is acknowledged that some researchers (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) argue that quantitative methods of data collection are not consistent with the paradigm of this study, constructivism; by contrast, Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie
(2015) argue that phenomenological research methods work well as a component of mixed methods phenomenological research. This argument is further supported by several authors who acknowledge the benefit of using such an approach (Mayoh, Bond, & Todres, 2012; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, 2015; Taylor, 2015). Furthermore, an increasing number of researchers (Banks, 2006; Creswell, 2015; Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Clegg Smith, 2011; J. L. Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Thompson, Grocke, & Dileo, 2016) emphasise the “collective strength” provided through the combination of data for understanding a research problem that otherwise is unlikely to have emerged from gathering one type of data alone.

The overall design applied to this research is therefore best described as an explanatory, sequential, qualitative dominant design (Creswell, 2015; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014), with a survey instrument collecting quantitative and qualitative data first, followed by qualitative methods being used to support and examine preliminary findings in more depth. Mayoh et al. (2012) suggest that that this combination is one of the more common approaches to mixed methods phenomenological research.

**Quantitative research**

The goal of this aspect of the research design was to use a survey tool to generate a broad-based and overarching understanding of the lived experience of participants in relation to the educational leader role. Quantitative data measures the perceptions of participants and provides a numeric description of trends, beliefs, and opinions of the participants within this study. Creswell (2015) and Plano Clark (2011) advocate that when quantitative data is used in combination with qualitative data, it not only allows researchers to draw upon the ideas of a large number of people, but also provides opportunities to investigate relationships within data.
Qualitative research

Qualitative research allows the researcher to learn “about social reality” (Leavy, 2014, p. 2), usually to explain, or develop a detailed understanding of the “central phenomenon under study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 57). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as “situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). Patton (2015) adds that qualitative research contributes to knowledge-generating through seven different characteristics:

1. Illuminating meaning;
2. Studying how things work;
3. Capturing stories to understand people’s perspectives and experiences;
4. Elucidating how systems function and their consequences for people’s lives;
5. Understanding context: how and why it matters;
6. Identifying unanticipated consequences; and
7. Making case comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases. (p. 12)

Understanding Patton’s seven points supports the researcher to understand the contribution to knowledge that qualitative research can make.

There were two qualitative components within this study. The first of these was within the Phase One survey and included the use of open-ended questions and opportunities to add further comments, if desired, to closed survey questions. In Phase Two, in depth interviews were designed to probe more deeply into the lived experiences of a smaller group of participants in order to gather detailed perceptions and experiences of the educational leader in Australian ECEC.

Phased approach

This study applied a common approach for mixed methods studies (Mayoh et al., 2012), with the research being conducted using a sequential design of two phases: a survey and an
interview phase. The Phase One survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data. These data were analysed and used to inform Phase Two, which involved in-depth follow up interviews with a group of key informants. This sequencing of phases provided opportunities to achieve clarification from one phase, as well as opportunities to seek further elaboration and insight (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010) based on the perceptions and experiences of the key informants interviewed in Phase Two.

A visual map of the research design is shown in Figure 3. It reveals that the participants involved in the Phase One online survey included a sample of educational leaders, along with other ECEC professionals. All participants worked within approved Australian ECEC services. Findings from Phase One guided questions posed in the second phase which consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted by telephone. Participants from Phase One volunteered to participate in this second research phase.

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in Phase One from a survey that consisted of multiple-choice questions employing Likert scales, plus sections providing an open text response boxes that provided participants an opportunity for comment. Several open-ended questions were also included. Qualitative data were collected in Phase Two from individual semi-structured interviews.
Figure 3. Visual map of research design.
Phase One: Survey

Phase One of the research comprised a cross-sectional web-based (electronic) survey. Within the field of education, surveys have held a dominant position, often regarded as the key instrument for data collecting purposes (Czaja & Blair, 2005). Most ECEC professionals are therefore aware of surveys and comfortable completing them.

There were a number of advantages to using surveys in this research project. First, surveys offer convenience for participants through ease of access, with participants being able to respond at times suited to them. Second, surveys allow data to be collected quickly from participants, which due to the size and geographical distance of the target population, and the financial constraints of the research, would have been difficult to achieve through other methods (Nardi, 2006). Nardi, and Creswell (2008) suggest that other benefits to web-based surveys include an increased perception of anonymity for the participant. Furthermore, Nardi (2006) argues that participants appear to be more candid to open-ended questions through web-based survey, and more likely to respond.

The survey used in this study was built with Lime Survey, a survey construction tool available for researchers through Griffith University. The survey was first developed in a construction zone or “sand pit”, and then tested and edited to include university branding. After ethics approval (EDN/66/14/HREC) and final testing, the survey went live in September 2014 for a period of 12 weeks (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey).

Survey instrument

Fundamental to research success was ensuring that the survey was easily understood by ECEC professionals. Not only did the survey need to be clear and well written, it also needed to be free from jargon. Writing a survey is a process of writing and rewriting, and critically examining the survey structure to ensure the questions not only meet research objectives but also are asked in
the right way for participants (Czaja & Blair, 2005; Pulliam Phillips, Phillips, & Aaron, 2013). Additionally, the instrument needs to be valid, reliable, and minimize biases. In reviewing the research questions, a framework called Key Decision Guide: Question Utility (Czaja & Blair; 2005) was applied to each question included in the survey. These include:

a) Does the survey question measure some aspects of one of the research questions?
b) Does the question provide information needed in conjunction with some other variable?
c) Will most respondents understand the question and in the same way?
d) Will most respondents have the information to answer it?
e) Will most respondents be willing to answer it?
f) Is other information needed to analyse this question?
g) Should this question be asked of all respondents or of a subset?

(Adapted from Czaja & Blair, 2005, p. 71)

Applying this framework to my survey provided direction to refine the survey instrument, and also afforded an element of confidence.

Survey structure

To support the participants through the survey in a logical flow, the survey instrument was constructed in sections beginning with a cover page which provided an introduction and welcome to the participants. The cover page also included a hyperlink which automatically directed the participant to an ethics-online information sheet. This ensured that the participants clearly understood the research purpose. Czar and Blair (2005) emphasise the importance of highlighting to the participants the anonymity of the survey. This was particularly important in this study as across the research it became evident from participants’ comments that they were concerned about possible repercussions at their workplace.
Section A (Questions 1–4) included trigger questions, designed to direct the survey in different directions, depending upon an individual participant’s responses. Figure 4, which follows, highlights the survey trigger questions and their pathway directions. The first of these triggers was aimed at participants who answered “no” to Questions 1–3 and was designed to filter out individuals unlikely to have sufficient *lived experiences* of the role of educational leader to make their responses useful. These individuals were immediately sent to Question 100. The second trigger question, Question 4, allowed the separation between educational leaders and early childhood professionals, providing opportunities for data comparisons between the two roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey, Section A Question 1: Do you know about the role educational leader?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes, → Survey question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, → Survey final question 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2: Does your service have an appointed educational leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2:</th>
<th>Does your service have an appointed educational leader?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes, → Survey question 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, → Survey final question 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3: Is the educational leader based mainly at your service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3:</th>
<th>Is the educational leader based mainly at your service?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes, → Survey question 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, → Survey final question 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: Are you the educational leader?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4:</th>
<th>Are you the educational leader?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes, → Survey Section B, C, D, E, F, K, and L.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, → Survey Section B, G, H, I, and J.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Arrows highlight the survey direction.*

*Figure 4. Survey trigger question and directions.*

Section B (Questions 5–23) was designed to gather background (demographic and biographical) information and applied a nominal scale. A nominal scale provides response options from which participants select (Creswell, 2008). The design of the questions in this section were

Section C (Questions 24–34) was directed at educational leaders. This section specifically asked each participant to identify how they were appointed to the educational leader role, the duties and responsibilities of this position, and any training received to support the enactment of this role. These questions were co-developed for this survey in consultation with five centre directors from long day services. A nominal scale was once again applied.

Section D (Questions 35–53), also completed by the educational leader, included questions that were designed and adapted after considering the leadership capabilities identified within draft papers with ideas that eventually evolved into the *Early Childhood Australia’s Leadership Capability Framework* (Early Childhood Australia, 2017). A 5-point Likert scale was applied (from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*). Table 5 highlights Question 38 to demonstrate how the Likert scale was used. Likert scales are the most common means of measuring people’s attitudes, values, internal states (feelings) and thinking (cognition) and are generally considered a reliable and valid instrument (Creswell, 2008; Joshi, Kales, Chandel, & Pal, 2015; D. Mellor & Moore, 2014).

Table 5.
*Reprinted Question 38 from Survey to Illustrate the Use of a Likert Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number 38</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My role, as educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to children</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although opportunities for additional comment were not provided in this section, several open-ended questions were provided at the end of the survey section, beginning first with two questions – Section E (Question 54, EdL) and Section I (Question 89, ECP) – which specifically asked each participant to identify whether the role of educational leader, based on their perception, was working well. An ordinal variable was applied (yes, no, sometimes), and invited participants to comment on their response. Because completion of the survey was voluntary, it was anticipated that participants would provide data-rich responses because of their interest in the research topic.

Several questions towards the end of the survey were opened ended, they were designed to allow for deep insights about the educational leader role as perceived by the leader. Further F (Questions 55 – 58) asked the leader to reflect about what makes the role work well; not well; gain insight to what might make the role work well and gain final thoughts.

Sections G (Questions 59–68), H (Questions 69–88), and J (Questions 90–93) are the equivalent sections to Sections C, and D but aimed at the early childhood professionals (i.e., participants who were not educational leaders). Section K follows and was designed to understand the educational leaders’ positions on leadership. Here, a 5-point Likert scale was used (Questions 95–99). Finally, Section L (Questions 99, 101) was designed to gain educational leaders’ views and provide further opportunity for comment, before inviting participants to consider involvement in Phase Two of this research (Question 102). Table 6 outlines how the various survey questions relate to the research sub-questions.
Table 6.

Research Sub-questions and Corresponding Survey Question to Collect Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research sub-questions</th>
<th>Data gathered from survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1 Who is the educational leader in early childhood education and care services and</td>
<td>Educational Leader survey number: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how is this determined?</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Professional survey number: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 59, 60, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2 How is the role of educational leader enacted within services?</td>
<td>Educational Leader survey number: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Professional survey number: 17, 18, 19, 20, 61,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3 How is the role of educational leader perceived as contributing to quality</td>
<td>Educational Leader survey number: 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Professional survey number: 69, 70, 71, 72, 73,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pilot study**

To ensure the survey asked the right questions, in the right way (Pulliam Phillips et al., 2013) a process of piloting was incorporated to gain feedback. Pre-testing the survey allowed the researcher to test the questions, and to minimise survey bias. This was considered beneficial for providing increased data accuracy and a higher survey completion and return rate (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001; Czaja & Blair, 2005; Nardi, 2006).

The first phase of the pilot applied convenience sampling and involved 11 participants from three approved Australian long day care services holding a variety of positions including both educational leaders and early childhood professionals. Convenience sampling is a method whereby the researcher selects participants that are willing and available to participate (Creswell, 2008). The pilot employed a paper-based version of the survey.
Following the first phase of the pilot, modifications were made to the instrument based on the feedback from this group. In particular, changes were made regarding the language used, and background and demographic information was moved to the start of the survey. Although Czar and Blair (2005) recommend that background and demographic information be positioned at the end of a survey, to improve completion rates, other researchers such as Creswell (2008) have positioned this information upfront. Given feedback from the pilot participants, this section was re-positioned upfront.

The second draft of the survey instrument was re-tested. Again, convenience sampling identified four new early childhood education and care professionals, two from long day care services and two from family day care. These participants reviewed a paper version of the survey and made no further recommendations. Subsequently, the survey instrument was considered final (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey). This process also provided the researcher with an estimate of survey completion time. Taking approximately twenty minutes to complete, this information was then communicated on the research invitation (see Appendix B for a copy of the Research Participation Invitation). A progression bar was also included within the survey so that participants undertaking the survey could see their progress.

No monetary incentive was provided to participants in this research. To keep participants informed of research results, participants were invited to access a summary of the survey findings posted onto the researcher’s website (http://www.lisapalethorpe.com), to be made available once research Phase One was completed. Once, the design of the survey instrument was finalised, it was forwarded along with other requirements necessary for ethics approval.

**Sampling**

Sampling in social research is usually a process of selecting units of a population (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). There are two categories of sample: probability and non-probability. As this
research is positioned within a qualitative paradigm, a non-probability, purposeful sampling technique was implemented. A probability sample or random sample selects participants or elements at random (Albright, Winston, & Zappe, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Czaja & Blair, 2005), while non-probability sampling such as snowball, convenience and purposeful sampling does not. Qualitative and quantitative data can be generated from purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015).

As the intent here was not to generalise about the population, purposeful sampling was appropriate. In addition, as Klenke (2008) suggests, the use of purposeful sampling helps to recruit participants who “… can illuminate the phenomenon of interest and can communicate their experiences” (p. 226). For this study, ECEC professionals working in approved Australian ECEC services were the target group as they were considered to be “information rich” (Patton, 2015). Importantly however, the sample was designed to include both educational leaders and early childhood professionals, with the aim being to reach a wide range of participants, including those who may otherwise be silenced in other debates about ECEC leadership.

The type of purposeful sampling used was maximal variation sampling where the selection of participants is made with the view to gaining maximum variation – in this case in terms of service type and geographical location. This approach ensures that the phenomenon under investigation can be considered from multiple perspectives, so as to identify important common patterns that cut across variations (Creswell, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015).

In summary, the survey aimed to recruit participants who were:

- early childhood education and care professionals;
- individuals with lived experiences of Australian approved early childhood education and care services;
- individuals with knowledge about the role educational leader;
● educational leaders employed at their service in some capacity; and
● individuals willing and able to share their experiences and opinions.

Whilst this breadth was important, one of the challenges was getting invitations past gatekeepers. Chaudhuri (2017) highlights the gate keeping challenges that many researchers face during data collection, while Creswell (2008) defines a gatekeeper, as “a person who has an official or unofficial role at the site, provide entrance to a site …” (p. 219). The gatekeeper may support access for researchers to participants as research sites, for example informing the ECEC staff team of the opportunity of participating in this study. However, gatekeepers may also prevent information being shared about the research, intentionally or unintentionally.

**Recruitment of participants**

Early childhood education and care in Australia is complex; the range of services differs between states and territories and there are numerous service providers (Productivity Commission, 2017). This means that there is no one communication channel for connecting with ECEC professionals in Australia. As the research design sought to include participants from all states and territories, and from all the approved ECEC service types, including those with different governance structures, multiple strategies were needed.

First, information from a public data base on the mychild website, https://www.mychild.gov.au (Commonwealth of Australia) was used to create a mailing list. A purposeful sampling method was applied to identify a list of potential participants. Next information about the research and an invitation to participate were sent via email to the identified participants. Letters were sent to those on the list where email was unavailable. After consideration, a decision was made to exclude services in the organisation where the researcher was employed. This decision ensured that no conflict of interest concerns could arise. Additionally, it ensured that the researcher’s position within the organisation did not create any perceived power
imbalance in the research (Creswell, 2008), such as ECEC professionals from the organisation’s services feeling as though they were obliged to participate.

The second communication strategy was through advertisements on ECEC professional websites including Early Childhood Australia (ECA), ECA state and territory branch websites, Early Childhood Teachers’ Association (ECTA), and Family Day Care Association. The final communication strategy, influenced by the research design of Hard’s (2005) study, was to distribute flyers promoting the research opportunity at the ECA Biannual Conference, 2014. The last two communication strategies created an opportunity for snowball sampling, as early childhood advocates forwarded the research information and invitation through their individual communication channels. Participants receiving the invitation accessed the survey directly via the electronic form or by copying the web address into their web browser (refer to Appendix B, Research Participation Invitation).

Using this sampling method, 279 surveys were completed and analysed from a total of 296 who accessed the survey. Full details of the sample are provided in Table 7 and a more detailed description of the sample (including removed surveys) is provided later in the chapter. The respondents to the survey included: 207 (74.2%) participants who identified as holding the position of educational leader (EdL); 70 (25.1%) participants who did not hold the position of educational leader, referred to throughout this study as early childhood professionals (ECP); and 2 (0.7%) who were not sure if they held the educational leader role.

The reach of the survey included every state and both territories, as shown in Table 7 (n = 279). The survey targeted all approved service types including long day care, kindergarten, preschool and family day care.
Table 7.

Number of Survey Participants, Locality and Service Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW / ACT</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total in state or territory 245 103 34 5 14 83 2 4

Note. “Other” refers to multi-service type, e.g., combination of long day care and state-funded preschool.

Analysis

The analysis methods employed in relation to Phase One data are summarised in Table 8. This table is followed by a discussion that provides more detail about these analysis processes.
Table 8.

*Survey Question Section, Scales and Measures, and Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A and B (questions 1-23)</td>
<td>EdL, ECP</td>
<td>Closed questions: Nominal and ordinal categorical</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Mean, Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (questions 24 – 34)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Closed questions: Nominal</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (questions 35 – 53)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Closed questions: 5-Point Likert scale</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Median, Frequency); Inferential statistical analysis (p-values, Mann Whitney U for non-parametric correlation analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (question 54)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Closed questions: Nominal</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (questions 55-58)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Open-ended question</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (questions 59-68)</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>Closed questions: Nominal</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H (question 69-88)</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>Closed questions: 5-Point Likert scale</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (questions 89)</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>Closed questions: Nominal</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Frequency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J (questions 90-93)</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>Open-ended questions</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (questions 95-98)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Closed questions: 5-Point Likert scale</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics (Median, Frequency); Inferential statistical analysis (p-values, Mann Whitney U for non-parametric correlation analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L (question 99, 101)</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>Open-ended question</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Quantitative analysis*

The analysis of the quantitative data in this study commenced with data cleaning through missing values analysis, followed by descriptive and inferential statistics (non-parametric analysis). All quantitative analyses were undertaken using SPSS version 25. Details of excluded cases are detailed in the next chapter. A code book was developed that listed all the variables relating to the questions within the survey (Creswell, 2008), which later provided ease of use for
the researcher by adding labels into the software program to support the analysis (refer to Appendix C for an extract of the survey code book).

An overview of the demographic/background characteristics of both educational leaders and early childhood professionals was tabulated. Descriptive statistics included measures of central tendency (mean, median), and frequencies. Displaying the results in figures provided a clear manner of highlighting interest points in the data.

Next, inferential statistics were applied to identify differences between the views of educational leaders and those early childhood professionals. Preliminary analysis was performed to check the distribution of scores in terms of the assumptions of normality (whether a normal distribution). A normally distributed sample would expect to be in a shape similar to a bell curve, where mean and median are equal, and skewness and kurtosis have a value of 0. Skewness value highlights the symmetry of the distribution, with positive skewness identifying scores clustered to the left at the low values, and negative skewness indicating a clustering of scores to the right at the high end. Kurtosis, on the other hand, refers to the peak or the sharpness of the peak of a distribution curve (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2013). In this research case, the data responses to questions relating to the perceived benefit of the leadership role and its perceived impact showed non-normal distribution, with the distribution negatively skewed and with significant kurtosis issues.

Understanding how the data is distributed is important, as it determines the type of tests that can be successfully applied to identify findings. In relation to the data about the benefits and perceived impacts, many of the scores were falling towards the higher side of the scale, and typically with the mean smaller than the median. As such, the appropriate tests for this data set are non-parametric. For example, according to the data, the median for perceived benefits of the educational leader was 5.0 while the mean was 4.22. To obtain the median score, each variable is provided an associated value, for instance: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, while 5 = *Strongly Agree*. 
As the two sample group sizes (educational leader $n = 207$; early childhood professionals, $n = 70$) were very different, a Mann-Whitney U test was used. This test is useful, as it is the non-parametric test used for independent samples, and the most suitable test for this type of circumstance where two groups are of different sizes and the variance of the scores differ (Pallant, 2013). The Mann-Whitney U test compares medians, rather than means and therefore the actual distribution of the scores is irrelevant. Where this was applied, an alpha of 0.05 was used to determine significance (i.e., if $p < 0.05$, significant).

Microsoft Excel™ was used for designing graphical presentations. Quantitative data are often presented in summary tables, with additional histograms used to summarise differences in variables. Results are presented to two decimal places throughout this thesis.

*Qualitative analysis*

The qualitative data from the Phase One survey, collected through opportunities for participants to provide comment throughout the survey and through open-ended questions, was exported to Microsoft Excel™ and assisted the researcher to apply analysis and to organise and manage the data to find common themes (refer to Appendix D for an extract of the code book used for the open-ended survey questions).

**Phase Two: Interviews**

To deepen understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, key informant interviews were conducted involving twenty-two individuals who volunteered to participate after completing the survey. Key informant techniques emerged from ethnography but have become used more broadly in social science studies (Marshall, 1996). According to Fetterman (2008), key informants are able to bring deep knowledge about their community to the research process, in this case the community of ECEC service. Fetterman suggests that they may give insight into their “… feelings,
or opinions, but often reflect on larger social patterns …” (p. 477). The next section describes the decisions made by the researcher in generating a key informant group.

**Sampling**

In order to select key informants and to ensure maximal variation (Creswell, 2008), a purposeful sampling approach was again used, across both educational leaders and early childhood professional groups. It was also important to ensure that key informants were employed across a range of ECEC service types (kindergarten, preschool, family day care and long day care) and within different states/territories. Unfortunately, no participants from Tasmania or Northern Territory volunteered to be involved in Phase Two.

Two steps were used to recruit participants for Phase Two. Step one involved participants self-nominating as part of the Phase One survey, with a total of 99, or 35% of participants, nominating to participate in Phase Two. Klenke (2008) suggests that when using a phenomenological approach and when employing in-depth interviewing, a sample size of two to 25 should be the aim. With this in mind, key informants were then randomly selected to meet the variation requirements described above.

The process of random selection involved multiple steps. First, the surveys were categorised according to whether the informant was an educational leader or early childhood professional. Second, the two groups were categorised into service type. For some service types, the sample was further categorised by state or territory. The surveys were then numbered in consecutive order according to when the surveys were submitted. The first and fifth survey from each available state was selected to achieve a final informant group of 22.

Participants who had volunteered to participate in Phase Two, but were not selected, were emailed and kept informed about the research progress on the chance a position became available. Participants selected for Phase Two were immediately notified by email or telephone call to inform
them of next steps. This action may have supported a high retention rate, as all but two of the originally selected participants engaged in the interview process. One of those who did not, stated that she was informed by her organisation that she was not permitted to participate, while the other left the profession. Information about the key informants is shown in Table 9.

Table 9.

*Number of Phase Two Key Informants, Locality, and Service Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW/ ACT</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Day Care</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Day Care</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in state or territory</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key informant interview logistics*

The key informants had a range of ECEC experiences and held diverse qualifications from Certificate III to post graduate qualifications. The largest representation of key informants was from long day care with five educational leaders and four early childhood professionals accepting an offer to participate. Eight educational leaders and one early childhood professional from kindergartens participated. Although the sample size was small, the study also incorporated educational leaders from both preschools (n = 1), and family day care, (n = 4). Pseudonyms were provided for each informant post interview to protect their identity. Further details of the key informants are provided in Chapter 6.
Interviews were organised depending on the preference of the key informant (these choices were discussed with them). Most elected to participate during the school holiday period, either because they were on leave and preferred to participate in their own time, or because it was a quieter period at their service.

Creating an environment to promote good listening was important to the researcher. Ideally, as highlighted by Shuy (2002), in-person interviews would have been advantageous for this research, offering the opportunity for relationship building and delving into complex issues. However, in-person interviews were not feasible economically due to geographic variation. King and Horrocks (2010) suggest that remote interviewing is an appropriate data gathering approach that can facilitate probing and gain detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. It also met this researcher’s financial and time restrictions, whilst providing opportunities for participants in regional and remote locations to be included within the sample.

Each key informant was sent a letter of the research aims, an overview of questions, the Research Participation Invitation and several communication options (via telephone or online communication platforms). All electing to be interviewed by telephone. At the start of each interview, I checked that these documents had been received and then re-read the documents sent to them. The researcher then re-read the ethics form requesting verbal consent. All participants agreed. The recordings have been saved.

Procedure

Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest that semi-structured interviews provide an exemplary method for phenomenological research. For this study, the interview questions were developed after initial analysis of Phase One data which supported the researcher in building an understanding of the phenomenon more fully, while also enabling the inclusion of questions based on the key informant’s survey responses. For example, some of the questions for Victorian kindergarten staff
were different from those used for informants working in Queensland Family Day Care services (refer to Appendix F). The core interview questions are shown in Table 10.

Table 10.

Core Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core interview questions, Phase Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● What does the role educational leader mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● In your opinion, what do you think it means to your colleagues? Field at large?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Could you provide me your thoughts on what the purpose of the role is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Educator’s Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework states on page 6: “The Framework encourages everyone who works with young children to see themselves as pedagogical leaders”, if staff are all pedagogical leaders, do you believe the services then need a positional leader such as the educational leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Can you describe to me how you were appointed to the role of educational leader? (Not asked if this was thoroughly provided by participant in the survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What support were you provided when appointed to this role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Describe the tasks you do as educational leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What literature / publications / documents have either influenced your understanding of the role educational leader or supported you in this position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Are you able to provide us with a copy of the artefact?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When conducting interviews, Creswell (2008) warns that it is necessary to “have a plan, but be flexible” (p. 229). Specifically, he suggests questions should be open-ended and not leading, and allow opportunity for further discussion. Key informants were encouraged to consider a quiet,
and private space, to support their engagement and the confidentiality of their conversation during
the interview; however, this was not always possible in the busy lives of ECEC professionals and
at times competing noise through key informants’ audio provided a quality challenge for the
researcher.

When conducting each interview, the researcher listened with interest and started the
interview by thanking the key informant for the opportunity to listen to their experiences and
chatted about their holidays and preparation for the new year ahead. This strategy was considered
particularly important for relationship building, given the importance of relationships in interview
quality discussed by Shuy (2002).

Each interview lasted between 35 and 50 minutes, with a voice recorder was used to capture
the discussions. These recordings were later transcribed verbatim, to maintain data integrity.
Immediately following each interview, a journal entry / memo about the interview was created,
capturing the researcher’s perceptions of the interview and notes on emerging themes. Omissions
were also noted.

A sense of honour and obligation was felt by the researcher through the interview process,
as time after time participants emphasised how important they felt this research was to the sector.
These responses gave an added sense of responsibility to ensure the participants’ voices were
heard. The following strategies were used to demonstrate appreciation:

- Respectful and timely communication occurred with the participants;
- Aggregated survey results were posted for participants’ reflection on a purpose-built
  website;
- A thank you card was sent electronically to each interview participant; and
- The abstract of the thesis will be sent to each interview participant at the completion
  of the thesis.
Transcribing and organizing data

Each transcribed interview was sent back to participants for member checking. Only one participant requested a change, requesting the removal of a comment about parents. The digital transcription files were then loaded to NVivo program to support inductive analysis and the identification of common themes. Two key functions of NVivo were used. The first of these was the main function which supports the creation of themes emerging from the data (called nodes). The second function, annotated notes allows the researcher to add comments and notes, provocations, questions, and considerations for further attention at different points throughout the transcriptions and analysis process.

Data analysis

Data analysis transforms qualitative data into findings, and according to Patton (2015), there is no formula to make this occur. However, guidelines can assist. Clarke and Braun (2013) emphasise that a number of versions exist. Thematic analysis uses raw data inductively to inform theory building with data being coded into themes. These non-preconceived themes emerge from data as it is read and re-read. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and Creswell (2013) promote this as a popular form of analysis that is useful for managing large data sets.

The six steps of data analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) include:

1. Knowing the data by reading and re-reading the data;
2. Coding the data to capture semantic and conceptual concepts;
3. Continuing analysis and search for patterns and themes relevant to the research questions;
4. Reviewing themes – cross checking the themes work in relation to both coded extracts and full data sets;
5. Defining and naming themes; and
6. Writing up to tell a story about the data, contextualised with the literature.

With this in mind, each interview was first considered individually, with the transcript being read several times and the recording listened to carefully. Notes were taken and added to the research journal. First the recordings were listened to for tone, words and phrases used by the key informant and any ideas that seemed to be amplified noted. Upon the second reading, the focus was on considering possible codes.

Within the research literature it is frequently highlighted that one of the initial and critical steps in the interview analysis process is the development of a codebook (Beekhuyzen, Nielsen, & Von Hellens, 2010; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The code book for the Phase Two data used a structure suggested by DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011), namely: code name; definition including the inclusion and exclusion criteria; and examples (see Appendix G for a sample section of Phase Two code book). Initial coding generated a large volume of data nodes (refer to Appendix H for a sample of the first level NVivo nodes). It was at this time that the benefits of using NVivo were recognized as the researcher began to compare and contrast interview themes with each other in order to identify common meaning. Once all the codes had emerged (refer to Appendix I for a sample of NVivo coding), data were analysed to seek ways of clustering nodes into new themes. As part of this process, the literature outlined in Chapter 3 was considered in order to identify new themes that may be missing (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). As the new overarching themes emerged, the originally codes became redundant. Themes were then categorised according to the research questions (refer to Appendix J for the final themes).

The final step to data analysis is what Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as the “writing up” section, whereby rather than making a list of clustered themes, the researcher summarises the findings which “involves weaving the analytical narrative (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a
coherent and persuasive story about the data . . . .” (p. 3). The findings of this final data analysis step and discussion will be presented in detail in Chapter 6.

**Trustworthiness**

Several strategies were used to support trustworthiness and authenticity. According to Polit and Beck (2014), trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in research, including the data, interpretation, and the methodology. Yin (2009) recommends that researchers “… conduct the research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder” (p. 45). This statement formed part of Yin’s suggestion to operationalize research to create a transparent audit trail, a process that could be followed and used to promote trustworthiness to the study. The procedures of the current research were designed to create this transparent audit trail, and each step and decision has been explained so that the reader can follow the trail. This action is part of what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as confirmability. Detailed notes, research journal, and NVivo memos (refer to Appendix K for a sample memo) were kept as a reminder of the procedures and decisions taken. Additionally, as will become noticeable in the next chapter, where possible participants’ comments from both survey and interviews were utilised to demonstrate understanding. To ensure these comments can be traced back to the original context (survey response or interview transcript), all surveys and interviews were allocated their own unique number and will be reported in this thesis using S for Survey and their identification number, for example (S46). For key informants, a pseudonym name is provided.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide additional criteria to support trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability (stated), transferability, and a later iteration that included a fifth category, authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). When applying these criteria to this research, authenticity is supported through the application of standard procedures used for qualitative research. Triangulation is a process of using different data to understand the same phenomenon.
This research collected data from a survey and then interviews to understand the phenomenon. This form of triangulation is in fact called sequential triangulation because the data was collected in a sequential process (Creswell, 2008).

The research sampled key informants and/or participants with varying experiences and located in diverse localities, in order to highlight a range of realities (Polit & Beck, 2014). This was the rationale for the sampling decisions in both Phases One and Two. Importantly, however, this study does not claim transferability. It is built around the lived experiences of the participants and key informants, who shared their insights and stories. These cannot be easily generalized. They can, however, point to some common themes that emerge across the research.

On a final note, Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage the use of journaling as a strategy for enhancing trustworthiness. This tool was maintained through the data collection and analysis phase. Not only did the journal facilitate reflection on each interview, it provided an opportunity to aid reflexivity and to recognise one’s own biases as discussed earlier in this chapter.

**Research Ethics**

Ethical considerations are an important feature of all research. Researchers have an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and anonymity of the participants, the confidentiality of their information and for honest reporting (Creswell, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Silverman, 2000). Ethical considerations here included confidentiality, accountability, and ensuring academic standards were maintained, as well as executing an approved communication plan. This plan included information to services outlining such details as: purpose of study, aims of the study, how resulting data would be used by the researcher and published, and lastly, participants’ right to withdrawal from the research at any stage.

Ethics approval was obtained from the Office for Research, Griffith University on 22nd August 2014, with reference: EDN/66/14/HRCE. The Australian National Health and Medical
Research Council (2007), which provides ethical guidelines for Australian research, states: “A risk is a potential for harm, discomfort or inconvenience …” (p. 12). This research was deemed as involving no more than negligible risk.

Phase One of the data collection, the survey, was published through Lime Survey. The survey was coded to protect the anonymity of the participants. To further ensure anonymity, the researcher has combined New South Wales ECEC services with services from Australian Capital Territory to ensure readers could not identify individual participants or services. Upon recruitment of key informants for the interview, the researcher ensured that ECEC professionals were thoroughly aware of the research purpose and aim and were reminded that they were able to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

The interviews were transcribed by a professional, and local transcribing service. Once the researcher had received the transcripts, listened to the recorded interviews and compared the transcripts, the documents were forwarded back to the participants for verification. Only two artefacts were received from a key informant. However, following ethics guidelines it was decided to exclude these from the data set because the signed permission form provided by the document owner related to only one of the artefacts.

Given that ECEC professionals are time poor, data collection methods were selected to be the least intrusive in participants’ lives. Key informants have honoured this research with their trust, commitment and time. The researcher recognises and respects this contribution and commits to ensuring this research is completed in the highest standard.

**Data Protection**

Data generated from this research has been protected and kept secure and will be held for the required timeframe of five years from publication. All data has been de-identified, with codes issued for participants who engaged in Phase One and Phase Two of the research. Pseudonyms
were applied to the transcripts. All hard copies of data are stored in a locked filing cabinet, only accessible by the researcher. Electronic copies of data are stored on a password-protected computer and back-ups to external hard drives also require passwords.

**Chapter Summary**

To listen and understand the perceptions of the education leader role in Australian ECEC contexts, a phenomenological research approach was undertaken. As such, the epistemology was interpretivist. The data was collected through two phases. A purposeful sample collected qualitative and quantitative data to give a broad understanding of the demographics, biographical information about the participants and provided some initial insights into the role educational leader. Phase Two provided a rich opportunity to collect data through interviews with key informants. Data were analysed through qualitative thematic coding, using the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). This chapter also discussed the ethical considerations fundamental to this research project and the strategies implemented to protect data. The next section of this thesis offers analysis of the data, with Phase One outcomes outlined in Chapter 5 and Phase Two in Chapter 6.
Chapter Five: Phase One Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This research sought to examine the perceptions of ECEC professionals about the educational leader role, including how it is enacted and the contribution this role makes to improving quality. This chapter presents and discusses the findings from Phase One of the data collection. In this phase, respondents completed an online survey that collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data within these surveys were analysed using descriptive statistical calculations (mean, median and frequency) and inferential statistics ($p$-values, Mann Whitney U for non-parametric correlation analysis). Qualitative data from the survey were analysed using thematic analysis. As in Chapter 4, the abbreviations EdL (educational leader) and ECP (early childhood professional) are used in the presentation of figures and tables.

Respondent Demographics

In total, 279 surveys were completed and analysed. Of these, 207 (74.2%) respondents held the position of educational leader, 70 (25.1%) the role of early childhood professional, and two (0.7%) were not sure if they were educational leaders. This distribution, whilst not equivalent in number, nevertheless provides two different perspectives on the role of educational leader. Table 11 outlines the respondents’ demographic information (based on Section B of the survey) including their gender, age, and country of birth.
Table 11.

Demographic Background of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>EdL (%)</th>
<th>ECP (%)</th>
<th>Total of respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First language spoken</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When considering the gender of the respondents, it can be seen that only two males (0.7%) completed the survey and of these, only one held the position of educational leader. This small percentage reflects the broader ECEC sector where 94% of all staff are female (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014). Respondents were aged from 20 years, with the majority of both educational leaders and early childhood professionals being between 30 and 39 years of age. This demographic also reflects the broader sector age demographic where 94.5% of the workforce are aged over 20 years (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014). Most respondents were born in Australia (EdL, 80.2%; ECP, 80%), with the most frequent language spoken within their home being English (EdL, 94.4%; ECP, 92.3%). Little Australian research was available to compare whether the low percentage of culturally and linguistically diverse participants represented in this study reflected the overall ECEC sector. Research in 2012, highlighted the limited information available about the cultural and linguistically diverse nature of the ECEC workforce, (Nuttall & Ortlipp, 2012), with current ECEC Workforce Census...
(Department of Education, 2016) and Report on Government Services not seeking information on these workforce demographics.

**Qualifications and experience**

There is ample evidence and literature informing the ECEC sector that a highly qualified and skilled workforce positively contributes to the overall quality of the ECEC provision, and outcomes for children (Manning, Garvis, Fleming, Wong, & Gabriel, 2017; Sylva et al., 2004, 2011). In this study all respondents held qualifications or were studying towards a qualification, as required by legislation introduced in January 2014 (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2013). Table 12 provides a summary of the qualifications held by the survey respondents.

Table 12.

**Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional Qualification Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>EdL (n)</th>
<th>EdL (%)</th>
<th>ECP (n)</th>
<th>ECP (%)</th>
<th>Minimum legislative requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD or Master qualification</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>One degree-qualified ECEC professional per service as of 1 January 2014 (except family day care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma or Certificate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or Advanced Diploma *</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>50% of ECEC professionals in each state service must hold a minimum of a diploma-level qualification as of 1 January 2014 (except family day care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III *</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Minimum qualification required under National Education and Care Services Law and Regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * vocational qualifications.
The qualifications held by respondents ranged from Certificate III in Early Childhood Educational and Care or equivalent (vocation qualification) through to postgraduate university qualifications, which from comments appears to be a Master level qualification. According to the 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014, p. 12) conducted at a similar time to this research, the qualifications of paid contact staff nationally were:

- 16% Bachelor degree or above (university qualified)
- 28.4% Advanced Diploma/Diploma
- 36.2% Certificate III/IV
- 1.5% Below Certificate III
- 18% No qualification.

The higher qualifications represented in this study, when compared to the sector average, is most likely attributed to the large representation of kindergarten staff that participated. Traditionally, kindergarten and preschool services have been staffed with university qualified teachers (Elliott, 2006), and all but one of the postgraduate qualifications (PhD or Master) was held by an ECEC professional employed in kindergarten service types. The work of this highly qualified educational leader working in long day care did not seem valued by the centre director (with qualification unknown), particular given the centre director stated “she cannot see the need for an ECT [or educational leader] in long day care” and was provided no time for leading and supporting others (S233).

The majority of educational leaders (61.4%) held university qualifications, including Bachelor degree (47.9%) and the higher degrees of Master of Education (5.8%) and Graduate Diploma or Certificate qualifications (7.7%). Almost one third (30.9%) indicated holding vocational qualifications, most commonly the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care or
equivalent. Of note, two individuals (1%) who held the role of educational leader held the minimum qualification (Certificate II or III qualification). Furthermore, two (1%) respondents who were educational leaders in their service had completed a Bachelor of Education qualification but had less than two years’ experience. This situation prompted one respondent to note: “The Educational Leader is the teacher, even though she is a new graduate” (S106).

In terms of experience working in ECEC, the respondents ranged from having 1.5 years to 43 years in the profession, with an average length of 17.28 years for educational leaders and 15.64 years for early childhood professionals. Once again, this level of experience is higher than the industry average. The 2013 National Child Care Census (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014, p. 15) reports that within the total ECEC workforce (long day care, family day care, in home care, occasional care, outside school hours care and vocational care) 27.8% of all ECEC professionals had more than 10 years of experience.

**Employment details**

A summary of the service type and governance of services where educational leaders and early childhood professionals were employed is shown in Table 13, which also summarises the main position held by survey respondents and whether or not they worked directly with children.
Table 13.

Summary of the Service Type, Governance and Other Positions Held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>EdL (n)</th>
<th>EdL (%)</th>
<th>ECP (n)</th>
<th>ECP (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service type</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service governance</td>
<td>Catholic service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government service</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent school</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local community</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main position held at service</td>
<td>Director *</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead educator / group leader</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educator / assistant</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work directly with children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Director may also include Principal/teacher-in-charge/family day care co-ordinator.

The largest number (55.1%, n = 114) of educational leaders were employed in long day care, which reflects the broader ECEC sector, with 49.4% of the workforce employed in long day care (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014). Early childhood professionals who responded to the survey had a higher rate of employment in long day care (62.9%, n = 44), which is much higher than the national average. Kindergartens were the second largest service type represented, with 24.2% (n = 50) of respondents being the educational leader and 20% (n = 14) working as an early childhood professional.
Most educational leaders were employed in private not-for-profit services \((n = 55, 26.6\%)\), whilst early childhood professionals were split almost evenly between private not-for-profit and private-for-profit services equally \((n = 16, 22.9\%)\). Privately owned for-profit model services represented 19.8% of the educational leader sample \((n = 41)\).

In the sample, the educational leader role was most often held by the person also appointed Director / Principal / Teacher-in-charge / Family day care coordinator \((n = 114, 55.1\%)\). This was significantly more than those appointed as lead educators, formerly referred to as group leader role \((n = 59, 28.5\%)\). From respondents who identified as holding the position of educational leader \((n = 207)\), four \(1.9\%\) declared this role was the only position that they held within their service, with one of these working in family day care, and the other three in private long day care services. One of these respondents noted: “I am solely employed as the services [sic] Educational leader. I am the same line as centre management” (S11).

The results also indicate that more than half of the educational leaders work with children \((n = 104, 50.2\%)\), with the early childhood professionals indicating that they work with children less often \((n = 25, 35.7\%)\). This difference is likely caused by service director who may have been appointed to positions of non-teaching management roles, and who were also not the educational leader. Table 14 summarises the ages of children that the educational leader identified as teaching.
Table 14.

*Table 14.* The Ages of Children Identified as Being Taught by the Educational Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Age group of children taught by EdL</th>
<th>EdL (n = 101)</th>
<th>EdL Frequency (%)</th>
<th>ECP (n = 27)</th>
<th>ECP Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages of children</td>
<td>From birth to &lt; 1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 year to &lt; 2 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 years to &lt; 3 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 years to &lt; 4 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 years to &lt; 5 years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 years to &lt; 6 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work across all ages</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational leaders were more likely to teach children aged 4 to 5 years (n = 48, 23.2%). This result may be due to the high number of kindergarten teachers represented in this survey, given their focus is to teach children of this age. The following section shifts from presenting demographic information about survey respondents to discussion of the survey findings.

**Survey Findings and Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of ECEC professionals about the educational leader role and its potential for improving quality in Australian ECEC contexts. With this overall purpose in mind and to frame the discussion that follows, I begin here by examining the responses to survey questions 54 and 90. These questions were designed to gain an overarching understanding of how well this role is currently working in Australian ECEC services, according to educational leaders (Q. 54) and early childhood professionals (Q. 90). In this survey question, respondents were required to select from a list of stated choices that included the following options: *yes, no, sometimes* and *not sure*. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied. Results are presented in Figure 5.
These responses indicate that whilst 36.7% (n = 76) of educational leaders and 32.9% (n = 23) of early childhood professionals perceive the role to be working well, of concern is that more than 39% (n = 82) of educational leaders indicated that the role only works sometimes. This perception was also shared by some early childhood professionals (n = 16, 22.9%). This means that approximately 62% of respondents perceive the role to work only sometimes. Adding further concern, almost 7% of educational leaders (n = 14, 6.8%) and 20% of early childhood professionals (n = 14, 20%) suggested in their responses that the role is not working. When this result is added to the only working sometimes result, almost 80% of respondents have concerns about this role not working. However, it is important to note the low response rate for this question compared with other survey questions, by both educational leaders (n = 152, which is 75.3% of the average response rate of EdL in the survey, n = 202) and the early childhood professionals (n = 55, which is 94.9% of the average response rate of the ECP in the survey, n = 67). This low response rate
may have many causes, but the reluctance to comment, particularly by educational leaders, is interesting.

From those participants who suggested the role did not work, many useful comments were provided, with the major theme emerging from these being insufficient time allocated to complete the perceived tasks associated with the role, given competing workloads. Typical responses included:

- There is no governed time allocated to the role so the service does not have to allocate time making it difficult to see the practice’s [sic] of other educators and assist them. (S187)
- … the reality of the time allowed for my role, only allows for conversations during ‘spare time’, so it is virtually impossible to support this further. (S36, educational leader)
- I don’t think the edu [sic] leaders get enough time off the floor to spend working with educators and mentoring. It seems all their time is taken up with booking things, checking first aid and setting up staff meetings. (S51)
- Too many other things to focus on at times and strong resistance to change by educators, part time staff. (S165)

Many educational leaders expressed concerns about time, particularly in relation to the volume of tasks and other responsibilities. Some comments also highlighted strongly held feelings in relation to this issue, including the following comment from an educational leader: “As a Teaching Director, my time is already stretched with the management of a large service of 100 families per week and up to 15 staff per week. The EdL role, as it has been formalised, is something that then has to be done in unpaid time and I resent it” (S176). This example not only highlights the strongly held feelings of the respondent but also suggests that management tasks erode the time that can be spent on educational leadership.

The tension that exists for many educational leaders with competing priorities suggests that administration and operational management issues take priority. For example, one respondent noted, “Inadequate quality time as most time is spent in administration” (S224). Another noted:
“I’m often too busy doing other things, or asked to relieve in a classroom, to get educational leadership tasks done” (S32). The following quote sums up a recurring theme: “No designated time to do work, just rolled in with other duties [and I] have to spend my own personal time researching, [I] feel that the role I [am in is] not respected and my advice is [not] taken by educator choice but yet when documentation isn’t happening by educators I am made to feel responsible” (S193).

These findings indicate issues within the implementation stage of this change (Fullan, 2016), and highlight that further attention to these issues is needed if the goal for sustainable change is to eventuate. Other factors perceived as influencing how well the role of educational leader is working are discussed in the following sections.

**Suitability and appointment**

In this section, the following topics are examined: processes of appointment, understanding the purpose of the role, and appropriateness of the individual for the role.

**Processes of appointment**

Respondents were asked several questions related to the research sub question: *Who is the educational leader in ECEC and how is this determined?* Respondents were provided with a list of choices designed to identify how the educational leader role in their service was appointed (Q. 24 and Q. 59). Responses from the educational leaders (*n* = 188) and the early childhood professionals (*n* = 60) are shown in Figure 6.
Figure 6. How the educational leader was appointed to the position.
Figure 6 reveals that the most common approach to appointing educational leaders, as stated by both the educational leaders ($n = 69, 33.3\%$) and the early childhood professionals ($n = 20, 28.6\%$), was by management request. Few comments were provided to explicate the decision-making behind these requests. However, one respondent stated: “It was suggested that as I had extensive experience in providing assistance to educators in their role and providing support for educators gaining their qualifications, I would be the most suitable person for this role” (S20).

The second most commonly reported recruitment process indicated by the educational leader was to appoint the existing Principal / Director / Teacher-in-charge / Co-ordinator ($n = 39, 18.8\%$). Although this was reported less frequently, there were also educational leaders who indicated they were given no choice in accepting the role and were simply informed by management that they were now the educational leader (no choice; $n = 29, 14\%$).

Responses from early childhood professionals showed a similar pattern, with educational leaders in their service being mostly appointed based on a request by management ($n = 20, 28.6\%$). Again, some early childhood professionals indicated that management had informed employees that they had no choice but to be the educational leader ($n = 7, 10\%$). Nine (12.9\%) early childhood professionals indicated that they were unsure how the person was appointed to the educational leader role.

In terms of difference between the two data sets, the educational leaders indicated that they perceived themselves as the most suitable person to undertake the role based on their current position as Principal/Director/Teacher-in-charge/Co-ordinator ($n = 39, 18.8\%$), while responses from the early childhood professionals revealed that only a small number ($n = 2, 2.9\%$) believed that educational leaders were appointed on this basis. Another marked difference in the data was that some early childhood professionals believed that more educational leaders volunteered for this
role \( (n = 15, 21.4\%) \), whilst this was less likely to be indicated by educational leaders \( (n = 19, 9.2\%) \).

Two educational leaders (1%), also in the role of director, suggested they were appointed because it was a legislative requirement for the director to be educational leader, which is a misinterpretation of the national regulations. These findings suggest different appointment processes are in place in local contexts, and that there are differing perceptions of the process.

Finally, several respondents (S1, S105, S121, S128) suggested that they only accepted the role because no-one else would take it. For example, “No other staff at the centre are interested in doing it [being appointed to the educational leader role] as there is no difference in pay, and also confronting staff about gaps or issues with their programming is not a great position to be in” (S1).

These findings suggest clearer and more transparent appointment processes may be beneficial. They also reveal that issues of pay, perceptions of increased workloads, and perceived tensions and conflict in managing staff are the factors identified by respondents as barriers to taking up the role of educational leader. These issues will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

**Position description**

In total, 190 educational leaders responded to a question (Q. 26) about whether their service had a role description (or position description) for the role. Of these, more than half indicated that their service had a position description \( (n = 120, 63.2\%) \). One respondent provided further information, stating: “The position statement simply states that I have agreed to be the nominated Educational Leader and will act as requested by legislation. It is not specific” (S156). Similarly, another educational leader responded, “Yes but vague” (S273). A further question (Q. 27) was designed to ask the educational leaders about whether this position description was used to guide their work. A large proportion of educational leaders \( (n = 97, 84.4\%) \) who indicated that they had
received a position description responded to this question ($n = 115$), with only a small number ($n = 13, 4.7\%$) suggesting that it did not guide their work.

These results indicate that more than half of educational leader respondents had a position description and the vast majority of these used this description to guide their work. However, of interest here is the fact that more than a third of respondents did not have a position description to support them.

**Understanding purpose**

Respondents were also asked if they had a clear understanding of the purpose of the role of educational leader (Q. 29 and Q. 63). Here, responses suggest that fewer educational leaders working in the role understood the role’s purpose than did early childhood professionals who are not working in this role. These outcomes are shown in Figure 7.

![Figure 7. Understanding of the purpose of the educational leader role.](image)
Figure 7 reveals that, of the educational leaders who responded to this question \( n = 189 \), only 55.1\% \( n = 114 \) indicated they understood the purpose of the educational leader role. This lack of clarity was summed up by one leader who noted: “I don’t have clear indication of where we are headed. I don’t fully understand my role yet. Our centre is going through a lot of changes which is distracting from the role of the EL” (S26).

This lack of clarity about the role of educational leader is noteworthy as it aligns with the findings of Rouse and Spradbury (2016) who reported that just over one third of educational leaders in their study did not understand the purpose of their role (17.9\%) or were not sure about its purpose (18.4\%). When taken together, these two studies clearly indicate that there is a lack of role clarity. One notable comment reinforces this point: “I have requested this [an explanation of the role] to happen at my service, but nothing has happened by head office in the last six months since I was appointed” (S160). This situation is problematic, for as Sims et al. (2017) warn, in order to model and assist others with practice, educational leaders must first understand the purpose of the role themselves.

**Appropriateness for the role**

This section addresses the notion of appropriateness for the role and draws upon the responses to Questions 25 and 62, together with qualitative comments offered across the survey. Here we see that the vast majority of educational leaders indicated that they believed they were the right person for the educational leader role \( n = 158, 76.3\% \), with very few suggesting that they were not \( n = 5, 2.4\% \) or were not sure \( n = 26, 12.6\% \). Notably, the five respondents who perceived they were not right for the role were all required by management to undertake the role.

While the majority of educational leaders believed they were the right person for the educational leader role, this opinion was not always supported by early childhood professionals
who at times offered opposing thoughts, particularly in relation to their educational leader’s capabilities. Examples included:

Inforces [sic] her way of all education and care and does not allow for or encourages self-expression and knowledge. (S3)

Not sure about the right personal qualities in guiding staff in a collaborative and supportive manner. (S59)

Terrible people and communication skills. Intentions good; delivery awful. Puts people off-side and lowers morale. (S79)

One respondent suggested that the educational leader was not enacting leadership, commenting, “The educational leader has difficulty giving feedback to educators about what they need to improve on and thus is not giving any comments on the documentation presented” (S140).

Comments provided about appointment process offered some insight into local decisions. A comment from an educational leader (S49) stated, “Unfortuatley [sic] it is the director. As this is unpaid role it is hard to get someone to take on the extra responsibility without monetary reward”. This educational leader also held the position of contact director, meaning the person also had responsibilities teaching children and establishing partnerships with families, along with all the other duties and responsibilities of managing and coordinating an ECEC service. Other appointment issues were declared in comments related to service size, for example: “In a small centre we don't have the choices so the experience of staff is not always there for an educational leader position to work to the fullest” (S102).

Some service directors suggested they were already enacting the duties of this role in their existing work. For example:

As centre Director [sic] I have always been accountable for the educational practices within the service. The recognition and naming of this particular aspect of centre management has raised an important focus onto the educational component of leadership. It concerns me somewhat that the role has needed to be extrapolated, shouldn't educational leadership within a service be a given? Of course, though that's not the case so the highlighting of the
role and attention now being paid to its importance is a valuable continuation towards the further professionalisation [sic] within the early childhood education sector. (S199)

Another director commented: “No time and unclear expectations of my role. I don’t feel I do anything different from before I gained the title ‘educational leader’. I continue to support and collaborate with staff as I always have” (S178).

In contrast, some respondents indicated that the educational leader role was new or a challenge, with one respondent noting: “I do not have time to complete discussions or reviews with staff as well as running the centre” (S1); and similarly:

I find it difficult to manage the role with that of my role as Director. There is very little guidance as to what the educational leader should be doing and I do not feel as though the work I do with educators is necessarily implemented in the way I would like it to be. (S24)

There was an identified tension in the data related to the leadership of peers in stand-alone kindergartens. This tension relates to the challenge of leading a team when team members hold the same position as the educational leader (all teachers) and their qualifications are similar. For example, one respondent noted: “In a kindergarten setting we have 3 teachers of equal qualification so not a leader as such and when there is disagreement no one person is a figure head” (S212). This gives insight into their understanding of leadership, including that leadership is considered a figurehead role, which is a quite traditional way of thinking about leadership. This thinking was demonstrated in another comment:

Ambiguities in staff understanding of the role. Resistance from some staff to that role – not happy with input, comments reflections on their practice. Very difficult to mentor other teachers in your own setting – see it as forcing your ways on their practice. (S232)

This section highlights the complexity associated with the perceptions of the appropriateness of the appointment of the educational leader and the different factors at play.
Discussion

The literature detailed in Chapter 3 suggests that leading change is complex and challenging, and requires the implementation of effective competency drivers, the recruitment of a change agent with particular personal drivers, as well as the knowledge and skill to apply a variety of leadership styles to support a team through the process of change. Considering first the competency drivers adapted from the work of Fixsen and Blase (2008), the importance of recruiting the appropriate change agent to lead and drive this change is considered essential. The findings of Phase One reported thus far suggest that within the ECEC services included in the survey sample, consideration of the selection of the educational leader may not have received sufficient attention. For example, lack of remuneration for undertaking this role, increased workload, and perceived duties of the role may reduce the interest in applying for the role in a recruitment process. In addition, several respondents indicated they had no choice but to accept the role of educational leader, which clearly is not an ideal recruitment strategy, as somebody forced into a role may not have the passion, commitment or persistence necessary to drive change. Of note, contextual factors such as the size of the service were also found to influence local appointments, with small services indicating difficulty in recruiting due to a reduced selection pool.

In this study, a risk to effective leadership enactment is evident due to several key components discussed in the literature review but not addressed or considered by services. First, educational leaders have been appointed to the role with little or no regard for competency drivers. As indicated in the work of the Implementation Drivers model (Fixsen & Blase, 2008), the competency drivers involve the effective selection and appointment processes needed to appoint the suitable change agent, and then the driver also needs to provide the appointed person with the necessary ongoing professional learning and mentoring needed to support the educational leaders’
success in driving change (Fixsen & Blase, 2008). It is important to recognise too that change is a process, often a lengthy one, not an event (Fullan, 2016; Herold & Fedor, 2008). Metz et al. (2013) suggest competency drivers are needed to lead early childhood professionals through the change process and ensure they have the knowledge and skills to meet the new ways of working.

Personal drivers (including values, attributes, knowledge and skills, dispositions and expectations) are also considered important and are recognised as necessary to enact leadership and drive change. In this study, several respondents mentioned the importance and need for educational leaders to have a high level of communication skills, a specific disposition that has been recognised in research as being important for successful leadership (Davitt & Ryder, 2018).

When educational leaders lack suitable personal drivers and are without the required knowledge and skills, there is a risk that they may not be capable of driving the complex task of change. Sims et al. (2017) warn that when this occurs, there is an increased risk that these educational leaders may focus on previous personal experiences, including a focus on compliance. For example, the lived experiences of S3, S79, and S53 showcased in the previous section suggest the leader may be using top-down leadership and attempting to force others to act rather than to lead through influence. From another perspective, S140 highlights the frustration of there being a lack of leadership.

In this phase, responses also suggest that for the majority of ECEC providers, the educational role was embedded into an existing position. Most educational leaders were requested by management to accept the role. What is also apparent is that many educational leaders were appointed without receiving a detailed position description of the role. In addition, a fair and transparent recruitment system was often absent, which Rouse and Spradbury (2016) suggest may contribute towards the role not being authenticated by early childhood professionals. Findings also indicate structures are not in place to support the role. As suggested in other research (Fleet et al.,
funding of this role (remunerating educational leaders for their efforts) may be warranted. Doing so may help to eliminate recruitment barriers and lead to others accepting the role.

The results also indicate that many respondents in this study hold the position of director (or equivalent) as well as educational leader. Given the demands on service director (human resources, budgets, rosters, enrolments, workplace health and safety) and the range of responsibilities for educational leaders, this combined role becomes extremely diverse and complex. Research conducted by Fonsén (2013) warns that attention to pedagogy has been consumed by the perceived priorities of service management. These dual responsibilities are both important. However, combining both positions increases the risk of the limiting attention to the educational program and increases the struggles of the educational leader to balance competing demands and responsibilities. For example, one respondent declared how the role is juggled with teaching, leading and managing the operations of the service (S49). What is also apparent from these data is that some respondents who have traditionally held the position of director consider the duties and tasks of the educational leader part of their role, while others clearly do not. This may indicate that for some services there has been an absence of educational leadership.

The Education and Care Services National Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a) stipulate that each approved licensed service is required “… to appoint the educational leader in writing …” (p. 85). They then add, “The Approved Provider should select the person most suited for this role in the service after considering the suitability of qualifications and experience of educators in the service” (p. 85). Of note, two long day care services (Brisbane, S7) and (location not disclosed, S256) considered it appropriate for a Certificate III qualified professional to be the most suitable individual to undertake the educational leader role. This decision is concerning given the complex requirements of the educational leader role set out in the Regulations (Ministerial Council for Education Early
Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a) which state that the responsibilities of this role are “… to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) in the service” and “to be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in their implementation practices” (p. 85). This statement provides insight about the types of diverse knowledge, skills, structural and process supports needed to enact this role, including: leadership, change leadership, mentorship skills, and early childhood educational program and practice. Whilst service autonomy in the selection of the educational leader is important, decisions to appoint a person with a minimal qualification may restrict the potential of this role.

Comments by two respondents employed in kindergartens (S232, S212) who were critical of the requirement for an educational leader role in this service context, provided insight into a tension when early childhood professionals are led. One suggested, “Still not clearly defined in eyes of all staff. Traditionally in kindergartens we are used to working alone so it is taking some time getting used to …” (S232); the other highlighted her opinion that they were “equals”: “In a kindergarten setting we have 3 teachers of equal qualification so not a leader as such and when there is disagreement no one person is a figure head” (S212).

Although expressed by a small number of respondents it is still an interesting tension, one that was also found in ECEC research by Hard (2005) and in earlier work by York-Barr and Duke (2004). Both suggest the enactment of leadership was affected by a shift in the hierarchy when teachers step up to lead. Given leadership involves group activity generated through the motivation of others to follow, effective leadership is challenging, and change unlikely, unless steps are taken to support cultural change. Several requirements for success include a transparent and fair selection process, position descriptions that outline the responsibilities inherent in the role, and an investment in developing leadership knowledge to support cultural change. Drawing on the
literature in Chapter 3, it is suggested that early childhood professionals require opportunity to build capacity, particularly around leadership and change, thus developing a culture of learning and generating a culture of collaborative action which engages and supports the motivation of all members of the team (Fullan, 2006a, 2007a).

A limitation to this phase of the research study was the omission of gathering data from early childhood professionals about the qualifications and experience of the appointed educational leader in their service. This information was not collected in this study as it was considered at the time that the early childhood professional would likely not know it. However, data on this would have identified perceived benefits and contributions to quality made when an educational leader holds differing qualifications from other early childhood professionals. Further research on leadership that involves multiple participants from the same service, where the university qualified teachers are being led by diploma or Certificate III qualified educational leaders, is warranted.

**Enactment**

In this section, the following topics addressed within the Phase One survey are examined: the duties of the educational leader; how and when the duties of the educational leader are enacted; how beliefs about leadership influence enactment; how professional learning opportunities influence enactment of the role; and how structural and contextual factors influence enactment.

**Duties and tasks**

Educational leaders \(n = 207\) were asked to select, from a list of 10 choices \(Q. 33\), the duties they undertake with staff in their capacity as educational leaders. More than 70% of educational leaders responded and the results are shown in Figure 8.
Figure 8. Duties and responsibilities identified by the educational leader.
The responses outlined in Figure 8 reveal that the most commonly indicated task was that of reflecting with educators ($n = 178, 86\%$). This was closely followed by the task of supporting the development of programs and documentation ($n = 171, 82.6\%$) and coaching and mentoring ($n = 171, 82.6\%$). The task identified as least occurring was performance management ($n = 118, 57\%$).

These selections were reinforced within additional qualitative comments across the survey, where encouraging reflective practices was also presented as a high priority. For example, one educational leader stated, “I try to do a lot of encouragement and reflective work with the educators. It is hard when no one has ever done reflective practices” (S26). Attention to programming and documentation was also common: “I assist educators during planning, acknowledge their enthusiasm, bookwork, experiences offered, cooperation with others, interaction with children and families. We share/discuss EYLF and documenting learning. It is ongoing throughout each day. I encourage them to attend PD sessions” (S281). Motivating other educators was a further dominant theme: “I want to inspire, motivate and build a team of leaders who will advocate high quality education for young children throughout their careers” (S10). Finally, one respondent highlighted the complexity of this role when they listed a range of tasks, including: “overseeing written documentation, grammar checking, extending connections to EYLF. Ensuring families understand our curriculum and philosophy. Advocating our program and curriculum to wider community and other professionals e.g. speech therapist, schools, special ed” (S179).

Also of note were comments indicating respondents’ varying perceptions of the provision of professional learning opportunities. For some, these opportunities were simply a case of “passing on information about professional learning opportunities” (S195). This somewhat
simplistic view might be an indicator of why less than 68% of educational leaders indicated they provided professional learning.

**How and when tasks of the educational leader role are enacted**

Survey respondents were also asked how and when tasks of the educational leader were undertaken (Q. 34). A list of eight choices was provided (see Figure 9).

![Figure 9. When educational leader completes tasks required for the role.](image)

Figure 9 reveals that in response to these choices, educational leaders (n = 207) appear to complete tasks they associate as part of their role at various times throughout their day including in their own time, and through established routines. The majority of educational leaders (n = 135, 65.2%) indicated they completed tasks by leading staff meetings. This was reinforced by comments provided by the educational leaders, including the following typical response: “A
section of the team meeting are lead [sic] from the Educational Leadership role but not the entire meeting” (S155).

Another strategy used by the educational leader to enact leadership included writing newsletters / memos to educators to exchange information ($n = 110, 53.1\%$), while some respondents communicated through emails. For example, one respondent noted: “emails about events and websites to get them thinking” (S281). Another respondent referred to the challenges of newsletters, describing them as “a bit impersonal and doesn’t allow for exchange of information” (S151). Another common practice was to enact responsibilities by having “conversations with educators over their lunch / meal breaks”. This option was selected by almost half of the respondents ($n = 95, 45.9\%$).

The data revealed that while some educational leaders are provided with paid hours to execute tasks of the educational leader role, others are not, with some respondents indicating that they complete tasks during rostered non-contact time with educators ($n = 115, 55.6\%$). Additional comments from respondents included:

I make time to meet with educators during their non-contact time and they are always welcome to have a conversation at any time. (S216)

I have designated hours each week. (S188)

Wednesday is my EL time to organise and audit. (S126)

However, almost half of respondents also indicated that they undertake tasks in their own time, during allotted planning time ($n = 96, 46.4\%$) and in their own personal time including before or after work ($n = 98, 47.3\%$). For example, one educational leader commented on the work involved in undertaking the role, saying it is, “often done in our own time at night” (S41). Along similar lines, another stated, “I work really hard to support my staff, at personal expense. I know my staff appreciate it but neither they nor my employer has any idea about how big and how much work this role entails” (S176). The provision of a list of duties and tasks may have limited responses to
the questions about when they undertook their educational duties. This was further limited by the omission from the list of “designated educational leader time”.

**How beliefs about leadership influence enactment**

Educational leaders were asked to indicate their beliefs about leadership (Q. 95). The results to this question have been positioned here as they provide further insight into the educational leaders’ understanding of leadership, as well as the notions underpinning their perception of the role. It is assumed that educational leaders’ beliefs influence their enactment of the role. In this part of the survey, a 5-point Likert scale was provided for respondents to indicate agreement in relation to a series of statements about the nature of leadership in their professional work context. Table 15 presents the results.

Table 15.

**Responses to Questions Declaring Leadership Standpoint**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declare your standpoint</th>
<th>Number ((n))</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All ECEC professionals are leaders for education and care at our service</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the director is a leader for education and care at our service</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the educational leader is leader for education and care at our service</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both director and educational leader for education and care at our service</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the educational leaders who responded to this question \((n = 177)\), the data reveal that approximately 81 percent agreed \((n = 71, 40.1\%)\) or strongly agreed \((n = 73, 41.2\%)\) that all ECEC
professionals are leaders of education and care in their service. This high rate of agreement to this statement was supported by other responses to a question that was asked a different way to determine that participants standpoint. An estimated 81 percent of educational leaders \((n = 174)\) disagreed \((n = 58, 33.3\%)\) or strongly disagreed \((n = 83, 47.8\%)\) that the director was the only leader of education and care at their service. This indicates the participants recognise that leadership can be shared, and not just associated to one position – the director. Again, the question was asked in a different way, this time asking whether the educational leader was the only leader for education and care at their service. Again, a strong response of approximately 81 percent suggested the educational leader was not the only leader \((\text{disagreed, } n = 67, 38.3\% \text{ and strongly disagreed } n = 75, 42.9\%)\).

Notably, responses \((n = 165)\) to the last question that requested a response to the statement, *both director and educational leader are leaders for education care at our service*, suggests some uncertainty exists with approximately 51 percent indicating agreement \((\text{agreed, } n = 53, 32.1\% \text{ and strongly agreed } n = 32, 19.4\%)\). This may indicate differing ways of thinking about leadership. Differing views on leadership were also evident in commentary provided by respondents. A typical comment from respondents is represented by this one: “I believe that anyone can be a leader in a service. Part of the ed leader [sic] role is building that capacity in others” (S53). Again, from another respondent, “All our educators have the responsibility to be leaders and advocate for positive change in our industry” (S60).

Comments made throughout the survey provide further understanding of how beliefs about leadership influence enactment. The concept of working as one team and the importance of collaboration was a frequent comment by educational leaders and early childhood professionals. One leader noted: “CollaborationEngagement [sic] from all – everyone has a voice and that needs to be heard and respected. Clear vision trust / respect/ understanding Communication across all
areas of the business and sharing why decisions are made” (S182). Although collaboration was a key theme, only a small number of respondents mentioned leadership that was distributed or shared with others. Two examples of responses related to collaboration were:

The role of the Educational Leader as described above is distributed amongst many staff members who take on mentoring and support roles with individual teachers and assistants. (S46)

As the director I find having another person to help support and discuss program practice very useful. (S88)

**How professional learning opportunities influence enactment of the role**

Successful change requires a change agent with a good understanding of leadership and change knowledge (Fullan, 2007a; Fullan et al., 2005; Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2009). In the case of the educational leader role, a high level of ECEC knowledge and skill is also advantageous. In ECEC, attention to leadership has traditionally been limited, and subsequent training in this area is necessary for upcoming leaders (Leeson, Campbell-Barr, & Ho, 2012; Lind, 2009). When examining the literature about educational change, the importance of building capability through various professional learning opportunities is emphasised (Fixsen & Blase, 2008; Fullan, 2007a). Given this, one of the goals of the survey was to determine whether professional learning was provided to the educational leader to support them in their newly acquired role, and also to identify the types of learning opportunities provided.

Figure 10 presents the types of professional development attended by educational leaders as identified in the survey (Q. 28). The data reveal that attending workshops on leadership was the dominant learning experience ($n = 141, 68.1$%), followed by readings on leadership ($n = 126, 60.1$%), then conversations about leadership ($n = 115, 55.6$%) and lastly, meetings with manager to discuss the role of educational leader and leadership ($n = 92, 44.4$%). Two groups indicated that they received no professional development on leadership ($n = 24, 11.6$%) and had not participated in discussions on leadership ($n = 10, 4.7$%).
Figure 10. Professional development types participated in by the educational leader.
These results indicate that most educational leaders were provided with some opportunities for professional learning to assist the enactment of their new role. However, of note is the number of respondents who indicated they received no professional learning ($n = 11.6\%$).

Several respondents also provided additional comments about professional development they had attended, including comments on the quality of these experiences. It became clear that while some respondents had opportunities to attend professional leadership programs, including in one case a 12-month course (S130), others did not, and as a result sought alternative ways of getting the support they required. Some of these leaders embraced social media in an attempt to gain information and peer support. One respondent identified a relevant Facebook group as “Admin a Facebook group – Educational Leaders Unite” (S191). Anecdotally, I am informed that this group of educational leaders has continued to grow and extend learning opportunities through online communication platforms each Saturday morning.

Another form of peer support was highlighted by this notable comment from one educational leader who stated:

We have developed a Reflective Practice Group that meets once a term. Each of the Ed. Leaders from our council centres attend and we hold discussions and information sharing for approx. 3hrs each time. We also present at our regular combined staff meetings, to further clarify our role to others. (S36)

Finally, comments provided by respondents indicate that while they had an expectation of professional learning, for some individuals this did not eventuate. For example, one respondent noted, “If they are really serious about the benefits of an Educational Leader, there should be a training course and extra hours and/or money to reflect the enormity of the role in my area of early childhood education” (S105).

The literature examined in Chapter 3 provides insight into the knowledge and skills required for the complex role of educational leader. If this role is to enact effective leadership,
considered crucial for the future development and improvement of educational programming and practice in the Australian early childhood education and care context, many researchers (Ebbeck, Saidon, Soh, & Goh, 2014; Fixsen & Blase, 2008; Fullan, 2016; Hard, 2005; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016) argue for the importance of investing and supporting leaders by building their leadership capability. To build this capability requires ongoing professional development and support through mentoring (Ebbeck et al., 2014; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016). The effect of not investing in appropriate professional learning may be a factor as to why some educational leaders perceive themselves as not having the capability to enact their role. Examples include the following comments: “the need for confidence in order to influence” (S89); “the concern of new graduates in this role who need support themselves” (S86); and “understanding adult learning skills” (S98). One comment in particular highlighted strong feelings about an inexperienced educational leader: “Manipulative young girl who has little knowledge of quality care and is a very poor role model to other staff” (S25).

**How structural and contextual factors influence enactment**

This section addresses local structural and contextual factors, including how service culture influences the enactment of leadership by the educational leader. It draws upon survey questions (Q. 31 – 32 and Q. 65 – 66) and qualitative comments from across the survey. This section begins with the structural factor of allocation of time, including the weekly non-contact time designated for the educational leader. The results are presented in Figure 11.
Figure 11. Non-contact hours provided to educational leader role.
More than half of educational leaders (n = 137, 65.7%) responded to this question, with 40 educational leader respondents (19.3%) indicating that they received no non-contact time, while other responses revealed that where time was provided, the most common allocation was between one - two hours per week (n =34, 16.4%). One participant also highlighted that this allocation of time “usually depends on the week and how much other work there is to [sic]” (S132).

The importance of an allocation of time, as provided through non-contact, was the most common theme to emerge from comments provided by both educational leaders and early childhood professionals alike. These comments suggest that when an allocation of time is provided to the role, the educational leader is better able to enact the duties and responsibilities considered part of the educational leader role. For example, one respondent noted:

Time to review and work 1:1 with educators. Formalised goals program, where educators choose areas they want to grow in and identify where they need support. Targeted support for new or inexperienced staff. Mentoring programs. (S130)

Another respondent offered the following comment:

Staff are aware that there is a designated person they can now access to support them with their programming and documentation. Having both contact and non-contact time allows for relationship building and hands on experience as well as time to research, gather resources and support colleagues. (S152)

Another theme to emerge from respondents’ comments in the survey related to the effect that structural and contextual issues had on service operations (refer to Chapter 2 for detail). Considering the findings from the earlier section about appointment of the educational leader, most services implemented the role in a similar manner, regardless of the service type (often through one person, the service director). Several comments emphasised issues that emerged in different service types because of this appointment decision. A comment from an educational leader employed in family day care indicated that geographical distance and the size of many coordination units with significant numbers of carers made it difficult to appoint only one person as educational
leader (S156). Additionally, teachers working in kindergartens and/or preschools, who held the role of educational leader and also had teaching responsibilities, often in separate rooms, reported issues relating to isolation. These educational leaders reported a lack of opportunity to visit other early childhood professionals, to observe and coach, which they perceived as an expectation of the educational leader role. These findings highlight the need for local consideration of context and structures when implementing a new role and introducing change.

The final theme to be presented in this section highlights the perceptions of a small number of respondents who shared their comments about the challenges of leading change due to service culture. One respondent suggested:

It is a lot of work! …Sometimes it’s difficult to make changes that you see have good possibilities, when they are ones [established practices] that have been in place a long time but little steps are generally helpful (though sometimes a really big step and in a hurry is needed!). (S205)

Another educational leader noted the resistance by some team members:

Always have good intentions but sometimes support is not seen as support, rather me pushing my own ideas, mainly due to time pressures and difficulty in communicating with some staff. Most staff happy with the level of support. (S232)

This resistance was also felt by another respondent who suggested, “Mostly it is valued [my leadership], and staff thank me for my efforts, but you can’t please everyone, and some people do not feel the need for personal growth and professional development” (S130).

Discussion

The literature review, specifically the work adapted from Fixsen and Blase (2008) which focuses on competency drivers, is useful here in helping to identify some deficits in building the leadership capability of educational leaders. This work notes that for change agents to be successful (in this case the role of educational leader), an investment in the competency drivers
(training and mentoring) is necessary. In addition, others have suggested that often the best form of professional learning is that which is ongoing and conducted within the local context (Colmer et al., 2014; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2006a; Poole, 2011). Mentoring was not included in the types of professional learning listed in the survey; notably it was not mentioned in the many comments provided by respondents. Mentoring is considered important to support individual leaders in building their leadership capacity (Fixsen et al., 2005).

The online support community initiated by some educational leaders is an example of the importance educational leaders place on supporting one another in the role. Identifying the impact of this professional learning community is outside the scope of this research; however, it highlights the willingness of respondents to engage in ongoing training in their own time, and at their own cost, in an attempt to gain support.

The findings reported here also indicate that while more than half of the educational leaders indicated that they received professional development on leadership, the most common approach to this professional learning process was via participation in workshops. Such an approach may be of benefit; however, within the literature it is not considered ideal for building capability to support change. Professional learning to support change occurs within the learning environment (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2006a, 2007a) by connecting and building capability through engagement with other services; mentoring and coaching (Fullan, 2006a); and having opportunity to engage deeply in professional conversations (Timperley, 2015). The situation of having educational leaders who received no professional development (11.6%) is of serious concern, given that Fullan (2006a) argues that professional learning is essential and ideally conducted within the workplace. Sustainable change is considered unlikely without this investment. The lack of high-quality professional learning opportunities outlined by the respondents in this study may illustrate the
perceived lack of value placed on the role of educational leaders by many service operators. It may also suggest a lack of knowledge about leadership and change leadership.

What it also suggests is that the enactment of the educational leader role is linked to the local context, and the way management understands and values the role. For the majority of respondents, the role was incorporated into an existing one (often the service director or associated role), with few respondents receiving an allocation of time to enact the expected tasks of this role (1 – 2 hours per week, 16.4%), and others receiving no allocation of time (19.3%). The issues related to time to support leadership enactment are not new in ECEC (Hard, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) but continue to present as an obstacle to the effective enactment of the role.

Another structure with the potential to inhibit leadership relates to opportunity to enact change. For the majority of educational leaders, staff meetings and ECEC professionals’ non-contact time are the only opportunities to engage with staff. Change, however, requires disrupting existing knowledge and skills and then embracing new knowledge and skills so that it becomes part of everyday practice, preferably through the processes of ongoing learning opportunities and mentorship (Fullan, 2006a). Although information can be exchanged at staff meetings, it is doubtful whether existing norms and processes can be displaced to support new ideas and ways of practice at this time. Again, this highlights the need for allocated time.

Educational leaders were asked to select, from a list of duties and tasks, the activities undertaken in their role. The tasks selected were similar for all the responding educational leaders and included coaching and mentoring early childhood professionals; supporting the development of programs; and discussing the abilities of children. The majority of educational leaders indicated the most common duty and responsibility they enacted was reflecting with staff ($n = 178, 63.8\%$). A few tasks were selected less frequently than others. These included teaching knowledge and skills ($n = 158, 56.6\%$) and providing professional learning ($n = 140, 50.2\%$). This is interesting
given that the role fundamentally is to be a change agent – mandated to improve the educational program and practice of the service. Although reflection with staff is important, so too is the need for staff to gain new knowledge and competencies to effect change (Fullan, 2006a). Developing a culture of learning, where both educational leaders and early childhood professionals participate in ongoing learning, is essential.

A pattern emerging from these results is that educational leaders were less likely to enact duties and tasks related to the practice management of ECEC professionals \( (n = 118, 42.3\%) \) and checking written programs and documents \( (n = 154, 55.2\%) \). This may indicate a reluctance on the part of educational leaders to adopt top-down management (Hard, 2005), as well as a reluctance to make peer judgments (Hard, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

There were many comments about the duties and tasks undertaken as part of this role and a noticeable absence of comments about vision and mission. Only two comments indicated that the educational leader had a vision: a comment previously noted (S182, refer to page 145) and the following comment:

The educational leader has always had a clear vision and understanding of the role and what we expect at the Centre. The role continues to develop as more admin time is given to it, and we raise its importance with other educators at the service. It can be a little tricky to get long time employees familiar with having reflective conversations, or just other people interested in what they are doing and why when they have not had this in the past. (S88)

As outlined in Chapter 3, collaborative action is key to change. This is often generated when teams come together to learn from one another and, in the process, establish a collective vision and agreed goals. This shared agreement then acts as a guide to influence future decisions and practice (Fullan, 2006a; Rodd, 2006). Results indicate implementation of the role has lacked some key leadership strategies considered necessary to drive change and has limited the potential of this role in some services.
Several research studies (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 2006; Sinclair, 1998) have suggested a resistance to leadership by women or those within the ECEC sector generally. The Phase One findings suggest a shift from this earlier thinking. More than half of the educational leaders perceive all ECEC professionals are leaders. This clarifies educational leaders’ beliefs that they are not leading in isolation but share leadership activity with staff. However, this said, there have also been some indications in comments made by respondents that traditional thinking about leadership may still exist for some, and that further information and intentional leadership training may be beneficial for the Australian ECEC sector.

Responses in this phase of the study also included accounts of resistance to change. Fullan (2016) warns that resistance is a natural part of any change process, as people work through their own meaning of the change required and about the process of change. As the change agent supporting change locally, the educational leader must apply suitable leadership styles to support and drive change. Distributed leadership and collaborative approaches are considered by some researchers (Heikka et al., 2012; Rodd, 2013a) to be more effective for promoting change. Findings throughout this research study suggest that most services implemented a leadership approach that was collaborative, with a few services going further and distributing leadership. At the other end of the leadership spectrum, a top-down leadership style was also evident.

Who benefits from the role?

Within this section, discussion is focused on identifying who benefits from leadership by the educational leader. Descriptive statistics, along with qualitative comments, inform this discussion. In addition, the perceptions of educational leaders and early childhood professionals about who benefits are compared. First, the data were analysed through descriptive statistics (see Table 16).
Table 16.

*Perceived Beneficiaries of the Educational Leader Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived beneficiaries</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*** denotes p < .001; SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, Neither = Neither Disagree nor Agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.*

The results in Table 16, when considered from the perspective of educational leader, indicate that educators [ECEC professionals] benefitted the most (91% agreement or strong agreement). Children were also considered beneficiaries with approximately 89% agreement. Management were identified as further beneficiaries, with an estimated 83% of educational leaders agreeing or strongly agreeing that the role of educational leader was a benefit to management. Educational leaders perceived families as benefitting least from their role, although overall agreement was still high at 81%.

Interestingly, early childhood professionals provided a different perspective. From their viewpoint, management was perceived to benefit the most (76.7%), with approximately 68% of early childhood professionals agreeing or strongly agreeing that the role of educational leader is a benefit to educators. Here, an estimated 15% of early childhood professionals indicating that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that the role of educational leader was a benefit to educators.
Children again were considered to benefit from the role of educational leader; however, from the perspective of early childhood professionals, this was a much lower percentage than indicated by educational leaders with approximately 67% of early childhood professionals indicating that they agree or strongly agree that the role of educational leader is a benefit to children, with 10% also disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Finally, early childhood professionals, similar to educational leaders, identified less often that families benefitted from the educational leader role, with an estimated 55% agreeing or strongly agreeing that families benefit from the educational leader role, and 18.7% indicating they disagreed or strongly disagreed to this statement.

When the responses by educational leaders and the early childhood professionals are compared, some interesting and notable findings emerge. First, it is important to state up-front, that both participants perceive the role of educational leader to be of benefit to, (in no particular order): management, educators, family and children. When considering the data further, early childhood professionals perceive the role of educational leader to be more of a benefit to management than to educators. When considering the frequency of response, more early childhood professionals than educational leaders perceived the educational leader role to be of benefit to management. A large difference in perceptions was noted here, with 23 percent educational leaders than early childhood professionals perceiving it to be more of a benefit to management than to educators. This difference of perception is further emphasised by 15.3% of early childhood professionals strongly disagreeing or disagreeing that the role of educational leader is a benefit to educators, compared to 2.7% of educational leaders, a difference of approximately 12%. This suggests a strong difference of viewpoint between the educational leader and early childhood professional about the benefit of the educational leader role.
There was also a variation in responses relating to the perception of benefits for children and families. Both educational leaders and early childhood professionals ranked children as the third highest to benefit from the role of educational leader. However, while approximately 89% of educational leaders agreed that their role benefitted children, and an estimated 67% of early childhood professionals felt this way, a notable difference of approximately 23%. Finally, one of the highest variations occurred with the opinion relating to families. Here, approximately 81% of educational leaders perceived their role to be of benefit to families, with few (3.3%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. In comparison, an estimated 55% of early childhood professionals perceived the role of educational leader to be of benefit to families, with 18.7% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing.

While the focus within the preceding discussion is on frequency of responses, it is also important to note that the differences between educational leaders’ perceptions and those of education professionals in relation to benefit to educators, children and parents are statistically significant ($p = <0.001$), whilst those relating to management ($p = .067$) are not.

Further analysis is needed here because these two groups (EdL and ECP) are different in size, and as such, inferential statistics need to be applied to gain a more accurate comparison. To do so, a Mann-Whitney U test, which considers the median score rather than the mean, was used and the findings are presented in Table 17.

Table 17.

A Comparison of the Perceived Beneficiaries of Effective Educational Leadership Between Educational Leaders and Early Childhood Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived beneficiary</th>
<th>Median (EdL)</th>
<th>Median (ECP)</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$r$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4664.00</td>
<td>-1.831</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3640.00</td>
<td>-4.133</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3741</td>
<td>-3.658</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3927.50</td>
<td>-3.613</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*** A significant difference $p = <0.001$ level; ** significant $p = <0.01$ level.*
When re-examining the different perceptions of who benefits from the role of educational leader, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test confirm that even when the differences in group size are taken into account, there remain significant differences between the perceptions of educational leaders and early childhood professionals in terms of the benefits for educators, families and children. They indicate that educational leaders ($Md = 5$, $n = 183$) had a stronger perception of the value of their work for educators compared to early childhood professionals ($Md = 4$, $n = 59$; $U = 3640$; and $p = <.001$). Results also indicated that a greater proportion of educational leaders ($Md = 5$, $n = 182$) compared to early childhood professionals ($Md = 4$, $n = 60$) perceived the role of educational leader to be of significant benefit to children ($U = 3927.50$; $p < .001$); and a greater proportion of educational leaders ($Md = 4$, $n = 181$) compared to early childhood professionals ($Md = 4$, $n = 59$) also perceived the role of educational leader to be a benefit for families ($U = 3741$; $p < .001$). These results confirm the significant differences in the perceptions between educational leaders and early childhood professionals for educators, children and families, and indicate that this is an important result. However, a key finding from the data analysed by the Mann Whitney U test is that there is clear evidence of the benefits of the educational role in terms of management, educators, families and children.

Qualitative comments across the survey related to perceptions of who benefitted most from the work of the educational leader role related to all four categories. For example, many comments highlighted the benefit for management. A typical comment suggested, “This is a great role, it has allowed me as the center [sic] Director to focus on running the center while ensuring that the programs are functioning well and Staff are getting the support they need” (ECP, S84). There were also many comments provided about the benefit of this role for educators. One early childhood professional stated, “Gives me advice. Supports me to think deeper about areas, and therefore extend the knowledge of Educators and children” (S35). Again highlighting the importance for
this role for knowledge sharing, an educational leader shared how information was provided to families:

I feel it further legitimises the theory and information that I share with both colleagues and families (in different ways). It prompts me to continue to look at challenges and bettering my own learning opportunities and within our area we have actually set up an Educational Leaders group (approx. 25 members) who meet regularly to share ideas and ideas and prompt new/innovative practices and challenges. (S205)

Another example, this time about benefit to children, highlighted the perception that children benefit through the development of early childhood professionals.

My role doesn't directly have me spend time with the children on a daily basis. I spend time with the educators. this is done in the rooms or throughout their programming time. My role is more so to educate the educators on their practice, provide current research and in turn provide a quality environment for the children. (S296)

**Discussion about who benefits from the enactment of this role**

Analysis of the survey data reveals the participants of this study perceive benefits of the educational role for management, educators, families, and children. The data also reveal varying perceptions about who benefits. For instances, while educational leaders identified early childhood professionals as gaining the most from this role, early childhood professionals identified management as benefiting most. These differing perceptions may be attributed to the effect of positioning of leadership and management by the National Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c). Within the Guide to the National Standard (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011) the notions of leadership and management are positioned as interconnected through the focus and direction of Quality Area 7. Although the preamble in Quality Area 7 highlights important aspects of leadership, “… shared values, clear direction and reflective practices” and “… the development of the curriculum …” (p.169), the weight of Quality Area 7 is more about compliance (e.g., compliance to policy and procedures; reporting information to
Previous research (Sims et al., 2017) has identified the pains by which the ECEC workforce as professionals have attempted to meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b) which, as observed in this study, has often led to a focus on compliance (monitoring or checking programs) or the integration of roles (management and educational leader), and diminishes opportunity for leading pedagogy and practice and mentoring of others. When the literature reviewed within Chapter 3 is considered alongside the findings, it is not surprising that respondents note challenges faced with the implementation of this role, given the manner in which the educational leader was appointed to this position, the lack of information, clarity, and guidance, and that the key change strategies needed to drive change have not been employed.

**Enactment of leadership**

This section reports on the perceptions of educational leaders and early childhood professionals in relation to educational leaders’ enactment of leadership (Q. 39 – 53 and Q. 74 – 88). The related research questions posed whether the perceptions of the impact of the educational leader role differed between educational leaders and early childhood professionals.

In the previous section, the perceived benefits of the role to people or groups (management, educators, families, and children) were explored, but in this section of the survey, comparisons are made between the perceptions of educational leaders in relation to their actions. The questions asked of both educational leaders and early childhood professionals were similar but written for the appropriate role. The results are shown in Tables 18 and 19. Following a similar process to the last section (about who benefits), these data are first examined using descriptive statistics.
### Table 18.

**A Comparison of the Educational Leader and the Early Childhood Professional (ECP) Perceptions of the Leadership Actions of the Educational Leader by Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement about leadership action</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD %</th>
<th>D %</th>
<th>Neither %</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>SA %</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action 1: I lead the ECP at our service to make children’s education and care their central focus.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 2: I lead the ECP to build the shared service vision and philosophy.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 3: I support ECP to make connection between theory and practice.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 4: I support the ECP to embed the principles and practices of the approved learning framework used at our service.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 5: I discuss with ECP teaching strategies to uphold children’s rights.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 6: The ECP and I work together using the learning outcomes to guide planning and future practice decisions.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 7: I collaborate with ECP and use a sound knowledge of each child, to guide the planning and practices for children’s education and care.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>.005**</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 8: I promote current research and contemporary practice to guide planning and inform assessment practices.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 9:</td>
<td>I promote strategies for ECP, children and families to collaborate through the planning cycle, including assessment of documentation.</td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 10:</td>
<td>I promote strategies to build family and ECP partnership that encourages discussion and consideration for children’s learning at the service and outside the services.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 11:</td>
<td>I use reflective practice strategies with ECP.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 12:</td>
<td>I consult with ECP to support them to consider and adapt the environment and resources to support children’s education and care.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 13:</td>
<td>I provide opportunities for ECP to engage in ongoing professional learning (inquiry).</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 14:</td>
<td>I encourage all ECP to take an active role in leading change for children’s education and care.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>.005**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 15:</td>
<td>I promote ECP to view themselves as leaders of education and care.</td>
<td>EdL</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, Neither = Neither Disagree nor Agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.
The results in Table 18 reveal that both educational leaders and early childhood professionals perceive that all the leadership actions listed in the survey are enacted. However, the data indicate variation in views between the two groups, specifically about their level of occurrence. From the perceptions of educational leaders, the three leadership actions where there is strongest agreement about enactment are Actions 4, 11, and 14. For example, with 94% agreement, Action 4 (supporting early childhood professionals to embed the principles and practices of the approved learning framework used at the service) scored highest. Next, Action 11 (reflective practice strategies used with early childhood professionals) scored a 92% agreement level, while Action 14 (encouraging educators to take on an active role in leading change for children’s education and care) achieved 93% agreement. However, in terms of these leadership actions, early childhood professionals had different viewpoints. From their perspective, three different leadership actions were most commonly enacted: Action 13 (provides opportunities for educators to engage to ongoing professional learning), Action 12 (consults with educators to support them to consider and adapt the environment and resources to support children’s education and care), and Action 7 (collaborates with educators and uses a sound knowledge of each child to guide planning and practices for children’s education and care), with agreement levels between 65-68%.

Apart from the differences highlighted above, the data also revealed noticeable differences in the level of agreement in relation to some actions. For example, in relation to Action 8 (promote current research and contemporary practice to guide planning and inform assessment practices), 89.1% of educational leaders agreed that they enacted this work, while only 51.9% of early childhood educators agreed that they had witnessed or experienced this type of work. This represents a major difference in views of more than 37%. This difference of viewpoint also occurs when disagreement is considered. For example, approximately 25% of early childhood
professionals offered disagreement to Action 15 (educational leaders promote educators to view themselves as leaders of education and care), while only 2.8% of educational leaders disagreed with this statement.
Table 19.

*Comparison of the Perceptions of the Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional (ECP) about the Leadership Action by the Educational Leader by Median*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement about leadership</th>
<th>Median (EdL)</th>
<th>Median (ECP)</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action 1: I lead the ECP at our service to make children’s education and care their central focus.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3012.50</td>
<td>-4.377</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 2: I lead the ECP to build the shared service vision and philosophy.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3217.50</td>
<td>-3.958</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 3: I support ECP to make connection between theory and practice.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2878.00</td>
<td>-4.746</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 4: I support ECPs to align the principles and practices of the approved learning framework used at our service.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3008.50</td>
<td>-4.267</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 5: I discuss with ECPs teaching strategies to uphold children’s rights.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2812.50</td>
<td>-4.639</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 6: The ECP and I work together using the learning outcomes to guide planning and future practice decisions.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3348.50</td>
<td>-3.362</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 7: I collaborate with ECPs and use a sound knowledge of each child, to guide the planning and practices for children’s education and care.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3347.50</td>
<td>-3.468</td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 8: I promote current research and contemporary practice to guide planning and inform assessment practices.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2872.50</td>
<td>-4.643</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 9: I promote strategies for ECPs, children and families to collaborate through the planning cycle, including assessment of documentation.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3008.50</td>
<td>-4.304</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 10: I promote strategies to build family and ECP partnership that encourages discussion and consideration for children’s learning at the service and outside the services.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4178.50</td>
<td>-1.617</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 11: I use reflective practice strategies with ECPs.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2683.00</td>
<td>-5.202</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 12: I consult with ECP to support them to consider and adapt the environment and resources to support children’s education and care.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3066.00</td>
<td>-4.156</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 13: I provide opportunities for ECP to engage in ongoing professional learning (inquiry).</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3645.50</td>
<td>-2.835</td>
<td>.005**</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 14: I encourage all ECP to take an active role in leading change for children’s education and care.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3089.00</td>
<td>-4.304</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 15: I promote ECP to view themselves as leaders of education and care.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3068.00</td>
<td>-4.149</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *** A significant difference p = <0.001 level; ** significant p = <0.01.
Once again, the Mann Whitney U test was applied in order to account for the differences in group sizes. This analysis reveals that for eight of 15 leadership actions nominated, the educational leaders’ perceptions about their leadership actions are significantly higher ($Mdn = 5$) than those of the early childhood professionals ($Mdn = 4$). These are: Action 1 ($U = 3012.50, p < 0.001, r = .29$); Action 2 ($U = 3217.50, p < 0.001, r = .26$); Action 4 ($U = 3008.50, p < 0.001, r = .28$); Action 9 ($U = 3008.50, p < 0.001, r = .29$); Action 11 ($U = 2683, p < 0.001, r = .34$); Action 12 ($U = 3066, p < 0.001, r = .27$); Action 14 ($U = 3089, p < 0.001, r = .28$), and Action 15 ($U = 3068, p < 0.001, r = .27$). These leadership actions included: Action 1 (leading the educators at our service to make children’s education and care their focus); Action 2 (leading the educators to build the shared service vision and philosophy); Action 4 (supporting educators to embed the principles and practices of the approved learning framework used at our service); Action 9 (promote strategies for educators, children and families to collaborate through the planning cycle, including assessment of documentation); Action 11 (using reflective practice strategies); Action 12 (consulting with educators to support them to consider, and adapt the environment and resources to support children’s education and care); Action 14 (encouraging all educators to take an active role in leading change for children’s education and care); and Action 15 (promoting educators to view themselves as leaders of education and care).

The data also indicate that for six of 15 leadership actions nominated, the views of the educational leaders ($Mdn = 4$) and early childhood professionals are similar ($Mdn = 4$). These leadership actions are: Action 3 ($U = 2812.50, p < 0.001, r = .31$); Action 5 ($U = 2812.50, p < 0.001, r = .30$); Action 6 ($U = 3348.50, p < 0.001, r = .22$); Action 7 ($U = 3347.50, p < 0.001, r = .23$); Action 8 ($U = 2872.50, p < 0.001, r = .30$); and Action 13 ($U = 3645.50, p < 0.001, r = .19$).
Discussion of findings relating to enactment of the educational leader role

Analysis of this section of the survey data reveals that there are very different perceptions about the leadership actions enacted by the educational leader. These differences are significant given the importance of these tasks for driving educational change; three of these leadership actions in particular (Actions 2, 4, 15) I would expect to be occurring given the role of the educational leader.

First, in relation to Action 2, researchers Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) have highlighted the importance of a service vision as a component of a quality ECEC service. However, Action 2, which is about educational leaders leading their colleagues to create a shared vision and philosophy (refer to Table 19 and 20) is one where there are considerable differences between leaders (Agreement 90%; Disagreement 2.8%; Mdn = 5) and early childhood professionals (Agreement 62.3%; Disagreement 16.9%; Mdn = 4). When this outcome is considered alongside the fact that few comments about vision and goal setting are provided across the survey, this finding may suggest that educational leaders might need further support to understand the importance of these strategies for leading.

Also of interest are the differences in views for Action 4, relating to the educational leader role supporting educators to embed the principles and practices of the approved learning framework. Based on the legislation directing the responsibilities of the educational leader role, “… to lead the development and implementation of educational programs …” (Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011a, p. 113), it is reasonable to assume that the educational leader role would support the principles and practices of the approved framework as part of leading the program; however the findings again indicate that for some early childhood professionals this is not their experience (EdL: Agreement 94.5%; Disagreement 2.1%; Mdn = 5 verse ECP: Agreement 62.8%; Disagreement 21.6%; Mdn = 4).
The third critical example of differences relates to Action 15, which is focused on leadership. Here we see that educational leaders have a median of 4, with 90.1% agreement and 2.8% in disagreement that this leadership action is enacted, while early childhood professionals had a median of 4, agreement 61.5% and disagreement 25%. This finding suggests a much different experience for educational leaders and early childhood professionals and is concerning given that the Educator’s Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2011) encourages both educational leaders and early childhood professionals to view themselves as leaders of education. This finding may suggest that educational leaders need further support in understanding the notion of leadership, and in particular, that everybody has the potential to be a leader.

Although difference of opinion was evident between the two groups, additional comments provided by participants gave some further support to the idea that early childhood professionals can also be leaders of education and care. For example, “At our service all educators are leaders, however as we have one person appointed as an educational leader it is for that person to lead the team of educational leaders” (S28). The comments such as that provided by S28 are promising given that to improve quality ECEC through sustainable change, leaders need to consider themselves as leaders of education.

When considering why such differences in perceptions exist between the two groups, several reasons may be at play: educational leaders may have a stronger belief in what they do (self-perception); their actions or purpose may not be understood by the early childhood professionals (not clear); or the actions they do complete may not be directly experienced by early childhood professionals or, in the busyness of a service, may not be meaningful. Based on international research (Fonsén, 2013) about the distraction of operational and management issues to educational leadership, these findings may also indicate that due to a focus on management and/or operational issues by the educational leader, the required attention as perceived by the early childhood professional may not be forthcoming. However, as participant S32 highlighted in the
previous quote, if management is the distraction to effective leadership action, the failure by some leaders not to act may not be driven by choice, but rather by the limited amount of time provided to this role to enact leadership duties.

Importantly, a further cause for these discrepancies may be the research design itself, as the educational leaders and early childhood professionals who responded to the survey were not employed at the same service. As such, the perceptions outlined here are based on the experiences of individuals from different service contexts. This limitation, together with the small sample size of the early childhood professionals, must be taken into account when considering the discussion above.

**Improving the Enactment of Leadership**

This section addresses the perceptions of both the educational leaders and early childhood professionals about improving the leadership work of the educational leader. It draws upon data from the final section of the survey made up of a series of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to seek deeper insights from respondents in relation to identifying the aspects of the educational leader role that work well, together with suggestions for improvement (Q. 55 & 57; Q. 90 & 92). The qualitative data from this section were analysed through thematic analysis.

**Strategies to improve the educational leader role**

Educational leaders had much to say about the strategies required to improve the value or benefit of their work as educational leader ($n = 136$), whilst fewer comments were made by the early childhood professionals ($n = 39$). Given that time was identified as a barrier in other comments, it was not surprising that the most common suggestion from both educational leaders and early childhood professionals to improve the role was to provide a specific allocation of time. Repeatedly, the early childhood professionals requested time to meet with the educational leader so that they could discuss practice and/or programming. For example, one suggested: “Allocate time, to spend in rooms and work alongside the room educators” (S164).
Greater role clarity was another key recommendation from both educational leaders and early childhood professionals, with a few respondents suggesting that a detailed position description (S55, S72, S95) would be useful. Respondents suggested they were appointed to the role with little or no information and rarely any support or training. One detailed comment provides a notable example: “Unclear what the role entails and what is required. It was ‘given’ to me when we were preparing for assessment but there was no discussion, etc of the role’s job description. I really feel as though I was thrown in the deep end here” (S158). Other early childhood professionals shared this concern and requested further information and an explanation of expectations in relation to the role. This desire for a job description supports research by Sims et al. (2017) who also found a lack of clarity and a need for clear position descriptions and authority to support this role.

Comments in response to open-ended questions suggest that educational leaders and early childhood professionals had differing expectations of the role. The following example demonstrates the expectations of the educational leader and her or his team:

Staff are aware that there is a designated person they can now access to support them with their programming and documentation. Having both contact ad [sic] non-contact time allows for relationship building and hands on experience as well as time to research, gather resources and support colleagues. (S152)

By contrast, the following comment from an early childhood professional demonstrated a different view, “Should be someone who travels around providing support to new teachers working in LDC to help us keep them” (S86). A position description and role clarity would support a more common understanding of the role and support similar expectations.

The last major theme relates to professional learning (S102, S142). The need for training for the educational leader and early childhood professionals was highlighted. For example, “more time for both myself in my role and my co-educator. Some paid professional development time. Some guidance over possible resources eg [sic] online” (S230). Another asked for: “Further
training and development, support and ongoing mentoring to assist with the role and its duties” (S157). Another respondent summed up many of the issues by noting that they needed: “Additional time for EL, additional time for staff to meet with EL, role clarity, training, emphasis on collaboration, support, not directing [sic]” (S80).

**Discussion**

These responses, with their focus on time, role clarity, and training, suggest a narrow view of what is needed to create quality outcomes, with very little attention from respondents being directed towards the competency and personal drivers outlined in the literature in Chapter 3 of this study. In addition, no suggestions were made about training specifically focused on change principles or leadership skills. Furthermore, there was a perceived lack of consideration of processes that take account of individual contexts.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings of the survey administered within Phase One of the study. It was developed to explore and gain a broad understanding about the educational leader role. Educational leaders indicated that they were most likely to have been appointed to the role after being requested to do so by management, and indicate their responsibilities were mostly enacted in their own time, before or after work.

Reflecting with staff, coaching, and supporting the development of programs were the top three duties identified as being undertaken by the educational leader. The majority of educational leaders and early childhood professionals perceived the role of educational leader to be of benefit and to have impact. However, educational leaders perceived a higher level of benefit and impact in some areas than early childhood professionals.

Dominant themes emerging from qualitative comments included the need for structural supports for the role, especially time, with the lack of non-contact time for both the educational leader and early childhood professional being perceived as part of the reason why the role of
educational leader was not working as well as it could. The findings also suggest a significant difference in relation to perceptions about who benefits from the educational leader role, with the early childhood professionals perceiving management benefits. This notion will be explored further in the next chapter. In spite of this, findings suggest that the educational leader role is a beneficial one, with leaders enacting numerous leadership actions that impact upon practice. However, the data also reveal that enactment of the role often relies on an educational leader’s goodwill, which takes a personal toll. Further, it appears that little attention is currently being provided towards ensuring that individuals in the role have the appropriate competency and personal drivers to manage the work, including high-level leadership skills; or in their absence, a commitment to investing in professional learning to support ongoing capability building including mentoring skills. Finally, little or no evidence of a focus on effective change leadership is evident in the data analysed in this phase. It seems to suggest that the system, structures, processes and orientations to support leadership and change leadership may be insufficient, putting at risk the sustainability of change efforts already completed.

In the following chapter, the interview data will be used to provide a more detailed examination of some of these issues and to get a clearer and more personal picture of these challenges at the local level.
Chapter Six: Phase Two Findings and Discussion

Phase Two of this research was designed to complement and build upon the findings emerging from Phase One by examining and discussing the lived experiences of a set of key informants. Totalling 22 ECEC professionals in all, these key informants were selected using a specific process (refer to page 136). They included both educational leaders and early childhood professionals and represent all service types and most states and territories. In this phase, key informants participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews involving a core set of questions, together with additional individualised questions that were aimed at seeking further clarification in relation to the individual’s survey responses. An inductive process of analysing the interview data was then used and involved categorisation and development of themes. To support this process, QSR’s NVivo 11 software was utilised.

In this chapter, key informants are identified through the use of pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, while their respective service types are also indicated. The following abbreviations will be applied throughout this chapter: long day care (LDC); kindergarten (Kindy); family day care (FDC); and Preschool (Pre). As in the previous two chapters, the abbreviations EDL (educational leader) and ECP (early childhood professional) are used in the presentation of tables. The chapter begins by providing a detailed profile of the key informants.

Key Informants’ Demographics and an Introduction to their Lived Experience

The 22 key informants who participated in Phase Two of this study were employed in a variety of approved ECEC services including long day care, kindergarten, family day care and preschool, and included 16 educational leaders and six early childhood professionals. Most states and territories were represented in this phase, apart from Northern Territory (with no willing participant identified in Phase One), or Tasmania (as the single volunteer was not able to be
contacted). Reflective of the sector in general, key informants in Phase Two were all female (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

Table 20 provides an overview of the demographic background of the key informants.

Table 20

*Demographic Background of Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>EdL (%)</th>
<th>ECP (%)</th>
<th>Total of respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n = 16</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
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<td>40-49</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Profiles of early childhood professionals**

Table 21 presents profile summaries of the key informants who identified as early childhood professionals. These individuals only represent two service types: long day care and kindergarten. The tables include: key informants’ pseudonyms and survey identification numbers, their state or territory, qualifications, number of years’ experience working in ECEC, service type, service governance, and positional roles held within each service.
Table 21.

**Key Informants’ Profiles, Early Childhood Professionals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key informant</th>
<th>State / Territory</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Service type</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Positions held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah (S107)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree 3 years</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>Early childhood professional Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peta (S40)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree 3 years; studying a Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Government service</td>
<td>Early childhood professional Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cate (S35)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Diploma in Early Childhood (UK)</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private not-for profit</td>
<td>Early childhood professional, educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne (S73)</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), 4 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Early childhood professional, teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tollie (S46)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education, 4 years</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>Early childhood professional, director and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley (S79)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), 3 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Early childhood professional - teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * Educational leader has delegated some of the perceived educational leader duties and tasks to this role and provided the role a different title. ** This service has developed and implemented a different model of leading learning, an educational leader team rather than the appointment of one person.

Table 21 reveals that the early childhood professionals who participated in this phase (*n* = 6) each had between 10 – 35 years’ experience, with an average of 23.5 years. The majority of these held a Bachelor degree (*n* = 5), with one key informant holding a Diploma in Early Childhood obtained from the United Kingdom. As indicated and detailed in Chapter 5, the experience and qualifications of these informants are higher than the sector average (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).
To share further insight about each of these early childhood professionals, a short profile is provided. A similar approach is also applied in the next section for educational leaders. Notably, the various key informants (both early childhood professionals and educational leaders) provided differing levels of detail and displayed varying degrees of passion when sharing their experiences during interviews. As a result, some key informants’ comments feature more heavily, and their profiles are more detailed than others.

Sarah, Long day care

Sarah is a long-standing staff member, employed at this long day care service since it opened 20 years ago. At the start of our discussion, Sarah was not sure whether she was or was not the educational leader. As the interview progressed, she suggested that she was not the educational leader (from a legislative perspective), however felt that she enacts the duties of educational leadership and felt this explained why she was uncertain as to whether she was or was not the educational leader. Sarah detailed how her leadership duties involved such things as mentoring to “much younger and inexperienced educators”, and she shared how she looked forward to a new change in responsibilities that allowed her to focus on projects rather than managing a permanent room. The service is privately owned by former teachers who she added had an active role in the operations and leadership of the service. She stated that the owner is a visionary ‘big ideas’ person, and she was the one who works out the detail of how to do it. Sarah indicated that although the owner of the service developed the vision, all members of staff are welcome to join discussions and have input into decision-making.

Peta, Long day care

When appointed as service director, Peta was informed that the educational leader would report to her. However, the reporting hierarchy soon changed with both the service director and educational leader being considered at the same level and required to report to an off-site general
manager. Peta indicated that no support was provided for this new organisational structure and explained how the tension and friction quickly mounted as each person tried to understand their role and each other’s, noting, “I don’t understand how they expect a director to function if you can’t talk to your team”. Peta, a university qualified and highly experienced teacher (35 years’ experience), shared a story to indicate how the roles were not working. She explained that when addressing a health and safety issue within her service, the action taken was not welcomed by the educational leader who claimed, “No, that’s my domain. It’s up to me to determine what’s happening in the room in the program”. Peta revealed, “I think we all found it very difficult” and so eventually elected to resign. Peta reflected on her experience, stating, “In terms of this research, I thought, why have I gone – so feeling like my claws have come out in terms of educational leader”? For Peta, the separation of roles at the same level led to conflict. She suggested that there needed to be shared responsibility, authority, and accountability.

_Cate, Long day care_

Cate is a highly experienced early childhood professional (29 years’ experience). She joked that she was “a bit of a dinosaur”, as she obtained her Diploma qualification a long time ago. Cate shared details about the vast array of professional learning opportunities she had developed and provided to the service. She also wanted to share insight into the unique educational leadership model their service had created. Cate was not the educational leader and held a different title; however, her position was responsible for many of the duties and responsibilities that other services have assigned to the educational leader. The educational leader (also the service director) supported educators with programming and planning, while Cate assisted educators to follow these tasks through, something she suggested the educational leader was unable to achieve due to the demands of her other responsibilities. Cate’s week involved 2 days mentoring (doing educational leader tasks) and 3 days working as a floater (covering rostered days off and annual leave). Cate felt this use of time provided opportunity to be more connected to everyday practices of staff,
noting, “I see people all the time”, adding, “can catch somebody in the moment”. In summing up her role, Cate suggested, “It’s really a go-to person, and sort of to back them up. But also, to drive learning as well”.

Suzanne, Long day care

Suzanne is an early childhood professional working in the toddlers’ room. Her experience brought a unique perspective, as Suzanne had worked in two services under two very different models of educational leadership. She compared and contrasted the two different experiences, sharing her opinions and beliefs about the leadership, the learning, and how this influenced her practice. She was very clear about her preference for the first leadership model saying: “[I] learnt heaps”. In this model, the educational leader was employed and worked part-time (3 days) in the service, this being her only role. Suzanne explained how the educational leader provided guidance and presented information and readings. However, Suzanne was quick to point out that not all people liked this involvement from the educational leader, noting that some people just want to “get their 20 bucks and go home”, suggesting for some, “It’s a job”. In contrast, Suzanne shared her current experience, and tried to explain the difference, stating: “…it’s a really difficult role for her [educational leader] because she does so many things in the centre. I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s not clear as to what she’s meant to do as educational leader, to be honest”. In her current service, the educational leader was employed as a part-time coordinator (2 days), and on the other days (3 days), a member titled a “float” who was responsible for replacing early childhood professionals who were away or had non-contact time (not working with children for a period of time to enable them to participate in activities such as planning and preparation activities).

Tollie, Kindergarten

Tollie is director and teacher at a large (more than 60 children per day) service. Her teaching duties involve working 3 days a week teaching young children, and the other 2 days completing tasks required as director. The kindergarten has implemented their own unique model
for the role of educational leader, having an educational leadership team rather than appointing just one person to this role. The decision to apply this model transpired after considerable conversation, reflection and a desire to reflect the kindergarten’s long-standing collaborative approach. All members of staff are welcome to join this leadership team and together make decisions through joint collaboration and processes. Each member of this leadership team is responsible for leading different projects based on interests and capability.

Lesley, Kindergarten

Lesley is a part-time kindergarten teacher who had recently resigned from her service due to conflict with the educational leader. Lesley seemed conflicted about this role, at one point suggesting the role is not needed in kindergarten: “In a kindergarten we’re peers, we’re equals; there’s no one… she’s a teacher, I’m a teacher and we just happen to have different groups of children”. Later she stated, “I suppose in a kinder there should be that educational leadership being the one person that makes sure all that happens”. However, Lesley was much clearer with her belief that this role is more suitable in long day care because, “often the educational leader is the director of the centre who is managing everybody anyway”. Lesley had returned from maternity leave to find her colleague, who she referred to as her “equal”, had volunteered for the position of educational leader. Lesley explained that she was not provided information or oriented to this role, and felt she had little understanding of it. Lesley suggested she found the staffing arrangement a challenge, “I find it hard when she’s, I guess it’s the equalness [sic] thing. She’s my peer but she, as educational leader does … she then come and say well why are you doing this way…”. Throughout the interview Lesley suggested that she and the educational leader had different shared understandings and it was due to the educational leader’s poor communication and rudeness that she could no longer work at the service.
Profiles of educational leaders

The previous section has provided detail about the early childhood professionals involved in Phase Two. The focus will now turn to educational leaders. The same format is used here in Table 22. A discussion of the table is offered next, followed by individual profiles, organised by service type.

Table 22.

Key Informants’ Profiles, Educational Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informant</th>
<th>State / Territory</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Service Governance</th>
<th>Positions Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tina (S191)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), 3 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca (S202)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma of Children’s Services (Child Care)</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie (S9)</td>
<td>NSW/ACT</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree (pass) 3 years</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belinda (S216)</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Children’s Services (3 years); Advanced diploma of Children’s Services (Child Care); Certificate III in Montessori Studies</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>Long day care</td>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella (S160)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, co-director and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melindi (S231)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annesley (S16)</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree 4 years</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Highest Degree Earned</td>
<td>Center Type</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Kindergarten/Primary</td>
<td>Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, director and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonja</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education 4 years</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader and director and teacher of children aged 3 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, and teacher of children aged 4 years less than 5 years *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>NSW / ACT</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader, and lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma; and Diploma of Children’s Services (Child Care)</td>
<td>Kindy</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader and coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education, 4 years</td>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>NSW / ACT</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (honours), 4 years</td>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Private-not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader and coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>NSW / ACT</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), 4 years</td>
<td>Family day care</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>Educational leader only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * These services are governed by a community-based parent/family committee.

Of the educational leader informants \((n = 16)\) in this phase of the study, 11 were aged 40 years and over. This demographic reflects the 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census (Department of Education and Training, 2014, p. 10) which found that “almost two thirds of the workers in preschools (65.5%) and family day care services (62.8%) were aged 40 and over”.

Like the early childhood professional key informants, educational leaders were mostly university degree holders, \((n = 14)\), with only two key informants stating they held a vocational education and training qualification in the form of an advanced diploma. This figure is more than
five times higher than the sector average (Department of Education and Training, 2014), with this most likely influenced by the high number of key informants working in kindergartens or preschools. In these service types, there is a requirement for educators to hold an early childhood university degree. Interestingly, a higher than average number of educational leaders working in long day care also held a bachelor qualification - double the sector norm (Department of Education and Training, 2014).

The number of years of experience held by educational leaders from Phase Two working in the ECEC profession, ranged from 4 to 35 years. This represents a total of 365 years of combined experience and an average of 22.81 years. Such a level of experience is opposite to the 2014 Workforce Census (Department of Education and Training, 2014) which identified that the majority of ECEC employees working in both long day care and family day care had more than 10 years tenure.

A profile for each of the Phase Two educational leaders is now provided. These are organised by service types, commencing with those working in the long day care sector.

Tina, Long day care

In the interview, Tina suggested that in her role of director she has always been the educational leader of the service, emphasising, “it’s what we’ve been doing for the last 20 years!” Tina’s service was one of few that incorporated what is referred to as distributed leadership, with Tina suggesting that as part of her role she takes the time to find out what her staff are good at, so that they can then lead specific projects. She considered her role as someone to, “nurture every member of staff into becoming a leader in their own way in what sits with their strengths, abilities and stuff like that”.

Rebecca, Long day care

Rebecca is the educational leader and non-contact director of a very large (7-room) service. Within the interview Rebecca explained that she had 28 staff and expressed the view that even
before the introduction of the educational leader role she was “already busy”. She also provided a glimpse of the complexity of her role suggesting, “I’m wearing about 25 hats”. Rebecca was highly critical of the lack of support for the educational leader, noting that while she understands the need to professionalise the sector, the role should have come with remuneration to support the new expectations, and points the finger to government, stating “they [government] should have paid – made it a paid position”. She also seemed to use a more abrupt tone when she spoke about the additional expenditure related to the implementation of this role, stating, “it’s employing more people to take up what I used to do so I can do the role and I do. I mean I don’t want to sound all negative about it but that’s just the fact”. Rebecca was also forthcoming in stating she doesn’t think she is the right person for the educational leader role, as she suggests she has not kept up-to-date with current early childhood theory. However, she added that she would “gladly go and do a course or something that would help…”

Rosie, Long day care

Rosie is an educational leader and director employed for somewhere between 9–12 years (she was unsure). Rosie’s service is part of a large not-for-profit organisation that she suggested has little involvement in the service operations. She is supported by an administration person, and somebody to do staff wages. Rosie felt that without the support of her whole service team, the educational leader role would have been all too encompassing along with being director, as it was far more complex than what she originally had perceived. Rosie suggested that the educational leader role was what she was doing as service director, however with a lot more in-depth focus. She added that she thought the requirement of having an educational leader role was a bit odd – that it was “… almost like a double thing”, confirming her view that she sees the role as part of the existing director role. Notably, when Rosie’s service was reviewed through the National Assessment and Rating regulatory process, Rosie detailed how she was challenged by the Assessor
as to why and how she could do both roles. Rosie suggested that until that point in time, she hadn’t really thought about being both service director and educational leader.

*Belinda, Long day care*

Belinda works 3 days per week job sharing the role of educational leader with the director (also the owner) and is employed the other days in higher education. Belinda does not have a teaching qualification but suggests she has extensive practical experience working with young children. She sees the role of educational leader as one “… to guide, challenge and transform educators’ understanding about children and the child’s world-view”. She also expressed the view that it was her role to motivate early childhood professionals to see their role as a vocation and not just as a job.

*Stella, Kindergarten*

Stella is the co-director, teacher, and educational leader. Within the interview, Stella provided details about her beliefs and opinions on the value of the educational leader role. She recalled “the learning curve” she had taken since accepting this role, including the experience of working through a staffing issue that required a high degree of leadership and management. She described her initial struggles with leadership and highlighted how difficult this role was, particularly at the start when she did not understand the role. However, since then she reported that she kept her motivation to lead by keeping a constant focus on children, good practice, and bringing practice back to the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009a).

*Melindi, Kindergarten*

Melindi is an educational leader and service director in Queensland, with the service managed by a parent volunteer committee. She advised that to get the work of the educational leader completed, she works on her day off each fortnight. At the beginning of the interview Melindi shared how she felt the purpose of the educational leader role was working together to
“achieve a greater excellence”. However, during the interview Melindi also reported resistance from her colleagues, suggesting that her leadership was perceived by peers as her acting more like a “boss than associate or colleague”. She expressed a feeling of being isolated in this role.

Annesley, Kindergarten

Annesley is an experienced early childhood teacher (28 years), director and educational leader. When asked about the role of the educational leader, she paused and expressed, “I don’t know”, adding, that she had not read anything about it, or discussed it at any point in time with anyone else. However, Annesley had insight into what this role might be about and suggested that she was already enacting strong pedagogical leadership “I probably have always had the role of directing the curriculum and sharing the curriculum with the assistant. Annesley explained in detail how she felt her practice had changed a decade before, due to earlier preschool curriculum guidelines in Queensland. Annesley could see the benefit of having an educational leader in long day care, suggesting, “the whole thing is aimed at child care rather than us” but could not understand the rationale for this in a single unit kindergarten, suggesting that in a single unit kindergarten the role of guiding pedagogy would be undertaken by the directors (in her case, the only teacher). When asked about double unit kindergartens she added, “my understanding in double units is that unless there’s a problem, that the teachers do their own thing in their own room”.

Maria, Kindergarten

Maria is a teacher, director, and educational leader and seemed frustrated in her role, stating, “I feel I have no backing”, and quickly added, “in reality there’s no leadership”. When I asked for her opinion about the educational leader role, she stated, “Well, it means nothing in practical terms”. She went further to explain her comment by adding that she doesn’t lead, she is a colleague, and feels that she and her colleagues are supposed to work as a team. Furthermore, Maria suggested that during her appointment, there was “no discussion… or written down
[information] about what boundaries there would be or anything” and added, “It’s very murky”. Maria felt that she was appointed to the educational leader role only because they were required to appoint one. Trying to understand Maria’s work context, it appears that she works part time with children aged four years. Another teacher works part-time in another classroom. She highlighted that when the position in the other room became available, she applied but was unsuccessful as the parent committee wanted two teachers. This outcome seemed to be another barrier to Maria leading, with Maria perceiving that any challenges towards the other teacher would be seen negatively by the committee. She thinks they might say, “because Maria didn’t get the job, she wants everything her way”. When asked about the educational leader role, Maria suggested, “There’s no time, there’s no inclination, there’s no support”.

**Jane, Kindergarten**

Jane works part-time and holds the positional roles of teacher, director, and educational leader. Jane suggested, “I don’t think I am, necessarily, a good or the best person to be the educational leader”. She added that the role “stresses me out and worries me”. She commented that she received no support towards this role and does not have a clear understanding of it. However, her comments suggested the opposite. When asked about the purpose of the role she suggested, “to lead and guide them”, and added “programming, planning and providing direction”. This conflict of ideas continued, especially towards professional learning related to this role. At first, Jane stated she was not supported, and was provided no professional learning. But later, detailed professional development opportunities she had attended including a course on leadership. As the interview progressed and Jane reflected more about the role educational leader, she confided that, “I probably haven’t worried and taken it [the educational leader role] seriously because I don’t really feel the need to as no-one’s chasing me up about it”.
**Sonja, Kindergarten**

Sonja is a teacher and educational leader and was quick to state at the beginning of the interview that at her service they work very much as a team. All the teachers collaborate on the overall plan, provide direction about the planning process, and how they will present their curriculum to parents. While Sonja emphasised the strong collaboration in her service, she also added that she (as educational leader) makes the final decision – “simply because somebody has to”! Again, she repeated this point “someone has to make the final decision”. Through the course of the interview, Sonja mentioned the lack of support and direction she had received for this educational leader role, indicating, “it’s really being – my own perceptions of what it is”. Despite this experience, Sonja spoke favourably about the benefits of the role, pointing out “it does bring pedagogy to the forefront” and suggested “it raises the bar a little more”.

**Leigh, Kindergarten**

Leigh held the positional roles of teacher, and educational leader, which in her service also included the operations. Leigh expressed concerns about her workload stating, “you’re the person that does everything” and feels “there’s so much workload that’s put onto you”. This workload seemed to be exasperated by Leigh “being left everything to do”. Leigh also added that there was conflict with one particular staff member, who would not follow her leadership (or management), and she felt that this conflict was fuelled by practice issues, which were underpinned by having different values and beliefs guiding their practice. Leigh was quite direct about this person stating, “…I can’t manage a person who doesn’t want to be managed by me!”

**Sam, Preschool**

Sam is a teacher and educational leader and was eager to talk with me and share her experiences. However, she also emphasised that when sharing her understanding of the educational leader role, she could only comment from her context, acknowledging “the role of educational leader would be enacted differently in different contexts”. Sam appeared to be confident and
recognised the importance of relationship in ECEC leadership stating, “relationships have a strong impact on how others would view your role”. She also appeared to have much knowledge of leadership. Upon accepting the role as educational leader, Sam immediately involved all members of the service in revision of the service philosophy and reflection on current practice to ensure alignment. This wasn’t necessarily an easy job, particularly as one parent did not agree to subsequent changes made. Sam demonstrated strong advocacy through her involvement in a local early childhood professional network group and provided support to other service staff struggling with the implementation of this role.

Susan, Family day care

Susan is a family day care coordinator and educational leader. Susan is highly experienced (23 years) and knowledgeable. She did her own research to find out about the educational leader role, after receiving no discussion or support (when first implemented) by her organisation. Susan felt that the purpose of this role was to mainly assist educators to understand all of the requirements related to the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a), which she added was part of her family day care coordinator role anyway. She suggested that she took on the position of educational leader because she was the only full-time person, but, indicated that this was probably appropriate given she is also a teacher and has extensive experience.

Anna, Family day care

Anna was employed as the educational leader (only positional role) in a large family day care scheme. On the day of her interview she announced to me, it would be her last day at the scheme, and she expressed how happy she was with her decision to leave. When I enquired about the benefit of the educational leader role, it quickly became apparent that she felt no benefit for herself in this role, and explained:

None (laughed). No, I don’t get any financial benefit out of it and in regard to my actual job description [it] has not changed: I’m still in my job description regarded as a coordinator. So, I didn’t get anything in terms of recognition for the role.
Anna felt that her role was about finding prospective educators, understanding their training needs in regard to the education component and then providing training particularly focused on documenting children’s learning, and providing experiences to extend learning.

*Liz, Family day care*

Liz is employed as service director and educational leader in a large family day care scheme. Liz highlighted early in the interview that she had extensive experience (35 years) working in this sector. When asked whether the educational leader role was the same or different from that of coordinator, she emphasised different, adding that the role focused on the relational part, and on education. In her role, she has been developing resources, reviewing reports and summarising the findings, and reviewing training. She felt the role was really about taking away the administrative burden and focusing on intentional teaching. Liz highlighted that although all the educators in her scheme were longstanding holders of qualifications, the new regulatory changes had not been easy for her carers to adopt, particularly as most spoke Arabic and Vietnamese, and reading and writing English was extremely difficult.

*Nancy, Family day care*

Nancy is the educational leader working in a large scheme. She was passionate and excited to talk with me, using lots of descriptive and positive words to describe her work such as “we’re really lucky” and “I feel really blessed”. She felt the role of educational leader in family day care was “super important”, particularly given people worked in isolation in their own homes. Nancy was one of the few in this research phase to talk in depth about her interest in leadership and had invested much time researching and studying the topic. Nancy detailed how she was collaborating with a colleague to develop some training about different models of leadership which they intended to share within an FDC network.
This section has introduced the early childhood professionals and educational leaders who participated in Phase Two as key informants. In the sections that follow, the data derived from these key informants are outlined and discussed, organised in a similar structure to that of Chapter 5: appointment to the educational leader role, enactment of leadership, and perceived benefits of role.

**Appointment to the Educational Leader Role**

The following topics are examined in this section: process of appointment; purpose of the role; new or existing role; perceived identity and beliefs about the role; and training, support and mentoring provided.

**Process of appointment**

This section relates to the first research sub-question:

*Who is the educational leader in early childhood education and care services and how is this determined?*

The key informants were asked to share their perceptions of how the educational leader was appointed within their service. Similar to the findings outlined in Chapter 5, key informants’ responses indicated that there was no typical decision or process for the appointment of this role.

A range of appointment methods occurred within long day care, with key informants sharing their experiences, such as volunteering or being required/expected to undertake the role, just to highlight a couple. Belinda (LDC, EdL) explained, “I just put my hand up and said, I’ll do that if you like”. By contrast, Rebecca (LDC, EdL) had a much different experience, suggesting she was told to “read what an Educational Leader is and just do it”.

The interviews with several people employed in kindergartens and preschool revealed various factors underpinning the appointment decision-making process. Similar to other accounts provided from long day care, some key informants working in kindergartens suggested that little thought had been given to their process of appointment or to what the appointment would entail.
For example, Jane (Kindy, EdL) recalled her appointment process by explaining that the role of the “educational leader was kind of just slapped upon me, which I agreed to because it didn’t seem like a big deal.” Stella (Kindy, EdL) was also concerned that the process did not seem to be “the best way to handle it [the appointment process]”, adding:

> When it was legislated that’s when it went to our [name removed] but then our organisation obviously worked out that it just wasn’t happening … So their quick fix was basically to give it to services, but without due consideration of what that might mean.

In contrast, there are a few key informants employed in kindergartens who indicate that their appointment decisions were influenced by contextual factors occurring within their service. In her interview, Annesley (EdL), the teacher of a single unit kindergarten employing just one teacher and one educator, explained how she self-appointed herself, assuming she would have to assume the role because she was the only teacher.

Another local contextual factor influencing appointment decisions were also influenced by the employment status of staff, such as whether they were full or part-time. Lesley (Kindy, ECP) noting their decision said, “We all work part time, none of us work full time but she [the selected leader] is there most days”.

Significantly, four of the seven educational leaders employed in kindergarten services spoke at length about a feeling of being forced into taking the position of educational leader and then receiving little or no support afterwards. Maria (EdL) explained:

> I was appointed the educational leader of the preschool, because it’s a requirement…there was no discussion as to what my role would be or what the expectations of my employer was. There was nothing discussed or written down.

A different appointment process unique to this phase was detailed by Stella and Sam (EdLs from a larger kindergarten and preschool, respectively – both services employing more than one teacher). They explained similar decision-making processes, which involved one teacher being appointed as the nominated supervisor (a positional management role - often the service director),
and the other as the educational leader, which suggests that the workload was shared. However, it is important to note that each of these positional roles are different, with the nominated supervisor role being about compliance with the law, regulations, management and operations, whereas the role of an educational leader is about the leadership of pedagogy and practice. In each case, no discussions were conducted to determine who may have been better suited to these roles.

All of the four key informants employed within family day-care mentioned different decisions and reasons for their appointment. These included volunteering for the position, being recruited for the position, and being appointed based on experience, while Liz (EdL) suggested that nobody else wanted to accept the role. Anna (FDC, EdL) explained that, in her scheme the coordinator at first accepted the role but quickly realised that “it was far too much for her” and requested that Anna (EdL), the service teacher, be appointed to the position because of her qualifications.

These findings in Phase Two are similar to those in the first phase, however the interviews with key informants provided an opportunity to understand more deeply the complexities that have influenced many of the appointment decisions.

**Understanding the purpose of the role**

In Phase One, the findings suggested that almost half of educational leaders did not understand the purpose of the educational leader role. However, somewhat different findings emerged in the interviews, with Melindi (Kindy, EdL) clearly stating that the role was intended to “lift standards”; whilst most others who responded (n = 6) that the purpose of the role was to lead and guide the team. Both comments refer to ECEC practice. Peta (LDC, ECP), an early childhood professional, was more detailed in her commentary, noting that she believed that government, “wanted to bring the focus back … with the zero to five-year olds … that we are educators and that we need a strong pedagogical focus and understanding about what we’re doing and why we’re doing it”. Also realising the role was to focus on quality practice, Rebecca (LDC, EdL) suggested
the role was to support, “deeper knowledge of children and how they learn and what we can do with them and for them”.

Although there seemed to be a general understanding amongst the Phase Two key informants of the purpose of the educational leader role, as was the case within the Phase One findings, many frequently suggested that greater role clarity was urgently needed. Indeed, more than half \( n = 14 \) of all key informants in this phase spoke at length about their concerns in relation to the need for role clarity. For example, Maria (Kindy, EdL) emphasised that “nobody knows what that is or what that’s about”. Similarly, Anna (FDC, EdL) argued that, in her service, a lot of people were “feeling lost and not knowing what to do”, while Belinda (LDC, EdL) warned that “there’s not enough known about the role … there’s no guidelines around the role and the duties and responsibilities”. Another early childhood professional perceived that her service’s educational leader found the role to be, “a difficult role for her … she’s not clear as to what she’s meant to do …” (Suzanne, LDC, ECP).

Based on these responses, it is fair to say that while the key informants have a broad understanding of the purpose of their role, the overall perception of these informants was that, “there isn’t a whole lot of clarity about what the role actually entails” (Sonja, Kindy, EdL). What this apparent contradiction that has emerged in Phase Two seems to suggest is that it is how to enact this role which is unclear. This lack of direction led to some frustrations being expressed by key informants in the interviews, with this one being particularly interesting: “I think the role was pulled out of someone’s bottom” (Rebecca, LDC, EdL).

In the face of this, most key informants \( n = 10 \) were forthcoming in offering suggestions to support future role clarity. Some requested position descriptions, or a list of duties and responsibilities. Others suggested making visits to other services to observe practice and the provision of examples would assist in making it clearer. Sonja (Kindy, EdL) summed this up by
stating, “I think probably a broad description of the role, what its aim is, what its purpose is in the facility, in the centre. Then some specific guidelines about how to fulfil that role.”

**New or existing roles**

Rather than talk about whether key informants were the ‘right person for the educational leader role’, within both phases of this study what emerged were contrasting views about whether the role of educational leader was a new role, or whether the duties and tasks associated with it were already carried out in an existing role, such as that of the principal, director, teacher-in-charge, or family day care coordinator. For example, one group – Annesley and Leigh (Kindy, EdL), Tina and Rosie (LDC, EdL), and Susan (FDC, EdL) – strongly argued that the responsibilities and duties of the educational leader were part of an existing leadership and management role (director). For example, Tina (LDC, EdL) shared her rationale for self-appointment by noting:

> It [the National Quality Standard] doesn’t tell us what we’ve got to do but obviously what would we think that an educational leader does and it was all of those things that I would have done as part of my director’s role.”

By contrast, some key informants – Jane and Melindi (Kindy, EdL) from Queensland and Victoria, and Anna (FDC, EdL) from Queensland – did not consider the educational leader work is to be part of an existing role. In Anna’s view, the existing focus in family day care has been on compliance, health and safety. She suggested, “education probably hasn’t been as big a focus in the past.”

**Identity and beliefs**

Key informants expressed their beliefs about the role in different ways. For example, Sam (Pre, EdL) suggested the role was “a burden”, Leigh (Kindy, EdL) suggested it was perceived by early childhood professionals to be “changing expectations”, Anna (FDC, EdL), on a positive note,
stated the role was seen as “something new”, and Leigh (Kindy, EdL) suggested that the role “means you take on a lot more”. Other beliefs included:

I think it’s a hard role. (Rosie, LDC, EdL)

I think the Educational Leader role is a lonelier life than a director’s role. (Melindi, EdL)

It’s not a nice role. (Melindi, Kindy, EdL)

Once again, the feeling outlined in Phase One that this role was not valued, re-emerged, with the lack of remuneration and better employment conditions again being offered as a justification for this viewpoint. For example, Rebecca (LDC, EdL) made it very clear that the position should be a paid position noting, “if they wanted a position that important they should have paid for it”.

Interestingly, Peta (LDC, ECP), an early childhood professional, made the connection that the position was “almost a voluntary position”. Lesley (Kindy, ECP) summed up the feeling in her kindergarten about the appointment of the educational leader stating, “Nobody else particularly wanted to be the educational leader because it sounded very nondescript and just extra work for not much gain.”

Stella (Kindy, EdL) was one of the few key informants who spoke with passion about the importance of the educational leader role and argued that to provide high-quality education to children, families, and educators, “this [role] had to work well”. Peta (LDC, ECP), however, shared a different perspective about the role and explained that from in her experience, she had observed that the role was considered just a “lovely title” that everyone wanted. Jane (Kindy, EdL) shared a similar viewpoint and stated sharply, “it’s [the role of educational leader] actually just a title.”

The title of “educational leader” was considered important, particularly when no other perceived benefit was on offer. For example, a sense of not being recognised in this role was highlighted by Anna (FDC, EdL), who pointed out in her interview that she was not given the title ‘educational leader’, but, was required to execute the tasks associated with the role: “I didn’t get
anything in terms of recognition for the role”. Worthy of note was that Anna resigned from this service, and the day of her interview was her last day of employment at the service.

Four key informants suggested that the title gave them a sense of responsibility and the right to lead. For example, Sam (Pres, EdL) explained, “[the role] actually gave me a little bit more licence”. Nancy (FDC, EdL) also expressed that she felt “more empowered to try new things” by being appointed to this role. Maria (Kindy, EdL) and Tina (LDC, EdL) shared similar views as Tina, warning that, “putting a label on it [educational leader role] doesn’t mean the people are going to do it [lead] either”. Maria (Kindy, EdL) indicated that to lead would require confronting some of her colleagues, which she was not willing to do, because she felt she held the title but had no authority.

Suzanne (LDC, ECP), an early childhood professional, shared her unique experience providing insight into her lived experience of two different educational leaders from two different services. In the first service, leading learning was highly valued and undertaken by the educational leader, who worked part-time in that role only. The educational leader in the second service had multiple roles, with her main responsibility as educational leader being to check on programs, which was done sporadically. In these examples, Suzanne considered one educational leader was leading learning; whilst the other was ensuring compliance (management), which was not considered by Suzanne as leading learning. On reflection, Suzanne (LDC, ECP) summed up her thoughts stating, “make it a proper role” implying that key elements (time and remuneration) were missing. These thoughts seemed to resonate with other key informants.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) warn of the challenges of breaking down long-standing teaching norms to encourage teacher-leadership. They suggest that teachers, such as Marie (EdL), steer away from assuming responsibilities outside of what they perceive as their teaching duties. In contrast, examples have emerged in the interviews that highlight the leadership generated when key informants commit to leading, even when initially forced into accepting the role. The interview
data indicated some key informants \((n = 5)\) had a strong desire to provide good leadership. Nancy (FDC, EdL) commented, “[What] I’ve been working on is my own strengths and how I can support my educators through my own strengths. That’s been a major one. I’ve really been reflecting on myself as a leader”. Also reflecting deeply about her role, Stella (Kindy, EdL) demonstrated her own commitment to her professional learning and her willingness to lead by detailing:

I’ve joined the [name removed] group, working in joining regional groups to find out things that are happening in our area to best support families and our children. But also, then it’s what do I do with the knowledge to best support the team that I’m working with.

Melindi (Kindy, EdL) demonstrated how her thinking has shifted in terms of understanding the role of educational leader and the growth of her own leadership. She explained her journey:

I really didn’t take it on board at first. I training staff. I just gave them readings and things like that and asked them to do it. But to really do active workshopping and things like that didn’t come for quite a while until I realised do you know what? I’ve got to do this, I’ve got to do a lot more in this role. You can’t just say look oh here’s some really good video links…So that’s what I’ve been trying to do. Really bringing it all back so that it reflects our centres and our relationships.

**Training, support, and mentoring provided to the new appointment**

In contrast to the Phase One findings which suggested that a level of support and training was offered to new appointees, more than half of the key informants interviewed \((n = 12)\) from each service type, and the states and territories represented, commented on the absence of support for the role. Ten informants currently in the role confirmed that they were receiving no support. This is of grave concern as these interviews were undertaken two years after the role was mandated.

Lack of support was identified by key informants as including no or minimal role clarity, guidelines, direction and training about the role of educational leader. When discussing the implementation of this role Liz (FDC, EdL) felt the role was unsuccessfully implemented and added:
It [the educational leader role] was foisted upon everyone, bang, here we go, got to nominate somebody. Wow, yes. There was a lot of infighting about oh, what I’m doing and oh God, I don’t want to do that. I think there was resistance, or people were not sufficiently informed or trained.

Rebecca (LDC, EdL) commented that creating an educational leader role but then giving no training in that area was all “a bit odd.” Stella (Kindy, EdL) said “I just didn’t feel that we got the support from head office.” Maria (Kindy, EdL) agreed there was no support and shared her frustration in receiving unclear information from a not-for-profit consultancy support service when enquiring about the role. Similarly, Susan (FDC, EdL) agreed there was no support, guidance or expectations provided by her organisation to support the implementation of this role. However, like Maria (EdL), she was one of the very few informants who enacted leadership herself and sought external learning opportunities to gain help and clarity, and subsequent assistance forthcoming from a family day care association.

One key informant stated, “I really have no idea what I’m supposed to be doing” and suggested the type of support she needed, “someone to ring, a hotline or someone” (Jane, Kindy, EdL). Sonja (Kindy, EdL) simply wanted: “a broad description of the role and then some guidelines on how to fulfil it [the educational leader role]. Probably a checklist on, you will have achieved your role [if] this, this, and this is happening.” Rebecca (LDC, EdL) suggested mentoring was needed.

Overall, there was a strong expectation that support be provided. Furthermore, key informants identified the type of support they felt would be beneficial. Several key informants suggested mentoring (Jane, and Stella Kindy; Rebecca, LDC; all EdL). Rebecca gave an example of what would be helpful to her: “Someone perhaps to go well yeah, you’ve on the right track Rebecca. You’re doing what you need to be doing to mentor these girls.”

Stella (Kindy, EdL) reflected on her initial support requirements and suggested the help she desired was simply somebody from head office to come to the service and explain the role, and then offer support to her. She expressed how disheartened she had felt left to implement this
role on her own, without support, even though her service was associated with a very large organisation.

Ten key informants indicated they had received support for the implementation of the educational leader role. Leigh (Kindy, EdL) indicated that she had received significant support including participation in a leadership course that she had found valuable stating, “I’d love to go and do it again to be honest. I’d like to go and get more skills.” Further support from consultants at learning events and opportunities to meet and network with other educational leaders was also provided. Leigh explained how these meetings functioned: “It was going through scenarios and how as educational leader – so it was more about getting together as a group and going through together and trying to give some advice on how to look at something or how you would do it.”

Leigh said, “They’re [her organisation] working as hard as they can on helping us.” However, similar to many other key informants, Leigh explained that when the role was introduced there was no support and it had only been provided recently – several years after commencement. Stella (Kindy, EdL) shared a similar story, saying that she attended a conference organised by her organisation seventeen months after the role had been mandated. She explained, “until then I really didn’t know what I was doing”. This delay in the provision of support was also emphasised by three other key informants.

Key informants Nancy (FDC, EdL), Anna (FDC, EdL), Susan (FDC, EdL), Sam (Pre, EdL), highlighted the value of learning from others. Network meetings, often organised by a service’s organisation, affiliated association or local network, brought people together to support one another and were highly valued by all involved.

Two educational leaders working in family day care described the support they received to implement the role (Anna, Susan, EdL). Anna listed a range of professional learning opportunities in which she participated; and detailed an educational leadership team set up by her association in
Queensland. The team met quarterly as a way of sharing knowledge and lessons learnt. Anna explained:

The first meeting was really around how we saw the educational leadership role and how that works for our service and basically just talking to each other about getting a bit more information about our services and how they operate.

According to Anna, this established community of learners has become more sophisticated over time, sharing knowledge about what each of the members do as educational leaders, and arranging professional development. Other family day care schemes have employed consultants to work with leaders, to reflect on the role, and review how the role had been implemented.

Susan mentioned the utilisation of resources provided by government to support the implementation of the role. Susan explained, “The government put [a] podcast series on educational leadership [onto the intranet], so I watched those as well but there really isn’t any guide there to say these are the sort of things that you can do”.

Discussion

What is apparent from the findings of both the survey and the Phase Two interviews is that, as Rouse and Spradbury (2016) noted, a range of processes were used to appoint educational leaders, with some informants feeling they had no choice but to take up the role, whilst others were unwilling to take it up. However, some educational leaders in both phases indicated that they embraced the opportunity for leadership and had volunteered for the role.

What this phase contributed however, was a deeper understanding of the appointment processes used for the educational leader role, highlighting the fact that services applied different strategies for several reasons. A novel approach to appointment of an educational leader revealed in the interviews, involved sharing the workload between a teacher nominated supervisor, and an educational leader. This egalitarian way of sharing the workload disregards considerations of recruiting the most suitable person to lead (Fixsen & Blase, 2008). Instead, it seems to suggest a
focus on needing to be fair and nice, a notion that has emerged in earlier ECEC research (Grarock & Morrissey, 2013; Hard, 2005). Being relationship focused is considered a necessary disposition of leaders in ECEC (Davitt & Ryder, 2018). However, knowledge of leadership and ongoing support are also needed so that leaders are able to find a balance and lead effectively while still being relationship-focused. This is currently not an easy fit. Many examples throughout this study have highlighted the use of a more traditional top-down leadership approaches to the role of educational leader, rather than approaches that value others and include them.

A reliance on hierarchical forms of leadership, often transacted through a single person, was observed as leadership being about “I”, “I do”, or “I allow”, rather than the collective. There was also a subtle undertone of power and control, as emerging from experiences shared by Leigh (Kindy, EdL):

I have a co-worker who I feel doesn't respect me as an educational leader and will fight me on everything I bring up…. So, I find that really difficult. Majority of staff here respect me as an educational leader, but I feel one doesn't and if it doesn't go her way, then she fights me on it and for some reason she always seems to win. So, I'm at the point of where I just, I don't know how to put this nicely, I don't care anymore, so I'm just going to be a bit more tough this year.

This staff member requires a lot of pandering and wants someone to tell her that she's doing a good job every day. I'm a person that if I don't tell you you're not doing a good job it means you're doing fine. I don't believe I need to tell someone that's in the field a lot longer than I've been, and is a lot older than I am, that they're doing a good job every day. My other staff members are like well if you don't tell us we know we're doing a good job.

In contrast, Jane and Maria (Kindy, EdL) felt they needed to have formal authority before they had the identity to lead. These findings resonate with earlier research (Grarock & Morrissey, 2013; Sims et al., 2017) which found that a formal title or authority is necessary for teachers to gain the sense of professional identity that enables leadership. Another factor considered necessary for strong leadership is self-belief, which may be more essential for successful leadership than an actual appointment (Waniganayake, Rodd, & Gibbs, 2015). These two kindergarten-based key informants did not view themselves as leaders without having formal authority. This not only
highlights their limited understanding of leadership but also provides some indication of the styles of leadership that might be expected from these educational leaders.

Time to enact leadership and remuneration for effort, considered important to frame professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Ho & Tikly, 2012), were absent in this study. Educational leaders were appointed with limited or no reward other than the perceived motivation of moral purpose (quality educational programs and practice leading to quality ECEC and improved outcomes for children) (Fullan, 2003a, 2005c). In both research phases this was raised as an issue, with almost half of the key informants noting this concept (Ann, FDC, Edl; Jane Kindy, EdL; Stella, Kindy, EdL; Maria, Kindy, EdL; Lesley, Kindy, ECP; and Rebecca, LDC, EdL; Belinda, LCD, EdL; Peta, LDC, ECP; Suzanne, LDC, ECP). This lack of benefit, as well as the negative perceptions held by several key informants who indicated this role was a burden, may negatively add to further workforce issues, that include high staff turn-over and poor identity (Watt et al., 2012).

The findings from the interviews support earlier research conducted by Fleet et al. (2015), which found that approximately one-third of respondents reported the roles and responsibilities of the educational leader to be enacted in other roles, predominantly that of the director. Although the response rates between the two studies were different, what was common was the fact that some service directors enacted educational leadership as traditionally part of their role, while others did not; indicating in some services an absence of educational leadership. Although a positional role does not guarantee leadership (Yukl, 2006), the findings also provide some evidence and justification for the government’s decision to formalise the role of educational leader, in an attempt to focus and prioritise attention to educational leadership within ECEC services.

The findings in Phase Two suggest a lack of leadership at various levels of the ECEC system, including government, the early childhood sector, organisations, services and even amongst early childhood professionals themselves. As such, it appears that since mandating the
educational leader role, there has been insufficient investment to support this systemic change. Change is not an event but a process, that involves ongoing decisions, actions, corrections and engagement at all levels (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fullan, 2007a; Metz, Naom, Halle, & Bartley, 2015). Simply mandating a role is not sufficient for sustainable change and is inadequate for providing the necessary quality leadership and practice that research has demonstrated can influence children’s learning and outcomes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).

From the accounts within this section, fewer than half of newly appointed educational leaders received high levels of support, and for many, support was received too late. More than half of the key informants did not receive support, training or guidance towards the educational leader role and this absence created much confusion, anguish and in some cases, a significant barrier to the enactment of leadership.

Of those key informants who engaged in professional learning opportunities to support them in their new role, several (Anna, Nancy, Susan and Sam; EdL) spoke about the benefits of educational leaders coming together to share knowledge and give support to one another. According to key informants these proved to be powerful learning opportunities. Fullan (2005a) described such actions as lateral capacity building and considered learning communities as a potent way to learn (Fullan, 2006b) and support educational change. Australian research in ECEC also suggested that professional learning that was contextualised and in a specific service also highly beneficial (Colmer et al., 2014).

Building the capability of educational leaders through timely, and regular opportunities for professional learning, which includes mentoring is considered an important competency driver (Fixsen, Blase, Naom, & Wallace, 2009; Fixsen & Blase, 2008). This belief was also supported by Australian research in ECEC with findings indicating that teachers’ perceived benefits for children, families and staff when an external consultant acting as critical friend supported a service through an educational change process (Hadley, 2012). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of research
Enactment

In this section, the following topics are examined: duties and tasks enacted by the role of educational leader; capabilities of the educational leader to enact these duties; how and when these tasks are enacted; how beliefs about leadership influence the enactment of leadership, and expectations of the role.

**Duties and tasks enacted by the role of educational leader**

During interviews, most key informants (n = 20) revealed a range of diverse tasks enacted by the educational leader. These tasks were grouped and then categorised into 15 common themes (refer to Appendix J). As was noted in Phase One, the most common themes identified across all service types associated with enactment of the educational leader role related to leading and engaging in professional conversations (n = 14). In the survey this task involved reflecting with educators (86%) and coaching and mentoring early childhood professionals (n = 12; survey 82.6%). It was evident from the tasks completed by educational leaders (as revealed by key informants) that there was a strong relationship between leadership and management (n = 12). This finding is not surprising given similar results in an earlier study by Sims et al. (2017) on the role of the educational leader and affirmed by findings from Phase One (74.4%), with more than half indicating they enact practice management, including checking written programs and
documentation. In the current study, examples of how leadership is interwoven with management tasks included the following comments from educational leaders:

- make the decisions (Leigh, Kindy);
- assess your own coordinators (Liz, FDC);
- market the kindergarten (Sonja, Kindy);
- manage time (Rebecca, LDC); and
- I do go through their programming, I do check it quite often. (Belinda, LDC)

The final task in this list, from Belinda, was typical of comments in this research phase. Peta (LDC, EdL), for example, also suggested that in some parts of the ECEC sector, checking paperwork was common to the role.

Leadership is not isolated to a positional role; however, the appointment and enactment of the role of educational leader appears to have created an element of confusion for some key informants in terms of what portrays a leadership action, as well as who can be a leader. For example, Leigh (Kindy, EdL) explains:

So working with families I’ve been able to sit down and give them information that I’ve learnt at meetings and PDs so I’ve been able to refer them onto services, extend their knowledge on how to parent. Then again, that’s a teacher’s role as well.

Given that the role of educational leader is focused on leading programs and practice, it is reasonable to expect, as Leigh recognized, that some tasks are conducted at times by both educational leaders and early childhood professionals.

The interviews also shed light on the tasks enacted by the educational leader to support the improvement of educational practice. For example, Peta (LDC, EdL), an early childhood professional and director, spoke highly about the educational leader in her service. She detailed how leadership and guidance occurred mostly through conversations with early childhood
professionals, but also involved spending time mentoring in the rooms, breaking down some of the information into practical examples, and providing demonstrations of practice.

Early childhood professionals who experienced mentoring said that it was beneficial. Suzanne (LDC, ECP) described one educational leader she had experienced who motivated the team by providing handouts on new information, talking in-depth about the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a), and supporting early childhood professionals to apply various theories on children’s play and behaviour. For example, an early childhood professional was asked, “have you thought about Howard Garner’s multiple intelligence? Have you thought that this child might actually be learning using…?”

Supporting programs and documentation was considered an important task led by many key informants (n = 11), who also suggested that this meant that at times they were required to challenge early childhood professionals’ existing practices. For example, Rosie (LDC, EdL) explained how her educators were reluctant to do more documentation because they felt that they had completed enough.

Belinda (LDC, EdL) had similar experiences in challenging early childhood professionals’ thinking, often using reflective practice to achieve this: “I do ask them if they’ve reflected on what we’ve been discussing. Then I ask them if they have any further questions or any further thoughts”. Stella (Kindy, EdL) also spoke at length about challenging traditional practices: “Doing the same thing for X amount of years and nothing had changed.”

Sarah (LDC, ECP), an early childhood professional, explained the support provided in her service for staff experiencing practice challenges. She detailed how problems were considered opportunities for learning, describing that the educational leader would “pull that person out and have a friendly chat.” Furthermore, she went on to explain that the person would also be supported with recommendations for literature to read about the topic and given ongoing mentoring support.
An interesting difference between the survey and interview findings, is that in Phase One educational leaders reviewed external learning opportunities and made recommendations to early childhood professionals; whereas in Phase Two, educational leaders more frequently developed and implemented professional learning. This was particularly evident for educational leaders who had been provided an allocation of time to enact the perceived duties of this role. Some educational leaders provided professional learning opportunities for early childhood professionals to build their knowledge and skills. Anna (FDC, EdL) felt her role was about supporting carers to understand their responsibilities in documenting children’s learning and providing experiences to extend learning. She provided training to build this understanding.

Another example of the provision of adult learning experiences was provided by Cate (LDC, ECP), with many of the tasks and responsibilities of the educational leader role held by the service director shared to Cate, such as the implementation of an internal professional learning series. This series, with the aim of building the music repertoire of early childhood professionals, was developed and provided by Cate each Thursday for two and a half months.

Across all service types, key informants (n = 6) detailed how they applied leadership strategies to motivate early childhood professionals and support practice change. Belinda (LDC) explained that she had attended forums that discussed the educational leader role and found that similar issues existed in other services. She added “How do you get staff to see it’s more than playing with children …?” The motivation of early childhood professionals was also identified by Rebecca (LDC, EdL) who felt that her role, in part, was to “ignite a bit of passion about learning.”

Across both Phase One and Phase Two of this study, few participants spoke about supporting the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009a) or about meeting the National Quality Standard (Phase Two, n = 3). Further, within Phase One the survey respondents emphasised a difference of views held by educational leaders and early childhood professionals relating to leadership actions about approved curriculum frameworks, while here in
Phase Two, reference to the frameworks was scarce. The leadership actions completed by the educational leader seemed to be influence by several factors, including capability of the leader, which is discussed next.

**Capability**

The professional capabilities of the person appointed as educational leader appears to have influenced how the role was enacted. These capabilities included their understanding of educational leadership; their knowledge about appropriate early childhood pedagogies and practice; and their values, attributes and dispositions.

The educational leader is required by law to lead the educational program of the service, yet few key informants provided accounts of enacting leadership to develop a collective vision, goals or agreed ways of working. However, only half of the services ($n = 11$) involved in this phase indicated that they had a service philosophy or a service vision. This outcome supports the Phase One findings, where only two participants provided comments about a vision, and early childhood professionals indicated high disagreement to the leadership action statement relating to being involved in the development of a vision.

Fonsén (2013) claimed that one of the dimensions influencing pedagogical leadership is organisational culture and that leadership within a community should be built around shared values. Similarly, Siraj and Manni (2007) in their study of effective leadership in the early years sector found identifying and articulating a collective vision with shared understandings, meanings and goals is a key aspect of leadership. This claim is supported by other research (Robinson et al., 2009; Rodd, 2013a; Waniganayake et al., 2012).

Although vision and philosophy are different, key informants seemed to confuse the nomenclature and used them interchangeably or at times together, as in this case, “We have a philosophy, a collective vision.” (Sarah, LDC, ECP). Whether a vision or a philosophy, it was seen as supporting the early childhood education and care professionals being “on the same page”
A similar perception was held by Liz (FDC, EdL) who indicated that the vision or philosophy helped get everybody, “heading in the same direction” (Liz, FDC, EdL). In two interviews, both Sarah (LDC, ECP) an early childhood professional, and Liz (FDC) an educational leader, stated that the educational leader provided the direction towards this vision and/or philosophy. Maria (Kindy, EdL) provided an important warning when she was asked whether her service had a philosophy, stating:

Yes, there is. All the staff worked on that together. I’ve done a lot of relief and emergency teaching in my year, going a day here, a day there, in lots of different kinders, and I can tell you that everybody has the same sort of philosophy that says we are play-based, we believe in free play for the children, child-centred, all of those terms, yet everybody interprets those terms differently when it comes down to what they actually practise. So it’s one thing to have a nice policy, a nice philosophy, but you have to really get down to the nitty-gritty of saying - I think that basically teachers just like to do what they think is right or comfortable or they’re used to, and there’s very little way of solving this, I don’t think, unless you have support and you have commitment from everybody. The other staff think that they’re doing a great job, we think we’re doing a great job and it’s really hard to merge the two.

When asked about the use of this philosophy, Maria (Kindy, EdL) suggested, “So there isn't any sort of culture, I don't think, of people getting together and saying, okay, this is what I do, this is what you do”. In contrast, some services were guided by a service vision or philosophy and this was seen as beneficial. For example, Sam (Pre, EdL), used the collective review of the vision as a way of challenging staid and uncontested practices.

Turning attention to the curriculum, pedagogical knowledge, and practice skills of the educational leader, the legislation and subsequent information provided by the Australian Children’s Education & Care Authority (refer to Chapter 2) highlights the need for the person in this role to be qualified and experienced. Overall, key informants acknowledge this requirement, and their expectations are that this role will hold current knowledge and experience.

Two key informants, Jane (Kindy, EdL) and Rebecca (LDC, EdL), emphasised a lack of current early childhood knowledge and expressed concern about their appointment to the role educational leader. Rebecca stated, “I mean I did my diploma yonks ago. So, the theories and
things like that – none of that – well not much of that has stayed in my head.” Similarly, Jane recognised that as an educational leader she was most likely expected to lead current evidenced-informed practice. Commentary provided by Jane demonstrated her knowledge gap, “don’t really have our head around programming and planning based around children’s interests.” Sarah (LDC, ECP) gave her perception about the traits needed for the educational leader role, “I think you need to have a lot of early childhood knowledge to run the curriculum”.

Good communication skills were considered necessary for the educational leader role. During interviews, three key informants shared their thoughts and experiences about the importance of good communication by a leader. Jane (Kindy, EdL) an educational leader, considered that she was not the right person to be educational leader as she felt she lacked specific communication skills. Leigh (Kindy, EdL) had a similar belief and expressed her concern by saying “I don’t always have the correct words…I don’t always have the correct lingo to say it nicely. So I will say it as it is”. She went further to add, “It is important to know what you’re talking about, definitely. But I know you need to be able to word it so people agree with you. I don’t have that skill”. From her tone of voice, this seemed to concern her.

From a different perspective, Lesley (ECP) from a Victorian kindergarten also shared her experience of working with an educational leader whom she perceived to have poor communication. She emphasised that the educational leader was a, “lovely person, but not very good at communicating her message and can come across really rude and horrible and can be hard to work with”. In this situation, Lesley considered the professional partnership untenable, and left to work in another kindergarten.

Overall, Phase One and Two had strong similarities in terms of the duties and tasks enacted by the educational leader. Similarities included: leading and or engaging in professional conversations; coaching and mentoring; supporting programs and documentation; organising and or facilitating staff meetings; and managing, administration and operations. Emerging from
comments in both Phase One and Two was the extra responsibility for “researching” new evidence, contemporary practice and information by the leaders for early childhood professionals.

How and when tasks of the educational leader are enacted

Two main themes emerged when considering how and when the tasks of the educational leader role are enacted. The first and most frequently discussed theme related to time and competing work factors.

More than half of the key informants (n = 13) identified issues of time such as a need for time management and no time allocation for the responsibilities and tasks of the educational leader as major constraints to the enactment of leadership. Key informants indicated that it was not uncommon, and indeed seemed expected, that they work outside their rostered shift (e.g., at home on their day off) to complete the tasks perceived as required by the educational leader. Sam (Pre, EdL) suggested, “I do a lot at home too but that’s part of the course [expectation]”. Working long hours seemed normalised, particularly for staff in long day care, with Tina stating that she typically worked 12 hours a day. Peta (LDC) an early childhood professional held the perception of the role as, “somebody who’s willing to give their time for others”.

Overall, the most challenging aspect identified by informants in this phase related to educational leaders working in kindergartens and preschool as educational leaders but at the same time teaching children (and often full time). Maria (EdL) expressed her frustrations in the following statement:

There’s no time, there’s inclination, there’s no support. If the educational leader system was set up with opportunities for people to meet and talk through things as part of their employment, so that it’s not an extra thing that you have to do voluntarily or without pay, then maybe there would [sic] some hope for it.

There was a sense amongst a few of the educational leaders working in kindergarten, that although the role had to fit with other competing demands, the role was valued and they genuinely wanted to afford it the time that they perceived the role deserved (Stella).
Similar concerns were expressed by key informants in family day care. Susan (EdL) spoke with concern about the increased workload with no extra time, “It’s not easy.” Anna (EdL) went further and highlighted that it is not just the extra workload but the logistics, “As educational leader we’ve got about 53-odd educators, so there’s 53 homes out there spread across <name removed> and it’s really difficult for [sic]– I’ve got to go and visit those people individually at their houses”.

In contrast, when an allocation of time was provided for the educational leader to enact duties and tasks, it was considered an enabler of leadership. Out of the 22 key informants interviewed, less than a third (n = 7) had adequate time allocated to enact the duties of the educational leader. However, all seven expressed the positive benefits of having such time allocated.

A few key informants (n = 3) indicated that they negotiated with committees (or their manager) for non-teaching time (referred to as non-contact), to undertake some duties perceived as associated with this role. Sam (Pre, EdL) valued this opportunity and used the time to observe the practices of other early childhood professionals and determine improvement steps. Leigh (Kindy, EdL) expressed the value of having an hour a week to focus on the role.

Key informants revealed that the educational leader role was more likely held by someone who also held another positional role. For example, most educational leaders employed in kindergarten and preschool services (n = 8) identified themselves as also being the director and teacher (n = 6), with only two educational leaders holding the position of educational leader and teacher only. Teachers emphasised that being an educational leader was additional work and came without non-contact teaching time to enact the role.

Both the educational leader role and the teaching role were considered challenging. For example, Stella (Kindy, EdL) and Leigh (Kindy, EdL) worked full-time teaching children. They received no non-contact allocation for the tasks associated with being an educational leader. As Stella explained, “it’s a role that you’ve got to fit in amongst everything else, so then you don’t
even feel like you’re giving it enough time or the time it deserves for what you’re really meant to be doing.” A similar feeling was expressed by Leigh (Kindy, EdL): “I never went into this role to be an educational leader I’ve always wanted to just be a teacher. Being an educational leader, I feel there’s so much work that’s put on you.” Leigh gave insight about her existing role suggesting, “[you are] the person who does everything”.

The complexity of holding multiple positions was not isolated to kindergarten, with Susan (FDC, EdL) suggesting being a coordinator and educational leader was “too much”. In general, this perceived juggling of roles was often viewed as the main barrier to leadership. It was often perceived that the management tasks were prioritised above leading learning (Rebecca, LDC, EdL; Suzanne, LDC, ECP). Furthermore, staff absenteeism often forced educational leaders to redirect their attention to working within rooms to meet staff-to-child ratio requirements (Rebecca, LDC, EdL).

Due to the perception that the educational leader was too busy, Suzanne (LDC, ECP) indicated that in her most recent experience, she would not go to the educational leader for support. Suzanne went further to suggest that the educational leader “doesn’t seem like she owns the role much because she’s so busy”. This theme of needing an allocation of time was dominant in both research phases, with participants suggesting that educational leaders complete many aspects of the role in their own time. It is of no surprise then from Suzanne’s comment above, that she considers the educational leader busy, given the complexity of this role, the numerous duties and tasks being enacted, and with Phase One participants indicating that majority of educational leaders received less than two hours of non-contact time per week to enact this role.

**How beliefs and models of leadership influence enactment**

To understand beliefs about leadership and how these influenced leadership enactment, the following topics will be explored. First, four different models of enactment are presented from four differing services. Then, how educational leaders led others in these services is presented. To
better understand how services supported the role of educational leader, four examples were identified and discussed in-depth. In these examples, local factors have been considered. Although some key informants claimed these practices did not necessarily work, different ways of enacting the role had been considered. The four examples are expanded in the next section.

Educational leader responsibilities shared

Cate (LDC, ECP) was not appointed to the role of educational leader; instead, this role was held by the director, and Cate was given an alternative title (withheld to maintain anonymity) and position. Cate’s position included responsibilities similar to those enacted by many other key informants appointed to the role of educational leader, and she declared that her role was very similar to that of educational leader. According to Cate, the director of her service was “very hands on” and still had a role in supporting the educators with programming and planning. The leadership responsibilities and tasks held by the educational leader appeared to be shared with Cate, whose position was adapted to provide more time and availability to enable her to guide and mentor educators. As she noted:

When you’re a team leader running your own room, you don’t have that time, whereas in the way my role operates now, … I’ve got two days where I’m off the floor to do the mentoring role. Then I’ve got three days where I support the program and also cover people’s ADOs.

Cate noted that this role is currently working well suggesting that:

the reason it works is because I’m in those rooms for those other three days, so I’m an approachable person that I see people all the time. So, a lot of my mentoring also happens in the moment, when we’re working together.

Separate roles, same organisational level

Peta was the director and an early childhood professional in her service, so she was not the educational leader. She provided commentary on her experience as director, with an educational leader employed within the service at the same organisational level with little support, both
reporting to an external general manager. Peta revealed her concern about how this structure “became quite divided” and created tension over who was responsible for particular roles and responsibilities. Her comment provides insight into her personal struggle with the changing roles within ECE and expectations. It highlights the importance of an educational leadership focus.

So then I think in terms of focusing again on what we’re actually doing in terms of philosophy, in terms of what our practice is, what our hopes and desires for children are, our relationships with families and the potential there for that role if it was allowed to be a proper role, to be able to focus on that entirely would be awesome. I think the sad thing is what I’ve noticed over the years, being fairly long in the tooth, but as a director in the past, you’re able to incorporate all those things and enact those things in your service and provide that inspiration. Whereas these days it seems to be that the director or the positional leader is just being [lumped under] compliance. It’s all about compliance. Yet myself, many of us, our passion is education. Our passion is creating worlds for young children and their families to flourish in. To almost create this other role which is not being supported to be as creative and wonderful as it could be, and then to move the positional leaders’ roles into directors’ roles or just shuffling bloody paperwork back up to head office like regurgitation, I think, has come about because they have failed to – because this direction towards the educational leader or this new kind of title or new role has taken away rather than strengthening and understanding the role of the leader, the positional leader in the service and giving that strength and giving that understanding capacity to do the job. We’ve created some sort of other almost a voluntary position.

Educational leader team

A staff member of a large kindergarten shared the details of a unique situation i.e., how they worked as a team to carefully consider how best to enact the educational leader role and to best support an existing culture of shared leadership. Accordingly, the kindergarten staff developed strategies to support an educational leader team rather than the appointment of just one person. As Tollie explains:

Educational leader was one thing that they were discussing fairly vigorously. We’ve always had a very collaborative approach here, but we have just had one person’s name as educational leader. However, in the context of this centre, this team of four – which brought everybody along with them to the decision that we are looking at a leadership team as opposed to … an educational leader.

Tollie spoke at length about her service in which there was a strong belief that all staff are leaders and followers at different points in time. Consequently, leadership was shared with different people.
taking the lead on projects. Staff within the service supported each other through a strengths-based approach, and strategies such as coaching, mentoring and sharing knowledge.

*Role of education leader: Only responsibility*

In family day care, two of the four key informants were appointed to the role of educational leader only (Anna and Nancy). The other two, Liz and Susan were both scheme directors and educational leaders. Anna’s manager held the role of educational leader at first but soon realised the complexity of the role. She then requested Anna step into this role. Anna described how she negotiated her appointment as educational leader with her manager, to include no other positional roles. The second informant, Nancy described her thoughts about the role and suggested “it’s just really a mentor who can lead a group in expanding on their expertise.” According to Nancy, she feels that “Honestly, I think I have the best job in the world!” In both of these accounts, the educational leader was able to focus exclusively on education.

*Leading others*

This section presents findings on how the educational leaders lead others. Several leadership styles were revealed by key informants: distributed, collaborative, transformational, and hierarchical or top-down styles of leadership (discussed in this order).

As previously detailed in this chapter, a distributed style of leadership was enacted by services as described by Cate (LDC, ECP) and Tollie (Kindy, ECP). Typically, a form of collaborative leadership in which a single leader sought input from early childhood professionals and delegated some duties and tasks was more common. Tina (LDC, EdL) provided detail about how she led the team:

It’s kind of becoming a collaborative team where everybody plays some part in that leadership journey and everybody has something to offer. It’s about helping staff identify those things that they have to offer in there as well as providing them I guess with that guidance.
According to Tina, and many of the other key informants who commented on this topic, collaboration was important. However, Tina emphasised that although collaboration was important, a service still required a positional leader to guide and give direction. She felt that “regardless of how collaborative things are; there also needs to be a person that’s making sure that that’s happening … to take responsibility … to make sure things get done …”. This degree of collaboration varied across interviews, however, it was apparent that the majority of educational leaders attempted this style of leadership at some point.

One key informant (early childhood professional), however, felt the introduction of an educational leader had created the opposite effect. Lesley (Kindy, ECP) described her feelings about the introduction of the educational leader as having shifted the traditional culture of a kindergarten: one of being collaborative, to one that is focused and directed by just one person: the educational leader. It is not clear from Lesley’s interview whether the change of leadership she experienced was due to the educational leader’s practice or Lesley’s own resistance to change.

Through the experiences shared by key informants (for example, Rosie, Belinda and Stella, EdL) there were many examples when educational leaders used transformational leadership approaches, often unknowingly. As was explained in Chapter 3, transformational leadership was first articulated by Burns (1978) and considered to be leadership often from one person. That is, the leader motivated followers (in this case, early childhood professionals) and supported them to rise to another level of performance. From the educational leader’s perspective, the driving force was often a focus on outcomes for children and families. Belinda (LDC, EdL) expressed her understanding of the purpose of the educational leader role, and also gave insight into her intentional and purposeful leadership approach: “The role of the educational leader is to guide, challenge and transform educators’ understanding about children and the child’s world view.”

To provide further insight into transformational leadership practices, Anna (FDC, EdL) expressed her expectations as follows: “I want to make sure that we’re doing the very best that we
can to ensure that those quality standards are being reached.” Similarly, Susan (FDC, EdL) explained her understanding and expectations for her role: “I am responsible for assisting educators to understand the EYLF requirements into work with their pedagogical practices.” These statements emphasise the focus on self as the driver of change.

Stella felt empowered by being in the role of educational leader and challenged long-standing practices introduced by her co-director into the service. To challenge thinking and practice she used critical reflection and guided conversations, identified as a key component of quality leadership in international research (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).

The influence of critical reflection, mandated in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009b), was also evident through comments by key informants, especially when referring to coaching and mentoring, (terms used interchangeably throughout the interviews). Nancy (FDC, EdL) shared a story of how she expressed to family day carers, “I’m not here to tell you what to do, I’m here to provoke thoughts essentially”.

An hierarchal leadership style was also evident in the findings. As Leigh (Kindy, EdL) asserts, “So someone needs to be nasty person or someone needs to be the person that says, okay this is what we're going to do and come up with the ideas. Another example by Maria (Kindy, EdL):

I've taken it upon myself to organise staff meetings, so I set the agenda, I chair the meeting, I record the minutes. So, I take that role on. I also take on the role of driving the meetings that we have for the quality improvement plan and the recording the documentation of the quality improvement plan.

The findings suggest that leaders draw on different styles of leadership dependent on the context and purpose to achieve the goals of the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009b).
How structural and contextual factors influence enactment

There were high expectations of the educational leader. In the interviews both educational leaders and early childhood professionals willingly shared their perception about the responsibilities of this role. These perceptions were compiled into themes and presented along with examples.

Expectations of the role

Although a need for clarity around the educational leader role was apparent in both phases of the research, nevertheless key informants held specific expectations of this role. They \( n = 21 \) were asked to explain what the role of educational leader meant to them, providing insight into their diverse expectations. These expectations were consistent across service types, with similar themes emerging. When coded, the common expectations for the role included:

1. Leading and guiding;
2. Coaching and mentoring;
3. Supporting achievement of the National Quality Standard and Quality Improvement Plan;
4. Supporting person about educational topics;
5. Programming and planning;
6. Monitoring of programming and planning;
7. Being researcher and provider of knowledge to educators; and
8. Seeking out professional learning opportunities.

To demonstrate the expectations further, the following examples from the interviews are provided. In her interview, Sam (Pre, EdL) described how she worked with educators supporting and working alongside early childhood professionals, as well as being involved in supporting day-to-day decision-making. She also noted that her role as educational leader included “longer term strategic planning around the direction of where the educational program and centre as a whole is
leading.” (Worth noting, this was one of the few occasions throughout this study where a respondent referred to strategic planning).

Returning to Sam’s experience, she highlighted how expectations, and a sense of personal and professional obligation had influenced her leadership. Sam explained that being trusted in this role of educational leader made her feel a sense of obligation to address practice concerns. As she explained, “if they’re entrusting me with that role I would be doing a disservice if I didn’t bring things up.” Sam added that this sense of obligation had been uncomfortable at first. However, in the role she felt obligated, “burdened”, and explained that the benefit of this leadership is that it, “supported some really good outcomes.” Similarly, this sense of obligation, was also mentioned by Stella (Kindy, EdL), who added that sometimes you need to be the “nasty person” and provide direction. In Stella’s case, the expectations were driven by her motivation and commitment to quality outcomes for children and families, as represented in the following comment, “I was concerned that this [program] wasn’t benefitting our children and our families”. Stella highlights an obvious tension, that leadership is not always a comfortable space, or well received early childhood professionals. According to Sam (Pre, EdL) and Stella (Kindy, EdL), this tension seemed to be ameliorated by their own professional identities as leaders and influenced by an intrinsic sense of responsibility (Waniganayake et al., 2015) and commitment to moral purpose (Fullan, 2003b, 2016).

Another theme that emerged from the insights provided by informants (n = 8) was the expectation that the educational leader was the knowledge holder (provider), and researcher. As “researcher”, the expectation from both educational leaders and early childhood professionals was that an individual in this role gained knowledge by analysing the current evidence in the field and then transferring the knowledge gained across the service. This expectation was detailed in the commentary provided by Jane (Kindy, EdL), who shared her personal expectation for leading and guiding the team, and her belief that she required contemporary knowledge and experience. As she
explained, “I’m supposed to understand the trends and what’s happening and how to do things differently or trial them differently and so forth.” Similarly, Stella (Kindy, EdL) considered the role as, “imparting that knowledge in ways that’s beneficial for them.” This self-perception of needing to be a researcher was also evident in Phase One and may result from the perception that early childhood professionals were time-poor and perhaps did not have the skills to undertake research themselves. Rebecca (LDC, EdL) summed up her expectations by stating that “the more knowledge I get, the more I can pass on.” This view and expectation of the educational leader as the holder and seeker of knowledge did not recognise or value the knowledge and contribution early childhood professionals could offer, nor did it provide an opportunity to empower others.

Only two key informants, both from kindergarten, spoke about expectations in supporting families to understand the service’s educational program and the importance of play-based programs. Clearly, there is a link here to the notion of leadership being associated with early childhood professionals and a lack of understanding around leadership or advocacy in the sector more broadly (Kagan & Bowman, 1997).

Expectations for this educational leader role were also held by early childhood professionals, their services and, in one case, the service’s organisation. Rebecca (LDC, EdL) shared her experience of asking her team what they expected from this role: “The answer that most of them have said it [sic], just encouragement. Telling them or letting them know they’re on the right track.” Susan (FDC, EdL) provided another example explaining that her own expectations were quite different from her organisation. She expressed that it was only in recent times that she had been alerted to her organisation’s expectations of her role (several years after the role was mandated), and these were that she was to support all family day carers by meeting with each of them at least once per year. As Susan stated, “that was a bit of a wow, [laugh] not only do I take care of my own portfolio of educators: I have to do every [early childhood professional] in the
service.” Susan added in her interview that she was unsure how she could achieve this requirement given the number of carers in her scheme.

Key informants were forthcoming about the underpinning traits and characteristics they felt were necessary for the educational leader role. For instance, Sarah (LDC, ECP), an early childhood professional, expressed her thoughts that were typical of comments provided by other key informants. Her expectation was that the educational leader ran the curriculum and, therefore, the position required “a lot of early childhood knowledge.” Extending on this notion, Jane (Kindy, EdL) felt that not only did they need lots of knowledge, but this needed to be current. Similarly, Sam (Pre, EdL) also felt that the position required somebody “wanting to keep on knowing more”. However, she also suggested the role needed to include the mentoring of others. The task of mentoring others and sharing knowledge was also a frequent suggestion given throughout the interview process.

Two key informants suggested that good communication skills were essential for the educational leader role. Sam (Pre) explained how she felt the role needed “the ability to really talk and listen to other staff in an intuitive way.” By contrast, Lesley (Kindy, ECP), an early childhood professional, shared her experience of working with an educational leader with poor communication skills. As she explained, “[she is a] lovely person but not very good at communicating her message and can come across really rude and horrible.” On a final note, Suzanne (LDC, ECP) summed up the overall feeling expressed by key informants by stating the traits and characteristics needed for this: “I suppose, for them to be passionate about the job, for them to want to educate the educators.”

**Service culture influencing leadership enactment**

The local service culture, and its readiness for change impacted the leadership or lack thereof. During the interviews many of the informants ($n = 10$), both educational leaders and early childhood professionals, identified some resistance to leadership. Staff conflict was expressed as
occurring in long day care \((n = 1)\), family day care \((n = 1)\), and predominately from kindergartens located in Victoria \((n = 6)\), and Queensland \((n = 2)\). Leigh (Kindy, EdL), an educational leader was quick to share challenges she was facing as educational leader:

I have conflict here at work with one of my co-workers which is why, is the reason why I feel the way I feel. It’s not being dealt with appropriately. So I’ve got a more of a person thing than maybe what other educational leaders feel. So I have a co-worker who I feel doesn’t respect me as an educational leader and will fight me on everything I bring up, yet if someone else brings it up it’ fine. So I find that really difficult.

Conflict was also expressed as occurring by Melindi (Kindy), an educational leader:

There’s a lot of talk between staff and there’s a little bit of them against us type of thing coming into it where we didn’t have that before. We were very much just one team and working, and we would be all talking and sharing ideas, but now I just perceive that there’s a bit of them and us type of feeling.

Liz (FDC, EdL) suggested that the conflict may be caused by the role itself and people’s lack of understanding of it, “I think that there’s still a degree of negativity and resistance around it [the role]. I’m not necessarily just talking here at our service. I’m talking generally. I mean here we understand it [the role].” In contrast, Belinda (LDC, EdL) felt the conflict was caused by resistance to change:

…people who have been in the industry for a while, they’ve become very set in their ways and the practice has become very reified and change is very difficult. But then suddenly to be told, usually by somebody younger, that they should just think in a different way, that can be very difficult for people.

One educational leader explained throughout the interview that she was not leading due to long-standing cultural norms within her service. Maria (Kindy, EdL) highlighted how she was not willing to confront her colleagues about their practice, as she felt the Early Years’ Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009a) required them to work as a team. Additionally, Maria reflected that the act of leading caused conflict and issues. Collegial disfavour with leadership was also communicated by Sonja (Kindy, EdL), an educational leader from a Victorian kindergarten who felt that staff now considered her “as the big brother thing”, and that she was “having a go at them”
when in fact Sonja suggested she was just trying to get them to think about practice. York-Barr and Duke (2004) have reported on this resistance to leadership, “one of the most prevailing norms in teaching in the teaching profession is egalitarianism which fosters the view that teachers who step up to leadership roles are stepping out of line.” (p. 272). This viewpoint can be directly observed in comments above and summed up by Maria (EdL) when she stated, “kindergarten teachers are very much laws until [sic] themselves and they’re very much used to doing what they want. So, there isn’t any sort of culture [of leading].” Maria’s statement regarding beliefs about leadership in kindergarten services was not isolated. Others, for example Lesley (Kindy, ECP) and Annesley (Kindy, EdL – both discussed earlier), shared similar thinking.

Another impact on how leadership was enacted related to perceptions of having authority ($n = 2$), or not ($n = 2$). Peta (LDC, ECP) believed the role needed a degree of responsibility and authority, particularly when working with people “when practice isn’t what it should be”. In agreement, Maria (Kindy, EdL), also believed authority was important. However due to the committee’s lack of understanding about the role, she felt that if she confronted colleagues about their practice, it could be construed by the committee and her colleagues as trying to control. This lack of authority and feeling of not being validated in the role was similar to an earlier study on the role of the educational leader by Rouse and Spradbury (2016).

**Discussion**

When examining the educational leader role, the duties and tasks completed by the educational leader were presented first. The list of duties and tasks was diverse and extensive. In Phase One of this study, several participants considered training as directing early childhood professionals to external sources of professional learning. However, in Phase Two, informants provided much detail about professional learning opportunities they developed and implemented to support practice improvement. The focus on compliance by program monitoring also featured in this phase of the study with several informants discussing this notion ($n = 7$). Sims et al. (2017)
suggest a compliance focus is a consequence of lack of direction and understanding about the educational leader role, and educators relying on what they know and have experienced previously. The focus on compliance counteracts change leadership which utilises strategies to motivate staff, build capacity, develop a culture of learning, generate collaborative action, and create a shared vision and goals. Evidence of change leadership practices in this phase were limited, and when present were seen as uncoordinated and appearing to lack the essential elements required for change. However, there was a stronger focus on building capacity, although this was not evident across all services.

In Phase Two it is apparent that educational leaders have a broad understanding of the purpose of their role. However, educational leaders appear uncertain of how to enact this role, unsurprising given the lack of attention to change leadership. There is an identified need for investment in ongoing professional learning opportunities about leadership and leading change (including mentoring) for the ECEC profession. This idea is not new (Ebbeck et al., 2014; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Waniganayake, 2014), given the profession’s traditional resistance to leadership (Dunlop, 2008; Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Hard, 2005; Rodd, 2006).

What is notable in this study, is the lack of support from service governance bodies (management and organisations), the delay in providing support, and the lack of leadership knowledge on how best to lead change. A consequence of this is that the educational leader role is enacted without consideration of the individual context (e.g., service type, size, location, cultural norms). Furthermore, there appears to be limited consideration of the structures needed to support leaders (non-contact time; clear expectations through position statements, and service policies and procedure documents). As a result, significant barriers to leadership have been identified.

One of these barriers, also evident in Phase One, relates to the use of the title “educational leader”, identified by informants as troubling. This was also identified by Fleet et al. (2015) as being an issue. More specifically, the term “educational leader” has often been associated with the
role of a principal in a primary school setting or the director in an ECEC service. In such contexts, educational leader relates to broad concepts of organisational leadership: leader of change management, administration, advocacy, and management tasks (rosters and budgets), as well as curriculum and pedagogical leadership. The term educational leader has been studied extensively in these contexts (Gibert, 2004; Harris, 2006), with numerous associations such as the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (www.acel.org.au) providing guidance and support for educational leaders. Thus, the term ‘educational leader’ has connotations of the characteristics of a school principal, which may account for the high number of directors also assuming the role of educational leader.

In this phase of the study, the interviews enabled some insight into the leadership styles in play by the educational leader, and it was apparent that the range of styles applied were somewhat limited. While Sims, Waniganayake and Hadley (2017) suggest that the role of educational leader is influenced by the notion of distributed leadership, its minimal appearance in this study may be due to the lack of clarity and understanding about the role; minimal reference to the position from government since the introduction of the role; and a limited understanding of leadership by the ECEC sector as a whole.

Only two early childhood professionals, Cate (LDC) and Tollie (Kindy), shared their experiences of working in services that employed a distributed leadership model and, in both cases, it was considered by the informants as beneficial. Cate’s appointment could be considered an example of a culture where leadership has been distributed and not invested in one person, namely, the director. In this example, many of the tasks and responsibilities of the educational leader were delegated to Cate. Additionally, Cate’s commentary highlights the commitment of the service to foster professional learning through mentoring. This has been achieved through the allocation of time, a structural factor considered necessary for distributed leadership to flourish (Heikka et al., 2016; Ho, 2010). Cate’s story illustrates the potential of teacher leadership when services recognise
its importance, apply different approaches (such as the distributed form), and engage structural factors (such as time), all of which facilitate leadership.

Tollie’s (Kindy) service decision to appoint a leadership team rather than one person again reflects a structure that supported a model of participatory leadership practice that has been observed to work effectively in ECEC (Colmer et al., 2015; Heikka et al., 2012; Rodd, 2013a). However, while acknowledging this completely flat structure and plan to attempt leadership through consensus, it should be acknowledged that MacBeath (2005) and Harris (2008a, 2008b) caution against this very model, highlighting the importance of maintaining a positional role such as an educational leader, who can drive and distribute leadership tasks across the team. A lack of clarity, guidelines and information around the educational leader role was observed to have an effect on the leadership models implemented, which in at least one case created tension between leaders. Participants from this phase indicated a preference for collaborative leadership practices. Whilst other forms of leadership were not as common, when practice required significant practice change, other forms of leadership seemed to be employed.

Curriculum reform and quality early childhood provision (OECD, 2006) is dependent on continuous professional learning and leadership. Within Phase Two, the professional learning opportunities available to early childhood professionals including mentoring and coaching were discussed. Mentoring and coaching appeared to be highly valued because of their capacity to build people’s knowledge and skills (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Fixsen et al., 2005; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). Coaching is seen as providing training, support and development of the early childhood professional’s practice. Suzanne and Sarah (LDC, ECP) shared their experience of mentoring which they perceived as beneficial. Again, the benefits gained from mentoring were only achieved through processes that provided an allocation of time to the educational leader.

What has been revealed in this study, compared to earlier reports about leadership in ECEC (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 2006) is the shift in understanding about the term leadership. During the
interviews, many key informants were asked a question taken from the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a) about all staff being pedagogical leaders, to which most agreed. While the key informants in this study identified a shift in thinking about leadership, the range of leadership styles and change leadership strategies applied by educational leaders was limited. For example, few educational leaders discussed the use of vision, shared understanding, and collective goals.

Several of the expectations held by key informants aligned with those found in the most effective settings within the ELEYS study (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). These included, commitment to professional development, encouraging reflection (as part of programming and planning), and coaching and mentoring. Key informants spoke frequently about the need for the educational leader role to gain knowledge and share this knowledge, often by unpacking research. This reinforced a notion of the leader as the holder of power and knowledge and seemed to ignore the potential collective knowledge and wisdom held within a team. Given the diversity of qualifications, knowledge and experience by those appointed to the position of educational leader, such expectations may be daunting and add unexpected burden. This is a concern also held by Rouse and Spradbury (2016) who warn that without clear guidelines, additional responsibilities may be added to the role which puts at risk the desired increase in professionalism and advocacy.

In this phase of the study, key informants provided much more detail about the personal drivers needed for the role of educational leader, even though there may not be role clarity. Personal drivers included values and attributes, deep knowledge and skill about leadership and ECEC, as well as strong skills in communication. All of these skills can be learnt (Davitt & Ryder, 2018), if provided appropriate opportunity. The focus on communication as an important disposition of an ECEC leader has also emerged in earlier research by Davitt and Ryder (2018).

A study in Hong Kong conceptualising teacher leadership in early childhood services (Ho & Tikly, 2012), suggested that structural authority does not necessarily evolve when complex long-standing cultures exist. This was observed particularly in two of the kindergartens, where teachers
who traditionally worked autonomously resisted leadership. The findings of both research phases indicate that role clarity is needed for all involved within services so that all members of the community have a clear understanding of the educational leader role and expectations. Reports from educational leaders who perceived they had no authority, compared with those who did, highlighted how authority (whether a self-belief or imposed) influences professional identity and leadership. Although Peta and Sonja (Kindy) had been appointed to the role of educational leader, they did not see themselves as leaders. This finding is consistent with other research, that also found that simply giving a title and saying that you are a professional is not enough, particularly when there are no benefits in pay or working conditions (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Kempster, 2006; Miller, 2008).

Many leaders in the early childhood education and care profession claimed that leadership had been pushed on them and that without “training” provision they had to rely on their own personal experiences (Ebbeck & Waniganyake, 2003; Hujala, Waniganayake, & Rodd, 2013; Rodd, 2006, 2013a). Fenech (2013), in commentary about the government’s decision to appoint educational leaders, called for leadership development, warning that one of the major challenges facing early childhood education and care reform is the lack of leadership development and the vulnerability of the workforce. This notion is echoed by Waniganayake (2013) who argued that the “chaotic trajectory into leadership” (p. 63) is limiting, recommending a leadership career development pathway. The argument for professional learning about leadership in this sector is not new (Colmer, 2017; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Nupponen, 2006; Rodd & Savage, 1997).

The importance of well-qualified and knowledgeable leaders cannot be underestimated, with Bush (2008) highlighting that the presence of qualified leaders in the school sector is a key factor in influencing student learning outcomes. In addition, the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al., 2004) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) study (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002) found that children...
made better all-round progress in services where there was strong leadership and staff turnover was low (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). Leadership is well accepted as an essential component of quality in ECEC (Hujala et al., 2013; Rodd, 2013a; Waniganayake, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). However, several informants (Jane, Kindy; Rebecca, LDC; EdL) inferred their knowledge of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy needed improvement. It has long been argued that effective leaders in ECEC must have good understanding about pedagogy (Rodd, 2013a).

Research conducted by Colmer (2015) revealed that for curriculum reform, professional development and learning is situated, and contextual and intrinsically linked to everyday practice. She argued that professional learning results from a complex interplay of pedagogical and organisational leadership, collaborative practice, organisational structures, and leadership. Of concern is that the leadership in some services appears absent, or minimal. Additionally, for a few, pedagogical knowledge is also limited or dated.

Leadership is complex and managing an ECEC service is multifaceted and requiring diverse skills in order to implement numerous pieces of legislation, policies, human resource requirements and day-to-day operational needs. In this myriad of tasks, the focus on pedagogy becomes difficult (Fonsén, 2013). The requirement to have an educational leader has led to a call for the separation of pedagogical leadership with other management and leadership tasks (Hujala et al., 2013).

In Australia, leadership in the ECEC sector has been resisted for a long time (Hard, 2005, 2006). A recent article published by Hard and Jónsdóttir (2013) entitled ‘Leadership is not a dirty word: Exploring and embracing leadership in ECEC’ highlighted continued resistance. Similarly, key informants (n = 10) in this study shared experiences of resistance to leadership within family day care, kindergarten and long day care. The lack of clarity and understanding of the role further exacerbated this resistance (Rouse & Spradbury, 2016).
Research conducted in Hong Kong (Ho & Tikly, 2012) found that teachers thought they might promote disharmony amongst their work colleagues if they took up opportunities to lead, or had differing opinions to colleagues. There were similar findings in Australian ECEC contexts (Hard, 2006). In Hong Kong, Li (2015) found avoidance of leadership (similar to Maria and Leigh) and suggested this may be due to the lack of reward for successful leadership performance. In the current study, no reward, remuneration (in most cases) or status is provided to the role educational leader and may be another reason for the reluctance of some ECEC professionals to lead. These studies may provide some rationale as to the resistance by kindergarten teachers in this phase. Additionally, it may be due to a desire to work in isolation and autonomously.

This section has detailed common themes considered as constraints that may affect the leadership enacted by the educational leader. Next, the last theme to emerge from the interview data, enablers to educational leadership is detailed.

**Benefits and contributing leadership actions**

In general, the Phase Two findings support those offered in Phase One which suggested that there is an overarching belief that the educational leader provides benefit to management ($n = 2$), early childhood education and care professionals ($n = 13$), families ($n = 7$) and children ($n = 11$). It was felt by some, however, that the role “does bring pedagogy to the forefront”. Nonetheless, Melindi (Kindy, EdL) summarized her thoughts about the benefit of having an educational leader by stating, “I think it’s created a much better centre and a shared vision and I mean even planning. Planning for things and seeing where we might head and it is better, yeah.” A similar view was also expressed by Stella (Kindy, EdL), an educational leader from Queensland who, when reflecting about her work in the service as educational leader stated with much emphasis, “I’ve got to be honest with you, from when I started at kindy to where we are now, it’s so exciting.”
These quotations from key informants suggest that the role of educational leader has improved practice, as well as generated a sense of motivation. One FDC educational leader noted, “I feel more empowered to try new things” (Nancy, FDC). However, the comment detailed earlier in this chapter by Suzanne (LDC, ECP) suggests that not everybody saw the benefit of this role, particularly when some ECEC professionals resisted what they perceived as extra work.

A clear example of the benefit of the educational leader was provided by Sam (Pre, EdL). She shared her experience of leading the whole service through a review of the service philosophy and analysing what was important to the service in relation to children, families, staff and community. She stated:

We looked at what it [the philosophy] said and then we looked at this practice and said, well it doesn’t actually fit very well with what our philosophy was saying, that what we believed what we should be valued and how children should be engaged.

Once agreed, the document was used to reflect on each of their service practices, including an end of year children’s graduation that involved children wearing pretend university graduation caps and gowns. This review supported the team to come to the realisation that this graduation practice did not align with their service philosophy and provided the motivation to change practices. Sam’s final comment highlighted the difference between the educational leader role and her teaching role, “So it was good, but it was something that I believe in and I don’t think necessarily maybe in my role as a teacher I would have certainly brought it up.”

The experience of Sam demonstrated the potential quality provision possible when a collective focus occurs within a service. Her story demonstrated her own leadership ability, understanding of quality ECEC practice, and her commitment to participatory leadership. She involved all staff, families and children in discussing and reflecting on the service philosophy, promoted collective wisdom, and motivation; recognised leadership strategies (Colmer, 2008; Fullan, 2006b, 2007a), which supported Sam to make local change that was considered to provide better outcomes for children. This research phase revealed that this type of leadership style and
change leadership focusing on vision and goals was rare. Leadership training may assist other educational leaders to understand the important role an agreed service vision with shared understanding and goals may play in quality leadership (Fullan, 2008a, 2008b; Sergiovanni, 1998; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). Findings from this phase indicate most services do not have a collective vision, and / or philosophy guiding the service’s educational direction. Significantly, quotes from key informants demonstrated a lack of understanding of the terms, using them interchangeably.

The educational leader role was considered by key informants to provide many benefits to staff ($n = 13$) and management ($n = 2$). In terms of self-benefit, Nancy (FDC) felt that by being appointed as educational leader, she was empowered to do more things. Other educational leaders also suggested there was benefits. Stella (Kindy, EdL) was personally motivated and excited by the new opportunities within her service due to practice change. However, as previously mentioned, for all educational leaders in this study there was no financial benefit for their efforts.

Early childhood professionals acknowledged the benefit of the role in supporting new capabilities, knowledge and practice. Sarah (LDC), an early childhood professional illustrated the approach taken in her service. From her perspective, the educational leader mentored less experienced early childhood professionals noting that, “sometimes she’ll come in, especially if it’s a younger one and she wants the younger one to extend their own knowledge, a younger staff member, she might sit in and show how things might get started.”

Similarly, an early childhood professional who was supported to attend a conference and visit other services with Stella (Kindy, EdL), shared this knowledge with the rest of her team. She emphasised that this opportunity had been really beneficial, adding, “I’ve seen in the way when we’re setting up the room or making a change or – she’s got more intentionality behind what we’re doing.”
The role also provided support for those early childhood professionals engaged in study, as well as students attending the service and completing practicum placement. Cate (LDC, ECP) provided commentary about one student who shared her thoughts about the support she received, “…it’s the first time I’m seeing what I’m learning about and I’m seeing it in practice.”

In relation to the benefits for families, a number of informants ($n = 7$) communicated that the role of educational leader was beneficial. In each of these cases, an allocation of time for the educational leader supported them to undertake tasks that directly influenced family relationships with the service. For example, Leigh (Kindy, EdL), provided information to families after attending different professional development opportunities, while Anna (FDC, EdL), supported early childhood professionals to display the educational program for families so that “parents can actually see what specific things she’s done with the children, or things she’s intending to do in the future.” Stella and Sonja (Kindy, EdL) had tailored service programs to support the diverse cultural needs of the families and support their involvement and understanding of suitable learning for young children.

Finally, eleven key informants suggested that benefits to children naturally flowed on from the work between the educational leader and the early childhood professionals. Anna (FDC, EdL) suggested this resulted in “higher quality experiences for children and better documentation.” Similar quotations were made by Stella (Kindy, EdL), and Rebecca (LDC, EdL), who suggested, “I think we’re reaching a deeper level and offering a more enriched experience for children.”

Belinda (LDC, EdL), shared the journey of one early childhood professional from her service. Belinda was concerned about the practice related to putting children to sleep. Children were patted for over an hour, “until they got so bored they would fall asleep.” Belinda explained how she worked with the group, challenging their thinking about children’s choice to sleep and children’s autonomy and agency; encouraging them to try something different, and eventually supporting practice to change. During the interview, Belinda reflected about the practice change
stating, “she is fantastic, absolutely fantastic, very open and yeah, just very accepting of children as people.” Although this experience celebrates the shift in this early childhood professional’s practice, it is the children who benefit from improved practice.

**Discussion**

As discussed in Chapter 3, findings of international studies have overwhelmingly highlighted the beneficial effects of high-quality ECEC for young children’s school success and future life trajectories (Heckman & Raut, 2013; OECD, 2012; Sylva et al., 2011). High-quality learning environments depend on quality leadership (Rodd, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) and on well-educated and trained ECEC professionals (Sylva et al., 2004; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle, 2010), implementing appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, and intentional practice (Barblett, Knaus, & Barratt-Pugh, 2016). The educational leader role was mandated to support the implementation of high-quality teaching (Sims et al., 2017), and importantly, findings from both research phases indicated that the role of educational leader was considered a benefit. Benefits included attention and focus on pedagogy, staff motivation, educational direction, and improved professionalism. However, key leadership functions and change practices were often absent but, when applied, were perceived to have success. This suggests that to maximise the potential of the educational leader role, building the leadership capacity of the ECEC sector is essential.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the results obtained from interviews with key informants working in approved Australian ECEC services, and where appropriate, has made connections to findings from Phase One. For example, a commonality between Phase One and Two is the fact that both educational leaders and early childhood professionals value this role and recognise its benefits. However, across both phases, many are concerned at the manner in which this role has been implemented and continues to be enacted.
Early childhood education and care professionals have been appointed to the role of educational leader often with little thought and consideration for the actual needs of the individual context, and often with educational leaders ill-prepared to take on the role. This was particularly evident in Phase Two, with informants highlighting the lack of timely support, resources, and learning opportunities to support the implementation of this role.

In Phase One, 15 participants highlighted how the role of educational leader and centre director role had been combined, with one notable survey comment reflecting similar views to those expressed in Phase Two. The survey participant stated:

For management to recognise that the EL role is a position of its own merit. For this to be effective, it needs to stand as a role of its own and not combined with directorship. (S113)

In this phase too, it was clear that appointments varied, with the role mostly being integrated into the existing director’s position. As such, it appears that little thought or use of evidence-based change frameworks have been applied to assist the implementation of this role, and in many cases the potential of the role has not been met. At worst, some services have resisted the role, and no leadership of pedagogy or practice exists. This puts at risk the opportunity to achieve government reforms and the outcomes desired for all children. Of concern too, across both research phases, is the scope of tasks and responsibilities that are commonly enacted by individuals with this role, and that few leaders are provided an allotment of time to enact them. Many leaders have indicated that these tasks are completed in their own time or compete in priority with management tasks.

There is a demonstrated need for educational leaders and for the importance of leadership to be understood. This role has the potential to drive change and improve quality in ECEC. However, to reach that stage and for it to be sustainable, there is a need to address some of the issues that have been identified in this phase.
Chapter Seven: The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework

Introduction

A single overarching research question drives this study:

- What perceptions do ECEC professionals hold about the educational leader and the potential of the role for improving quality in Australian ECEC contexts?

In the previous two chapters I have presented detailed findings related to this research question with a summary of these presented at the end of Chapter 6. In interrogating the research findings in the light of the literature introduced earlier in the thesis, I identified key areas and elements for consideration in relation to the educational leader role and leadership generally, and the improvements needed to improve quality in ECEC contexts. Based on these findings and in consideration of the literature outlined in Chapter 3, a conceptual frame for leadership within Australian ECEC contexts is presented in this chapter. Entitled “The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework”, it is used here as a critical lens to support further discussion of the findings outlined in the previous chapters. My hope is that this framework will be useful at all levels of the ECEC system and will serve to frame discussions about what is needed to maximise the benefits of the educational leader role, and how it may contribute to improvement in quality within Australian ECEC.

The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework

A conceptual framework links individual concepts based on multiple theories, which then helps to support further development of theory (Seibold, 2002). According to Green (2014), a conceptual framework provides a guide, or a map to a study, whereas Polit and Tano (2004), from a differing perspective, propose that the role of the conceptual framework is to make research findings meaningful – the desired outcome of this study. The ECEC Leadership for Quality
framework (see Figure 12) was developed using a multi-step process. The first step was to revisit the three areas of literature first outlined in Chapter 3: quality in ECEC; leadership; and educational change. Next, the findings outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 were considered in the light of this literature with key constraints and enablers being identified by the participants considered in relation to the literature. Contextual features identified within the data were also added to the framework as well as aspects of the external environment. Whilst the educational leader is positioned in the centre of the framework, it is important to note that everyone has the potential to be a leader and that leadership can be shared.

Earlier theorising about leadership in ECEC (Nivala, 1998; Nivala & Hujala, 2002), drew upon ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner (1979). This earlier work has also influenced this framework, which clearly shows how the individual service context is influenced by the external environment, in particular, by government. Further, the service context is influenced by a number of contributing factors, with all these factors (external and internal) impacting on the enactment of leadership by the educational leader. This notion of contextual leadership also draws on a sociological perspective, and considers leadership as an outcome of societal, cultural and organisational contexts (Rodd, 2013a).

The framework is also inspired by Fixsen and Blase’s (2008) change model which suggests that competency and organisational drivers, along with a range of leadership styles, enable the leadership of change. Furthermore, the framework draws on the work of Fullan (2007a) whose theory of action for educational change incorporates seven premises considered necessary for reform: motivation, capacity building, learning in context, changing context, a bias for reflective action, tri-level engagement, and persistence and flexibility in staying the course.
Figure 12. The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework.
Notably, the framework is consistent with the Educational Leadership model (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019, p. 79) which drew on the earlier thinking of Stamopoulou (2012) and was published just at the time of writing this thesis. It is envisaged that the framework offered here will help to guide both the appointment and enactment of the educational leader role in the future, whilst also serving as a stimulus for further discussion about leadership in the ECEC sector.

In terms of its structure, the framework is not linear, but instead is organised as a series of frames within frames (see Figure 13). The frames represent different constructs or levels of influence that interact within the framework. Whilst these frames are clearly distinctive, they should also be seen as permeable, with the concepts included within one frame impacting on and influencing those within and surrounding it. This permeability is meant to highlight the inter-connectedness of the various components considered important for leadership and change in ECEC.

Figure 13. The external environment component of the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework.
Figure 13 highlights the external frame of this framework. It represents the external environment within which ECEC services operate and as such takes account of all aspects of the social, economic, cultural, and political climate, for instance policymakers, external agencies, and government. This frame is considered to be the macro level of the system, and although this level may not have direct impact on the role of educational leader, its impact is inward facing. Within this frame is the ECEC context which represents each individual service.

Two sets of components transverse the external frame and the ECEC context frame: the foundational components at the base of the framework and the quality components at its top. This design decision is based on reasoning that decisions associated with policies, processes and systems are usually made by authorities external to each individual ECEC context, but also influence what needs to be done by the educational leaders working within services. Similarly, notions of quality are also determined, at least in part, by external authorities, including policies relating to systems, processes, structures and orientations, with these quality outcomes being informed by the work of the service and reported to external agencies. In this way, the framework demonstrates that leadership is influenced by both external and internal factors.

By considering the internal factors of any given service, the framework aligns with the work of Hujala (2013) who is considered a pioneer in leadership within ECEC settings (Waniganayake, 2014). Her work highlights how factors such as ECEC mission, core tasks, functions and administration tasks, and organisation vision form the unique characteristics of individual services and in turn influence the leader and leadership. In the framework presented here, these service characteristics are listed as type, size, location, culture, governance, and mission.

The ECEC context is framed by various aspects of leadership including leadership enablers, personal qualities, leadership styles, and change leadership practices. Together, these
shape and influence the innermost frame which represents the individual Educational Leader and other ECEC leaders in a service (see Figure 14).

**Quality Components**

![Quality Components Diagram](image)

*Figure 14. The quality component of the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework.*

The quality components detailed in the literature review (refer to Chapter 3) are positioned at the top of the ECEC Leadership for Change framework, mirroring the foundational components (see Figure 15). They constitute how leadership and leading impact on the ECEC context (Flückiger, 2018; Hujala, 2013; Rodd, 2006, 2013a; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), and ultimately lead to the quality components. Whilst the educational leadership role itself is regarded as a structural component of quality (Flückiger, 2018; Torii et al., 2017), effective leadership also has the ability to influence all quality components (system, structural, process, and orientational).
Context is considered to be one of the determinants of leadership (Fonsén, 2013), and this frame of the leadership framework supports the notion that leadership is contextualized. Any change to one component of the system influences the whole system (Jorde Bloom, 1991; Nupponen, 2005), and in turn, influences the outcome of quality. Writing about leadership, Waniganayake (2014) suggests that it is best to examine leadership in the local context of enactment and to take account of each unique context, with time, history, processes, and culture all considered to influence leadership, and the ability to lead.

In the current research study, each service is different. The contexts under investigation include: different service types (Preschool, kindergarten, long day care, and family day care), of various sizes, with staff holding diverse experiences and varied qualifications, and with services
located in different geographic locations, recruited from across Australia, regional, urban and rural. In addition, while some services have a profit-making mission, other service types are not-for-profit or have a social-purpose mission.

The Leadership Essentials

*Figure 16. The leadership essentials of the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework.*

At the core or heart of the framework is the frame leadership essentials – the fundamental elements considered necessary for leadership and leading change (see Figure 16). This frame has direct influence on the educational leader (as inputs) and it is the interconnection of these inputs, with personal qualities that lead to outputs of quality ECEC. These are: leadership enablers, personal qualities, leadership styles and change leadership practices.
Leadership enablers

The ECEC sector is recognised as having recruitment and retention problems (Choy & Haukka, 2010; Penn, 2018), and an entrenched resistance to hierarchical leadership (Hard, 2005; Rodd, 2013a). With this in mind, three leadership enablers are outlined within the framework presented above: professional learning, mentoring and networking. These enablers ensure that individuals appointed to leadership roles in ECEC have the necessary pedagogical expertise and the leadership knowledge and skills required to successfully enact their role, and embrace the notion that professional capabilities can be developed given appropriate levels of investment (Sergiovanni, 1998).

The first of these enablers is professional learning. This term has been deliberately adopted here in preference to others like training or professional development. These latter terms are often associated with one-off workshop sessions and conferences (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007), and are generally considered to be ineffective for achieving practice change in ECEC (Burgess et al., 2010). By contrast, according to Fleet and Patterson (2001), professional learning is considered to involve a collection of contextualized ongoing learning opportunities, often focused on collaborative groups of inquiry, which enable educators with varied levels of qualifications to work and learn together.

Although mentoring may be considered a form of professional learning, it has been singled out in the framework because of its importance in assisting individuals to learn how to become successful leaders, and for ensuring continuous growth. In the leadership framework, the term mentoring is used as a strategy to acquire skills, with the mentor’s role being to offer advice, and pass on knowledge from his or her experience to the mentee (Tolhurst, 2010), in this case the educational leader.

Networking is also considered a key leadership enabler. One of the traits associated with leadership in the ECEC context is the desire for and emphasis placed on relationships.
Relationships can include feeling the need for a professional relationship with service-based colleagues or direct reports, or with external colleagues. Within this study, participants often perceived the benefits of working alongside other ECEC professionals and the learning opportunities these provided.

**Personal qualities**

The next component of leadership included in the framework is personal qualities. These include the knowledge, skills, dispositions values, and expectations (of self and others) of each leader. This component of the framework has been inspired by literature recognizing that leadership is about qualities and values (Early Childhood Australia, 2017) and research that identified the key leadership dispositions needed by an ECEC leader (Davitt & Ryder, 2018). The personal qualities of a leader not only influence the way the leader behaves and responds (Davitt & Ryder, 2018), but also the manner in which their behaviour is perceived and understood by others (Poole, 2011; Waniganayake et al., 2012).

Beginning first with knowledge and skills, the framework employs the learnings from literature which identify certain knowledge, qualities, and skills as needed to enable successful leadership (Rodd, 2013b; Stamopoulous & Barblett, 2018). Fullan (2001a) suggests that knowledge about leadership for influencing change is needed. Ord et al. (2013) argue that expertise in children and childhood, as well as understanding how adults learn and develop are also necessary. A lack of knowledge and skill, particularly about contemporary leadership, limits the potential of leadership and change in raising quality.

Given the work of the educational leader is about leadership and leading the educational program and pedagogy (pedagogical leadership) through different styles of leadership, and change leadership practices, the implications for such a role are that it requires knowledge about quality pedagogy (Fonsén, 2013; Waniganayake et al., 2012). Effective pedagogical leadership rests on an understanding of the core role of the leader and a self-awareness that pedagogical leadership is
an outcome of leadership and change (Fonsén, 2013; Semann, 2019). In this framework, each of these desired characteristics are considered as able to be learnt which further highlights the importance of investing in the capability of leaders. This is represented on the left-hand side of the model as leadership enablers.

Values and beliefs are further important personal qualities for the ECEC leader as they influence and guide moral purpose (Waniganayake et al., 2012), and influence the style of leadership enacted (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). Often categorised as leadership dispositions (values, beliefs, and attributes), McGregor (1960) and more recently Davitt and Ryder (2018), suggest that a leader’s dispositions are crucial to all aspects of organisational leadership. Our beliefs, the thinking and rationales that underpin our actions, reflect what is important to us. This includes our beliefs, values, and dispositions about leadership change and about working with young children. According to a study detailed earlier in this thesis, Davitt and Ryder (2018) identify six dominant dispositions that support New Zealand ECEC leaders. These included skilful communication; relationship focused; caring and supportive; leading growth and change; and being a critical friend.

The final personal quality included within the framework is expectations. This quality may also at times be considered a disposition. Expectations include expectations of self as a leader, and expectations of others. Research about professional identity highlights how ECEC professionals are influenced by internal and external expectations (Murray, 2013). Earlier research about the role of educational leader conducted by Fleet et al., (2015) and also by Sims et al., (2017) suggests that there are strong expectations by the sector for this educational leader role, a finding also consistent in this study.

**Leadership styles**

As the literature within Chapter 3 revealed, there is no one agreed best way to enact leadership. Leadership is complex and dynamic (Early Childhood Australia, 2017), and involves
consideration of people, context, situation and culture, highlighting the need for a leader to be able to draw from the full continuum of leadership styles. Data across both phases of this study show that educational leaders applied a range of leadership styles (collaborative, distributed, transformational and authoritarian), with two styles reported more frequently (collaborative, and transformational). This is not a surprising outcome as research suggests that ECEC leaders are more likely to draw upon leadership styles that are collaborative in nature (Rodd, 2013a; Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014; Vijayadevar, Thornton, & Cherrington, 2019). A collaborative culture, or team consensus, was evident, with many ECEC professionals encouraged to be involved in service decision-making processes and encouraged to have a say. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that ECEC work is grounded in relationships. Teams of educators work alongside one another implementing an educational program, often with input from children, families, colleagues, community and other multi-disciplinary professionals.

Two dominant leadership styles included in the framework have been considered by others as a good fit for ECEC: transformational leadership (Brownlee et al., 2010; Fenech, 2013) and distributed leadership (Colmer et al., 2015; Heikka et al., 2012; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).

**Change leadership practices**

Leadership and change have an interconnected relationship (Early Childhood Australia, 2017; Rodd, 2013a). In a sector lacking efficient change processes (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018), the leadership for quality framework intentionally draws out and presents the processes considered necessary to drive change. It suggests that for successful and sustainable change to occur, change leadership practices must be intentionally led and this requires motivating others to change (Fullan, 2016). For this reason, strong and effective leadership, the knowledge and skills for leading the processes required for change, and being steadfast through change (Fullan, 2007a; Herold & Fedor, 2008) are all needed.
The seven premises outlined by Fullan (2007a) in his theory of action for educational change provide insight into the processes required to support change. The framework incorporates six of Fullan’s processes, but they have been adapted here for ECEC contexts. A leader:

- motivates and influences others;
- builds capability and capacity to change;
- creates shared vision and goals;
- generates collaborative action;
- enacts leadership priorities; and
- engages all levels.

The premise of developing a learning culture as defined by Fullan is not adopted as an individual premise in the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework. According to Fullan (2007a) this premise relates to developing a culture of learning; on the job learning; and learning in-context. When implementing change focused on pedagogy and practice, evidence suggests (Colmer et al., 2015; Corrick & Reed, 2019), that building capability and capacity involves learning in-situ, distributed leadership and collective dialogue and this is intrinsically linked to everyday ways of working in ECEC.

For change to occur and be sustainable, all levels of the system must be engaged and aligned with the purpose and need for change (Fullan, 2016). In an ECEC service, this involves everyone in the service along with families and local community (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2012). Consideration must also be given to aligning proposed changes with the service’s governance (owner, parent committee, government department, board of directors), the organisation’s vision and strategic direction, and the broader system (government policy and investment).

In recent times, change in ECEC has been driven by external factors (Goffin, 2013). This makes it difficult for leaders to create the case for change locally, whilst also fostering intrinsic
motivation within the service. As Elmore (2004) proclaimed, cultures do not change by mandate, they require leaders who can unite teams to create a shared vision and collectively agreed goals that are owned and communicated by all members of the team.

Finally, change involves a leader modelling and living the new values and behaviours required for change (Elmore, 2004), along with a focus on developing a culture for learning. Professional learning to support all players to gain the necessary knowledge and skills (Fullan, 2016; Kotter, 1996; Muijs et al., 2004), along with structures and processes to allow groups of ECEC professionals to come together to share and generate knowledge, is considered essential (Colmer et al., 2015).

**Applying the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework to the Research Findings**

The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework is now used as a critical lens to support discussion of the key findings arising from the research question: *What perceptions do ECEC professionals hold about the educational leader and the potential of the role for improving quality in Australian ECEC contexts?* As the framework offers a “best practice” view of how to achieve quality through effective leadership practices, the strengths and weaknesses of the processes enacted across the various services involved in this study are identified. Beginning with the foundational components of system, structures, process, and orientation, the discussion will then move through each subsequent component.

**Foundational components and the educational leader role**

**Systems**

Early childhood education and care services do not operate in isolation; the influence of the wider system (government) has a direct impact on them. This impact has been evident across a period of unprecedented policy change and reform generated by the Commonwealth government, including the requirement to appoint an educational leader.
Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) in their writing about leadership warn that when introducing and mandating policy, it is essential to ensure that these policies are fully explained to the workforce, suggesting that governments must provide guidance to support implementation. According to participants in this study, except for the initial policy statement on the requirement of an educational leader, system leadership appeared to be absent, with very few explanations, support or financial assistance being offered. Participants suggested the sector was somewhat confused with the requirements of this role and questioned government’s commitment to this reform.

From investigations of change in schools, Fullan (2007a) highlights the importance of trilevel engagement for sustainable change, this means having agreement about the change and a partnership to support the changes at all levels. Participants in this study suggested there was limited engagement (Commonwealth and state government, service provider, and the individual service), and indicated there was no opportunity to voice concern or be involved in the initial policy development. When considering systematic change, important system level functions seem to have been lacking, and as these are foundational for change, their absence immediately impacted upon the achievement of improvements in quality, the goal of the reform. Additional guidance and tangible support from governments was needed to assist implementation of the education leader role within stand-alone services and organisations, and further enhance educational leaders’ abilities to promote quality outcomes.

Structures

The OECD education working paper (Slot, 2018) considers structural quality a precondition for process quality. For example, small staff-child ratios (structural quality) facilitate more frequent proximal interactions between children and engaged adults (process quality). In a similar way, there are structural components which provide support for the enactment of educational leadership. For example, within this study the provision of time for the educational
leader to have the opportunity to enact the duties required of this role was the most frequently perceived prerequisite for success. However, findings reveal that it was common for the educational leader to receive no allocated time to lead in complex areas such as curriculum, pedagogy and practice.

In response to this situation, participants were generous in identifying how best to address these issues. Recommendations included: time allocation to enact the role of educational leader; release time for educators to meet with the educational leader; and time allocation for educational leaders to attend professional learning. Although participants made these suggestions for improvement, in most cases they were unable to address these structural issues within their own context.

A second identified issue was that in many services there was no clear appointment process for the role of educational leader, no clear role description provided, and no guidance given to the educational leader, or their colleagues. Earlier research about this role conducted by Sims et al. (2017) indicated that this was a much-needed resource, particularly if the educational leader was to gain the authority to lead. A fair and transparent recruitment process for the appointment of this role would also have provided benefit.

These structural weaknesses had an impact at the foundational level, and once again served to limit the quality benefits that might have been achieved. Had greater attention, both internally and externally, been placed in this area, the flow-on effects may have been extensive.

**Processes**

Process quality within the ECEC sector is considered to be the primary driver of children’s development (Melhuish et al., 2015). It refers to the child’s experience in the ECEC setting and the emotional and educational quality of staff-child and peer interactions during play and learning (Pianta et al., 2016). In terms of leadership, it relates to the intentional, respectful, and professional relationships developed between ECEC professionals. In recognising the importance of
professional relationships, Davitt and Ryder (2018) suggest relationship building is one of the dispositions of being a successful leader.

Educational leaders in this study reported challenges in establishing professional relationships with colleagues, making it difficult to influence change. Barriers to these relationships included resistance to this role due to: historical ways of working; a lack of understanding about this role; and the most commonly reported reason, a lack of structure that would enable ECEC professionals to come together to engage in pedagogical dialogues. Where participants reported that structures were in place to support allocations of sufficient time, and opportunities to come together, strong professional relationships were reported and examples of how the role benefited educators and their practice detailed.

Orientations

Just as orientational quality is underpinned by ECEC professional beliefs and values; goals and priorities; and services goals and culture (Flückiger, 2018), the beliefs and values about leadership both internally and externally influence the enactment of leadership in services. For instance, the recognition of the value of leadership in ECEC towards quality improvement has been a priority of government and has driven reform from a system level. Yet, these beliefs and values were questioned by some participants of this study due to the lack of involvement and investment by government and its agencies at the time of reform.

Another consideration about values and their influence on change is provided by Fullan (2016) who warns that for successful change, knowledge is needed to shift values and beliefs so that behaviour can change. This prompt is important given that findings from a doctoral study conducted by Hard (2005) also found that the Australian ECEC culture resisted leadership, most likely due to traditionally held beliefs about leadership. Based on this learning, and understanding Fullan’s (2007a) change theory, if the goal is for educational change to occur in the ECEC sector,
understanding is needed about what is considered quality ECEC pedagogy and practice, and also about leadership.

This study has demonstrated the challenges faced by educational leaders when they, or their colleagues, have varying beliefs and values about leadership; when educational leadership is not prioritised by the varying system levels; and when educational leaders are not able to identify as being a leader.

**Contextual influences and the educational leader role**

The ECEC Leadership for Quality framework presented in this thesis supports the idea that leadership is contextualized, with any change to one component of the system, influencing the whole system (Jorde Bloom, 1991; Nupponen, 2005). This understanding requires the change agent, in this case the educational leader, to think about all of the relevant components that affect leadership in their context. This next section will consider each of the contextual factors and the impact they had on leadership enactment as identified by the participants in this study. The discussion begins with service types.

*Service types*

Within this study, participants from four ECEC service types (long day care; kindergarten; preschool, and family day care) provided their lived experiences about the educational leader role in their context. Several participants acknowledged the difference between service types and suggested that the role of educational leader might work better or differently in other service types. For example, participants from family day care highlighted geographical distances within their service operations; educators working individually, and the number of educators within their operation expecting educational support by the educational leader role. In comparison, a kindergarten participant worked in a service that had just two employees, with both located in the same location. These examples showcase the difference between services and how these differences need to be considered when thinking about how to embed educational leadership.
However, findings across both research phases highlighted the scant attention given to service type or consideration of ways to differentiate the role.

Size

As mentioned, ECEC services range in size and this variation impacts on the educational leader and their ability to lead. For example, one educational leader representing a small service stated that she felt obligated to accept the role because there was nobody else. From a different perspective, a participant representing a large service was concerned about the number of educators she was required to lead and questioned how one educational leader could manage it all.

Location

Similarly, the locality of a service, whether urban, regional or remote, may be a factor that influences the ECEC context and in turn the educational leadership in a service. In this study, no mention was made of locality; however, it is reasonable to expect that recruiting early childhood professionals with leadership knowledge and skills in regional and remote areas may be a challenge and a factor which needs due consideration.

Service culture

Service culture is created through the interactions of all stakeholders in the early education and care context including: ECEC professionals, multi-disciplinary professionals, families and children. The beliefs, values, behaviours, and actions of this community create a service culture, which can be a challenge when change is introduced, particularly if stakeholders are not understanding and supportive of change. Understanding the culture of an ECEC context and how it influences leadership is essential for a leader so that they are best able to understand how to lead a service through the change process.

The data from both research phases highlighted different cultures at play in early childhood services. For instance, some services valued the importance of educational leadership and in these
contexts, change was welcomed, and strategies implemented to ensure a focus on improving quality. Others had no existing culture of educational leadership and resisted being led. Many service directors suggested the role of educational leader was not something new, and on this basis, responsibilities were incorporated into their existing role. In other services, this was not the case. In addition, due to the resistance to leadership felt by some educational leaders, or a feeling of being excluded from the team (them and us), being a leader felt uncomfortable to some. The importance of everybody getting on, was a feeling expressed on several occasions.

Most notably in the interviews, kindergarten services reported a higher number of challenges relating to long-standing cultural norms. For instance, participants suggested there was a shift from a once autonomous working environment towards a team culture and ways of working. The notion of working autonomously was attributed to teachers being equal due to their qualifications and therefore not needing leadership.

The quality of the relationships with other staff in ECEC services influenced the ability of the educational leader to lead. When a collaborative approach to leadership was adopted, all ECEC professionals in the service were encouraged to have input into the change process; or educational leaders adapted their leadership to please others and maintain harmony.

The culture within a service also impacted recruitment decisions. Specific to kindergarten services, findings indicated qualifications were considered a necessary criterion for the role of educational leader with teachers (university qualified) automatically selected over early childhood professionals holding vocational qualifications, even though the regulations state ‘most suitable’ rather than ‘highest qualified’. Further, non-merit selection processes that disregarded ability were utilised to appoint the educational leader. For instance, a culture of fairness ‘being fair and sharing the workload’ was deemed a reasonable consideration by participants representing kindergarten services, with an example being that one teacher was given the educational leader and the other nominated supervisor.
Governance

Governance refers to the ECEC service’s “formal structures and accountabilities that inform leadership decision-making” (Waniganayake et al., 2012, p. 60). Those supporting governance responsibilities may be accountable for high-level decisions – leadership, that includes the mission and ethos of the service. The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework recognises the important role governance arrangements have in influencing leadership and change. Good governance requires both understanding rules, procedures and involvement in leadership decision-making, factors often absent in this study. According to several participants the governance arrangements in place within their service (for example, parent committee), often had little involvement in service activity. This absence may be attributed to changes in everyday society (busy parents), or the commercial focus of an ECEC service, often with absent owners or managers. This absence seemed to create an underlining tension between leading and managing, with service directors trying to do all, or lacking the required knowledge and skills to lead and manage the commercial operations of a service whilst also maintaining an educational focus. International research conducted by Fonsén (2013) concludes that for ECEC services in Finland, management and operational issues were often prioritised over educational leadership, a finding also evident in this study. Further, from an international perspective, Penn (2018) warns that educational leadership cannot be assumed in the context of an ECEC service with profits as their mission, therefore suggesting that the concept of leadership requires contextual consideration.

What was also indicated in this study was the personal willingness and goodwill of some educational leaders to successfully meet the needs of operational and educational leadership at a personal cost, motivated by what seems to be a desire to do their best for the service and/or children. These practices are however not sustainable, nor ethical, and these issues need to be addressed to ensure enduring and ethical leadership practice. For example, parent committees and service owners have governance responsibilities in the roles they accept, and where this is not
feasible, services are advised to look for alternative solutions that allow for educational leadership to thrive locally, and not at the cost of the individual service director.

Service mission

The mission of the service refers to the core purpose or reason for an organisation’s existence (Daft, 2015), and this directly affects the leadership of a service. In Australia, like many countries, ECEC has been commercialized and high numbers of services jostle for market share in a competitive context. Often the mission of a service is about profits and expansion strategies, in conflict with the wider system desire for quality ECEC (Goffin, 2013; Goffin & Janke, 2013). These competing motivations provide a challenge for educational leaders. This was demonstrated by the lack of investment and service structures in place to support educational leadership in this study. One participant suggested that policy change requirements should be paid for by the government, rather than owners.

Regardless of mission, a commitment to quality educational leadership can support service quality, which in turn can lead to increased family engagement and satisfaction. Further, in a period of workforce staff shortages, particularly for ECEC teachers, services with quality ECEC, supportive workplace cultures, and with a focus on educational leadership are likely to also experience stability in staff with less staff turnover.

ECEC service context: Summary

When brought together these findings reveal that in the implementation of the educational leader role across the participating services, there was a distinct lack of consideration given to the contextual factors influencing leadership. Contextually driven leadership takes into consideration the social, cultural and political context of the environment (Hujala, 2013), including factors such as the varying knowledge and skills of early childhood professionals, size of service, service type, staffing arrangements, and workplace culture.
This lack of understanding about the influence of context on leadership appears to have created disharmony and tension, particularly in kindergarten services, with the application of a hierarchical model in particular, creating major cultural change for these services. Resistance was met when educational leaders attempted to exert leadership based on their own internal beliefs of what was needed, or what they perceived they should be doing. This resulted in a myriad of reactionary leadership behaviours including: stepping up and trying to lead; trying to meet all needs by being passive and/or over accommodating; refusing to lead; or turning to management and controlling styles of leadership. What was evident from the findings is that a contextually driven model of leadership needed to be understood and enacted by the ECEC sector.

**Leadership essentials**

At the heart of the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework is the leadership essentials frame. The essentials include four important components: the leadership enablers, the personal qualities, leadership styles, and change leadership strategies. Each of these components is necessary for successful leadership.

*Leadership enablers and the educational leader role*

The next aspect of the educational leadership framework to be discussed is that of leadership enablers. The duties and responsibilities of the educational leader are complex and require strong knowledge about leadership, as well as knowledge and skills about ECEC pedagogy and practice. Although many researchers have argued for the inclusion of leadership studies in university teacher training (Campbell-Evans et al., 2014; Dunlop, 2008; Mistry & Sood, 2012), this is not standard in most teaching courses or in vocational training. This means that it is likely that a person appointed to a leadership role in ECEC may not necessarily have the leadership knowledge and skills required to successfully enact that role. However, the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework supports the notion that leadership capabilities can be learnt and developed,
and as such, the leader’s professional learning about leadership can be built but requires a continual focus on learning about leadership.

**Professional learning**

Commitment to professional learning is an essential element for quality educational change (Colmer, 2015), not only as an action of the leader but for the leader. The findings of this research suggest a lack of understanding about the role, and for at least some participants, how to enact the duties and responsibilities that are associated with the role was perhaps influenced by misinformation and a lack of understanding about educational leadership.

For example, within the survey, whilst the majority of participants suggested that they were provided professional learning opportunities to assist the enactment of their new role, the second research phase (interviews) provided opportunity for participants to share deeper insight into these learning opportunities. These data revealed that these learning opportunities were not available at the time of reform and were provided very late in the change process. This meant that for a long period (several years in some cases), participants had very limited learning opportunities available to them. Further, some participants indicated that the professional learning they eventually received did not provide the expected or required level of detail. Although a thorough learning resource (148 pages) was created by the Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority (2019), the role was legislated to begin 1st of January 2013, meaning that there was gap of more than five years between legislation and the creation of support materials.

**Networking**

Networking, well documented in school-based literature (Fullan, 2005b, 2016; Sliwka, 2003; Vijayadevar et al., 2019), provides opportunity for building the collective capacity of organisations. It is much needed in ECEC contexts to support the educational leader role (Rouse & Spradbury, 2016). Lateral capacity building (Fullan, 2016), which brings services or associations together to share learnings, seems to have been the most popular strategy employed
by the educational leaders who participated in this study. However, as noted previously, participants suggested that these opportunities were needed much earlier than provided. In addition, further opportunities for ‘educational leaders’ to come together as equals to share knowledge and to be supported by more experienced leaders were also needed.

One effective networking strategy identified within the data was instigated by an educational leader and delivered through the medium of social media (Facebook). This format gave educational leaders the opportunity to connect to other leaders at their convenience and to gain the support they needed. Unfortunately, examples such as these were rare within the data set.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring is considered another important leadership enabler. Although mentoring is a component of professional learning, it is presented separately in the framework because of its value in assisting leaders to learn how to become successful leaders, and in ensuring continuous professional growth. In the leadership framework, the term mentoring is used as a strategy to acquire skills, with the mentor’s role being to offer advice, and pass on knowledge from his or her experience to the mentee (Tolhurst, 2010), in this case the educational leader. Mentoring is an effective tool in ECEC, particularly given the strong relational focus of this sector. Several participants in this research suggested mentorship and leadership strategies were needed to support their leadership development: however, no formal mentoring opportunities were evident in the data.

**Leadership styles and the educational leader role**

The literature on leadership suggests that distributed leadership is a good fit for ECEC (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), with this in mind when the educational leader role was envisioned (Sims et al., 2017). The findings in this study indicate that a distributed leadership style was employed by a small number of services but not by all. Five participants indicated experiencing a shared leadership style. Overall, the variety in leadership styles adopted by
educational leaders across services was minimal, with participants lived experiences suggesting that leadership and change leadership strategies were few and far between. Three of the leadership styles reported in the lived experiences of participants will be discussed next.

**Transformational**

The National Standards (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013) and the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009a) were used by some leaders as tools to reflect on current practice and to identify changes needed. A variety of other ways to generate reflective practice were also identified and used to provide early childhood professionals with individualised support. In creating these opportunities to reflect on practice, and to look forward towards new, improved ways of working, it was suggested that practice could be transformed. However, in one instance when the realisation that her practices were not current, rather than transforming practice, an early childhood professional chose to take leave.

Two key transformational leadership strategies, developing a vision and establishing collective goals (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), considered important functions for leadership, were seldom mentioned in the survey or interviews, perhaps indicating a lack of leadership knowledge. When considering the main functions of leadership are providing direction (vision and goals), influencing others, and improving outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014), considerable attention is needed to support educational leaders to go beyond leading reflection and engage collaborative processes to establish a collective vision and goals. This will not only assist in making apparent the need to change, but also assist in developing focus and direction towards achieving the collective vision and agreed goals.

**Collaborative**

Developing positive relationships with children, families and with colleagues to support the learning and development of children are considered central to the work of an early childhood education and care professional. The importance of such partnerships, emphasised in the National
Quality Standard (DEEWR, 2009c), influences the leadership enacted within services (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). In this study, reports of leadership that respected and cared about relationships, and strategies that supported collaboration and consultation with all members of the team dominated. The importance and dominance of collaborative approaches to leadership in ECEC has also been highlighted in other research (Hujala et al., 2013), and from research in schools. For example, Robinson (2009) argues that positional leaders have a pivotal role in creating collaborative environments which are inclusive and encourage participation in leadership by all.

**Distributed**

As mentioned earlier, several services enacted a distributed style of leadership. In such instances, the service director focused on managing operations, and the educational leader assumed responsibility for the curriculum, pedagogy, and practice. From the perspective of the educational leaders in services that used such an approach, and in one case the early childhood professional who experienced it, this division of responsibilities worked well. The potential of such an approach to support learning, critical reflection, and promote deep consideration of practice was recognised by the early childhood professional who recalled it as a positive experience, affirming advocacy of such an approach by researchers.

The majority of service directors who took up the role of educational leader held the view that their current position already entailed both the duties and responsibilities of managing a service and leading the educational program. Others, along with educational leaders who accepted the position, claimed that there were no other suitable candidates available. Such views may indicate a reluctance to share perceived authority and control; a lack of knowledge of the benefits of sharing leadership; and/or an unwillingness to share leadership. Whatever the reason, those unwilling or unable to share leadership are constraining the opportunities for others to develop their leadership capacities and be empowered.
A lack of knowledge and skill in the use of suitable leadership approaches was evident in many of the shared experiences provided by study participants (see Chapter 6). In these instances, educational leaders attempted to control or direct others and force change rather than realise change through influence or consensus.

**Personal qualities and the educational leader role**

Drawing on trait theories, the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework foregrounds the personal leadership qualities that support good leadership and successful change. Unlike the original theories, here it is recognised that these qualities can be nurtured and learned, thus reinforcing the importance of investment in the professional learning of educational leaders. Successful leadership requires the leader to be knowledgeable and skilled about change, and this is where the focus of the next section begins.

**Knowledge and skills**

An educational leader inspires, motivates, affirms and challenges the practice and pedagogy of educators (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, n.d.-c), as well as supports knowledge development in others and the translation of this knowledge into everyday practice (Bøe & Hognestad, 2017). The knowledge base required by educational leaders to undertake these roles is complex and multi-layered. They require knowledge and skill about leading and change (Fullan, 2007a; Rodd, 2013a; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007; Stamopoulos, 2012); the National Quality Standards; child development and learning; curriculum development, and pedagogy and practice; (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019), and andragogy (Ord et al., 2013). Importantly, they need the practical skills to apply this knowledge through leadership, mentoring, and professional relationships with others (Rouse & Spradbury, 2016).

Although the majority of educational leaders participating in this study were service directors and university-qualified teachers; not all were. This raises questions about the depth of
knowledge and experience with ECEC needed for the role, and the capacity of educational leaders without this knowledge and experience to influence others who have (Clarkin-Phillips, 2011; Colmer et al., 2015).

Data across both research phases suggest that although there are knowledge considerations for this role, seldom was it reported as a factor in recruitment. Some participants (specifically early childhood professionals) considered the leadership they experienced was not good leadership and did not promote quality ECEC practice.

**Dispositions**

Participants suggested that dispositions or necessary qualities needed for the role of educational leader included being a good communicator; people focused; team focused and a leader of practice. However, they expressed concerns in both research phases that the dispositions such as having good communication skills and understanding how to build collaborative relationships were not evident.

**Expectations**

Being the educational leader is considered a significant role (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019). However, participants of this study suggest it is not always perceived this way. Some perceived the role simply as additional work; others saw it as a part of the service director’s role. The findings indicate both educational leaders and early childhood professionals perceive a lack of understanding and a lack of clarity around the educational leader role. Notably though, the majority of participants had strong expectations of the role. All participants expected the focus to be on leading education; however, expectations of what this entailed varied. Most participants expected the leader to be an “expert” and their role to transfer knowledge to the rest of the service team. This expectation seems at odds with notions of distributing and sharing leadership and expertise and has the potential to disempower other team
members. Such a perception of the educational leader as “knowledge provider” adds unnecessary additional pressure especially with the reported lack of time allocated to the role.

The analysis reveals the commitment by early childhood educational and care professionals who accepted this role. Without any financial benefit or acknowledgment for service, they have donated many hours of personal time to attempt to make this role work. Great expectations were placed on these leaders, both by others and themselves, often with limited support from the service.

**Change leadership practices and the educational leader role**

At the top of the leadership framework, change leadership practices draw from the change leadership theory identified by Fullan et al. (2005). Accounts provided by participants of this study indicate that few experienced suitable processes of change leadership from any level of the ECEC system. Each of the change leadership practices is detailed next, beginning with motivation.

**Motivates others**

Motivation is considered the “holy grail of change” (Fullan, 2016, p. 39). Change leaders persuade and influence, motivating groups to achieve and realise shared goals (Rodd, 2013a). Fullan (2016) suggests motivation includes creating new understanding and meanings (beliefs) that support new ways of thinking, that can, in turn, influence new ways of behaving, leading to the creation of a shared vision. Further, motivation is about the change agent understanding their role in the process of change and activating how others see potential change (Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2014). Whilst a focus on motivation or inspiring others was important to some participants, this was not typical practice, with many educational leaders acting as support agents rather than identifying as a change agent. The few examples of motivation in this study suggest that it was effective. Educational leaders such as Stella (Kindy) and Nancy (FDC), reported that motivating staff supported a positive change to service culture.
Builds capability and capacity

Building capability and capacity refers to the individual and collective capability of early childhood professionals to understand new theories and knowledge and translate them into new and improved ways of working. Additionally, in ECEC this capability is generated through effective relationships, and an environment of collective learning in situ, where knowledge is created together and shared through the use of distributed leadership strategies.

Leadership and professional learning are considered integral for such curriculum reform (Colmer et al., 2015; Muijs et al., 2004; Stamopoulos, 2012). Findings indicate that educational leaders believed they were responsible for contributing to the ongoing learning of early childhood professionals; however, this belief may not have led to leadership action. One educational leader was adamant she provided no leadership.

Several leadership practices considered effective in the literature (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007) were perceived to be employed by educational leaders. These included: mentoring, reflective practice, modelling content knowledge and theory, and the skills for appropriate interactions with children (Siraj et al., 2017). How participants supported capacity building in their local contexts varied, some services embedding many of these leadership strategies while others provided few examples. Similar to other research about professional learning in ECEC (Colmer et al., 2014), established organisational structures (allocations of time, release time for early childhood professionals, financial allocations) were needed in services to support learning opportunities. Findings suggest that for most participants, time to support learners was limited. This is of concern as literature suggests that for practice change to occur, educators’ existing understandings and practice must be challenged by new learning and theories, along with opportunity for reflection, and opportunity to learn new skills (Fullan, 2001a; Wong, Sumsion, & Press, 2012). There are several examples in the findings of this study of strong leadership leading to successful educational change. Success has been attributed to early childhood educational and
care professionals working collaboratively to share their knowledge and skills. Associated services invested in structures that enabled leaders with specific knowledge or skills to lead the development of others in the team (Spillane, 2006). Such services valued the importance of learning in the local context (Fullan, 2007a, 2016) and committed to ongoing professional learning.

*Creates and actions shared vision and goals*

There was ambiguity in the findings regarding participants’ concepts of a vision and a philosophy. Several spoke about a vision, but few seemed to have a clear understanding of what it represents. Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet (2014) warn that a vision is central to successful leadership. Findings from earlier research by Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) indicated that direction and motivation towards change were achieved through the process of developing a shared vision. The development and enactment of a shared vision involves deep levels of ongoing shared reflection, which Fullan (2007a) refers to as a bias for reflective action. The limited opportunity for participants to come together and focus on pedagogy and practice identified in this study was not conducive to the development of a shared vision.

*Generates collaborative action*

Generating collaborative action from the perspective of ECEC includes understanding the some of the other change practices (understanding the change process, motivating the team) to enact the change and reflecting on progress of agreed goals. In Australia, reflective practice is encouraged within the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a). Being reflective encourages early childhood professionals to consider current practice and examine opportunities for improvement (Stamopoulos & Barblett, 2018). According to the participants in this study, reflection was a common practice of educational leaders, but few examples of this were evident. Further research is needed to understand the depth of reflection needed to support early childhood professionals’ understanding of their practice and drive unified educational change.


**Enacts leadership priority**

For leaders within services, educational leadership was not a priority. Similar to the findings of international research (Fonsén, 2013) service operations often took precedence over leadership activity. Although there were examples of driving pedagogical improvement and making leadership of pedagogy and practice a priority, in most cases the focus was on management, operations and elements of support provided, rather than intentional pedagogical leadership. Further, teaching responsibilities limit the capacity of educational leaders in kindergarten services to provide leadership across contexts.

**Engages all levels**

Participants highlighted the paucity of action from government and related agencies in terms of developing a shared understanding of leadership in ECEC and supporting the implementation of the educational leader role. Stamopoulos and Barblett (2018) concur and identify a lack of support mechanisms for change management in ECEC. Further, there is a perceived disconnect at the service governance level, leaving service directors overburdened or lacking direction. Fullan (2007a) warns of the importance of all levels of the system being aligned and working mutually towards the desired change. In creating the *ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework*, the importance of each component is acknowledged. For change to occur the focus cannot be about the educational leader alone, for successful change, the whole system needs to understand their continued role and become engaged.

**Components of quality and the educational leader role**

There are four primary components of quality identified in the literature (Flückiger, 2018; Torii et al., 2017) and include systems, structures, processes and orientations. These components have been explained in detail in the literature review (see Chapter 3) and positioned at the top of the ECEC leadership for quality framework.
Leadership is considered fundamental to improving the quality of early childhood education and care provision with successful leadership impacting positively on children, families, communities, and ECEC professionals employed in the sector (Brownlee et al., 2010; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). This research supports this claim with participants perceiving management, educators, families and children the beneficiaries of leadership enacted by the educational leader. While this research did not seek to define the components of quality influenced by the educational leader role, through the interviews, lived experiences of key informants provided some insight into the aspects of quality activated by the enactment of leadership by the educational leader role. This was particularly evident where the role was perceived to be working well. Although only a few examples, the contribution provided by enactment of leadership towards the four components of quality are discussed next.

System quality

Educational leadership is considered an important component of quality at all levels of ECEC system provision (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). A reform of regulatory standards led to the introduction of the educational leader role in services, designed as a change agent for improving quality. However, although having an educational leader is a step towards leadership and quality, an absence of funding, and investment by government constrained this opportunity. Regardless, there are several examples within this study which have embraced the leadership opportunity and ensured this role works. The findings of this study highlight that the role is perceived to be of benefit, but for many, only working sometimes. A further investment by the system is needed if the potential of the educational leader role for quality is to be achieved.

Orientational quality

Orientational components of quality include such factors as the beliefs and values held by the ECEC professionals and services; goals and aspirations; and can include workplace culture. The findings have provided examples of how a couple of educational leaders have challenged the
existing values and beliefs held by early childhood professionals, and in both cases, the educational leader reported that their service was better for this. In one of these examples, through mentoring offered by the educational leader a different perspective about children and sleep was achieved and improved practice for the child.

**Structural and process quality**

These two components of quality have been combined for this discussion because it seems that the structural components of quality are needed to enable process quality to occur. Within this study there are a couple of examples where leadership was shared. In two such examples, structures were developed that allowed the educational leader time with early childhood professionals to have professional dialogues. These rich opportunities provided time to interact, reflect, be challenged, and to learn. Professional conversations are important vehicles for stirring thought, reflection and lead the construction of new knowledge (Timperley, 2015), important ingredients of a quality ECEC environment. Although the focus of this study is the inputs to improving ECEC quality – the foundational components, the ECEC service context, and the leadership attributes – examples provided in this section draw our attention to the output of leadership and remind us of the quality components.

**Drawing Conclusions**

In this final section, I draw together what was revealed by applying the framework to the findings outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. In doing this, my purpose is to identify those aspects of the framework that are most successful in enabling educational leaders to maximise the potential of the role, and those aspects of the framework that are constraining this potential. This structure is organized according to the three key components of the framework which influence quality, they are: foundational components; contextual influences; and the leadership attributes.
Foundational components

When applying the framework to the findings, it is clear that there are aspects of each of the three components of the framework that are either enabling or constraining the potential of leadership by the educational leader, and being that these are interconnected, an effect to one often affects the other. To begin the discussion, I start first with the outermost frame, the external environment, and the foundational components that traverse this frame. What is most noticeable is the absence of many of the foundational components, and this is a barrier to leadership. In terms of enabling factors, leadership in ECEC is recognised by policymakers within various government agencies for the important role it has in improving quality. This belief and value (orientational aspect of the foundational components) has enabled the creation of the educational leader role, a structural component that has been designed to act as a change agent for improving quality in ECEC.

Constraining the potential for leadership are the missing aspects from the system, specifically financial investment and funds to develop and implement the structural components needed for change; a transparent change process including support and resources. Structural aspects are needed so as to generate processes that motivate and engage the ECEC service context - important steps needed for driving major change. The attention needed to the foundational components to best support the educational leader role, point to a tension in play. There is an obvious desire by government for leadership in ECEC; however, the long-term benefits for improving quality versus timely investment. Change on this scale requires an adequate financial investment to ensure guidance, support, and resources are available to the sector, if the potential for the educational role for improving quality in Australian ECEC is to be achieved.

I now turn the discussion from the external frame to the internal frame; the ECEC service context, which includes the influence of the context and the bodies that provide governance to services. It is within this frame that the impact of leadership constrained by factors from the
external frame become noticeable, and this contributes to the sector being unprepared for the introduction of the role of educational leader. Again, what is apparent from both Phase One and Two, is that for most services, attention to the foundational components has been minimal, and this constrains leadership from this internal frame.

From an orientational aspect, a lack of vision, direction, and guidance about leadership, and specifically about the educational leader role by the governance bodies of services was common. What is unclear from the research is whether this was a symptom of the lack of information about the educational leader role provided by policy makers; whether it was due to a lack of value or knowledge and skill about leadership and change; or both. Either way, attention to the foundational components with consideration to the local context at the service level is needed if the potential of the educational leader role for improving quality is to be achieved.

In this study, there are examples of where the role of educational leader was perceived to work well, and in these cases, each of the foundational components were addressed within the ECEC service context, along with consideration of the local contextual factors (detailed next). When leadership was valued (orientational components), existing leadership and management approaches were reviewed to incorporate new leadership approaches (structural components), and these were supported through an investment in people, time, availability and resources. This investment enabled a range of leadership styles to be incorporated, often shared in various ways (process). Enabling factors included: an allocation of time to prioritise and enact the duties of the educational leader; employment arrangements that ensured the availability and access of the educational leader to mentor early childhood professionals, and rosters with scheduled meeting times that enabled opportunities for professional conversations about program and practice. Each of these leadership actions are considered essential for building professional knowledge and growth (Timperley, 2015). In summary, this section shows that when services invest in the
foundational components, with consideration to their local context, the role of the educational leader is perceived to work well.

**Contextual influences**

Context influences leadership, and major barriers to leadership by the educational leader occurred when services implemented the role with little or no consideration of the contextual factors that make each service unique, including: service type, size, location, service culture, governance, and service mission. It is clear that there is no one best way to implement this role. What is needed to enable leadership is guidance and support about educational change to assist services to consider their local context and find strategies that provide opportunity for leadership by the educational leader.

Workplace culture has a strong impact on leadership. The culture of a service played a major role in either enabling or constraining leadership by the educational leader. Enabling cultures included services with an established collaborative or shared approach to leadership, and/or a strong learning culture; whilst cultures resistant to educational leadership often had limited or no exposure to leadership, as they were driven by a perception of professionals being ‘equal’ and working autonomously, or with positional roles having a strong focus on management and operations. Assistance is needed to support leaders to understand existing workplace cultures and where necessary, develop new cultures that are supportive and focus on improving quality ECEC.

The involvement of the governance body of the service also influences leadership. For some services, the governance body was inactive, and it was reported that the service director was responsible for their duties and responsibilities. In this study, service directors were most often the educational leader. There appears to be a perception across the various service types that service directors can do-it-all. For some, this approach has constrained leadership, with management and operational needs prioritised above leadership. Where the role of educational leader has been
reported to work well, existing workloads were considered, and in some cases leadership shared. Assisting those in governance positions to understand different approaches to leadership, while reviewing positional roles to determine suitable workloads seems to be a priority.

The prioritisation of operational needs over leadership highlights another constraint which was revealed in both research phases. This reform has been implemented with what seems to be the assumption that ECEC services have a mission to provide quality ECEC. However, this may not be the mission for all services, particularly when their ethos aligns with a commercial focus.

Leadership essentials

Attention now shifts to the inner-most frame of the ECEC leadership for quality framework, which focuses on the leadership essentials. These essentials include the leadership enablers; leadership styles; personal qualities and change leadership practices. Notably, the findings of this study suggest that leadership can be developed and nurtured when certain essential factors are in place. This insight highlights the importance of investing in leadership knowledge and skill through leadership enablers (inputs). Educational leaders highlighted the benefit of leadership enablers, specifically networking and professional learning opportunities for their contribution to leadership success. While, for some, opportunities to attend learning opportunities were available and considered an enabling factor, many within this study indicated no opportunity to attend professional learning.

Participants identified having knowledge and skill about leadership, and early childhood pedagogy and practice as enabling factors vital for the educational leader role. Personal qualities also included good communication skills, being approachable and being able to share knowledge. Constraints to leadership included the educational leader not identifying as a leader, and not leading. Factors that influenced this perception included a lack of perceived authority provided by the governance body, having no title, or position description, and receiving no remuneration or change to working conditions for undertaking higher level duties. It was evident that to enable
leadership, leaders often had to advocate for the resources needed to enable the role to be successful. This was particular evident when governance structures were absent. These constraints need to be addressed if leadership for improving quality by the educational leader role is to be achieved.

The study highlights a range of leadership styles employed by the educational leader. Where the educational leader role was perceived to be working well, the leader enacted leadership that was more inclusive and collaborative, with members of teams being involved in decision-making and enacting elements of leadership. Leadership was also shared, and in a couple of cases, a transformational leadership style, with a vision for better outcomes for children, meant that individuals focused their attention on the principles and practices of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009a). Where leadership was constrained leaders seemed to have limited knowledge about leadership and it appeared change was forced and leadership style more authoritarian. Further, participants from a few small services suggested concerns that leading would have negative impacts on professional relationships. This interpretation of leadership potentially constrains leadership and highlights a limited understanding about leadership and local cultural issues at play that need attention towards more supportive ways of working.

The participants’ accounts in this study highlight that change leadership practices rarely featured. Few services indicated having shared goals, and only a couple of participants indicated their service had a vision for improving quality. Some educational leaders recognised their role for building capability and establishing the learning culture, however for others, the focus was on compliance. These practices seem constrained due to a lack of knowledge and attention about change process in the sector. To enable change leadership practices to occur, an investment in building the capability of the workforce is needed and structural components that allow time for the enactment of leadership.
Conclusion

In this chapter, the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework was applied to support further understanding of the perceptions of participants involved in this study. By doing so, it has identified those factors that are enabling leadership by the educational leader, and those that are holding back its potential. It has highlighted the interconnectedness of each component of the framework, suggesting there is no one component more important than another. This also emphasises the important role each stakeholder has for addressing the necessary aspects that go towards supporting leadership. Unless each of the constraints are addressed, quality is compromised. After considering the findings of this study in detail, the next, and final chapter of this thesis will detail the conclusion of this study and implications for those who are considered to have a stake in ECEC leadership for quality.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

This study investigated leadership within the Australian ECEC context; more specifically, it aimed to gather the perceptions of ECEC professionals working directly in approved services about a mandated leadership role entitled educational leader. The study was undertaken within the context of ongoing international research findings linking quality ECEC services and quality leadership. It was driven by a personal perspective that there is currently a vacuum of leadership within the Australian ECEC profession – which the effective implementation of the educational leader role might help to fill. The significance of this study is outlined in the following section.

This study applied a methodology based on an interpretivist research paradigm which enabled me to listen to the voices of participants about their lived experiences in relation to the educational leader role, and about their perceptions of the role’s potential for improving quality. A distinguishing feature of this study is its scale, with data being collected from participants across Australia. The first phase involved a national survey and included all states and territories, with a total of 279 respondents. Then, after a sampling process was completed, interviews were conducted with 22 key informants representing most states and territories. The study applied an explanatory, mixed methods design, and captured the voices of both educational leaders and early childhood professionals. Importantly, this study provided an opportunity to learn about the educational leader role from the contributions of all approved early childhood education and care service types. This study has the potential to be of significant interest and benefit to the ECEC profession and adds an essential dimension to the discourse surrounding leadership in ECEC.
Findings

The findings of this research titled: A Change Agent for Improving Quality in Australian Early Childhood Education and Care draws on current evidence to address the research question: What perceptions do ECEC professionals hold about the educational leader and the potential of the role for improving quality in Australian ECEC contexts?

The question was supported by a series of three sub-questions:

1. Who is the educational leader in early childhood education and care services and how is this determined?
2. How is the role of educational leader enacted within services?
3. How is the role of educational leader perceived as contributing to quality education and care?

In summary, and aligned to the Leadership for Quality Framework, this research concludes the following:

External environment

- Timely system leadership and change practices are needed that ensure clear explanation, guidance of policy, and implementation processes.

ECEC service context

- The absence of a transparent, merit-based recruitment process and artefacts such as position descriptions are barriers to the identity of the role of educational leader;
- Misunderstanding about leadership of pedagogy, leadership and management exists with management prioritised over pedagogical leadership;
- ECEC workforce roles are blurred between providers, directors and educational leaders and this effects capacity and creates tension due to competing workloads;
- Consideration of context for leadership is essential and most often not applied;
When context is considered, unique models of leadership are developed, implemented and perceived to work well; and

- Structural factors such as an allocation of time to enact the duties and responsibilities of the educational leader role are needed.

**Leadership essentials**

- The role of the educational leader is complex, and for effective pedagogical leadership requires knowledge and skill about leadership, leading change, andragogy and pedagogy and practice;

- Good communication is considered a necessary trait of educational leaders;

- Collaborative leadership based on relationship dominated;

- Change leadership practices were limited with few services guided by a collected vision and agreed goals and this limits leadership enactment; and

- Few leaders who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

**Quality components**

- Both educational leaders and early childhood professionals perceive the role of educational leader to be of benefit to management, ECEC professionals, families and children;

- Early childhood professionals perceive educational leaders collaborating with management, with management reported as often prioritised over pedagogical leadership; and

- This role is perceived as only working sometimes and if the perceived benefits of this role are to be maximised, additional attention is needed to this role as outlines in the recommendations, discussed shortly.

Following this summary, the findings are now applied to address each of the research questions. Beginning with the first research sub-question that focused on who the educational
leader is, and the appointment decisions. The findings from both research phases indicate that most often, the educational leader’s role and responsibilities were incorporated into the existing service director role, the unique nature of the service context not considered which led to created tensions of competing workloads and management prioritised over pedagogical leadership. Findings also indicated other roles within service seeming to be blurred, with the duties and responsibilities of approved providers – parent committees or absent owners delegated to the ‘wearer of all hats’ the service director, with pedagogical leadership placed further down the list of priorities.

There are also examples in this study of the role being held by others. According to participants, this appointment decision was often at the direction or request of management and the reason for this choice was not always known, indicating an absence of a transparent, merit-based recruitment process. Participants identified a range of other appointment decisions which rarely considered the merits of leadership knowledge or capability. Some participants indicated feeling obligated or pressured to accept the role of educational leader, suggesting local contextual factors made it difficult to find alternatives. These responses suggest a narrow view of the possible approaches to leadership that could be adapted for this role with most services taking a similar approach to the implementation of the role. This narrow view was evident in both Phase One and Two. However, in the latter, a few services with a deeper understanding about leadership and context, developed and implemented unique operating models with the inclusion of much needed structural components of availability of time for the role and theses were perceived as beneficial.

The second sub-question explored how the educational leader role was enacted within the service. Participants identified a lack of purpose, clarity and direction to support the implementation of the educational leader role, and with an absence of information and models from both the external and internal environments it is no surprise that leadership was constrained. The findings indicate there was limited evidence of a range of leadership styles in use, the application of change leadership practice was scarce, and a lack of vision and agreed goals was
somewhat limiting. Collaborative leadership styles were favoured by participants, but resistance was evident when beliefs and values about leadership varied and leadership was not prioritised. Some educational leaders in both phases reported the difficulty of identifying as the leader without a position description, title, or benefits for taking on higher level duties. Structural factors such as an allocation of time and availability to early childhood professionals also constrained leadership, with these themes dominating in both research phases.

The final research sub-question considered how the role of educational leader contributed to quality in education and care. Overwhelmingly, findings highlight that even though the implementation of the role is a benefit to management, educators, families and children, to what degree this is the case is contested, with those in the role perceiving the benefit to be higher than those outside the role. In addition, it appears that the success comes at the personal expense of the individual leader, with key duties and responsibilities being completed in their own time. The role of educational leader is complex, and for effective pedagogical leadership an investment of knowledge and skills about leadership, leading change, andragogy and pedagogy and practice essential, as currently for many participants of this study, this knowledge is simply missing, with no clear vision and collective goals for quality ECEC.

In summary, across both Phases One and Two, early childhood professionals and educational leaders appear to value the role of educational leader and feel it has an important role to play in improving quality in the Australian ECEC context. However, the role is only perceived to be working sometimes and only in some ways. This is problematic. If improving quality is to be achieved, maximising the potential of this role is critical.

Significance

This study contributes to the body of research on leadership in the Australian ECEC context and specifically adds to the growing evidence about the positional role of educational leader. The understandings come from listening to the lived experiences of those directly impacted by the
mandated reform: the educational leaders and the recipients of their leadership, the early childhood professionals. This is one of few studies that draws on both these perspectives and is unique in its reach across Australia and inclusion of varied service types. Understanding the role of the educational leader requires attention being drawn to the conscious experience of the participant – as they perceive the world (Nelm, 2014), and highlights the importance of this study design.

Further, this study contributes through the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data that enabled the researcher to see common themes that emerged, and then to examine these further through the process of interviews. The study does not claim that the views and insights gained in this study reflect the entire ECEC sector, but there is identified tension between system expectations of quality and a reluctance to invest in the components necessary for large-scale change.

This study provides evidence of educational leaders’ and early childhood professionals’ perceptions about the benefits of the educational leader role, and also adds further to the evidence base about perceptions of the educational leader and implementation approaches taken by the ECEC sector (Fleet et al., 2015; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016). Another significant finding from this Australian study that supported international findings (Fonsén, 2013) was that operational matters were often prioritised over educational leadership, particularly when service directors also held the duties and responsibilities of the educational leader.

This study offers further evidence of the barriers to leadership when context is not considered (Hujala, 2004). The finding also adds to the growing call for investment in ongoing professional learning opportunities about leadership and leading change (Ebbeck et al., 2014; Rouse & Spradbury, 2016; Waniganayake, 2014), including mentoring for the ECEC profession. The major contribution of this study is the framework that has been developed to guide the sector and to add to the discourse, and this is detailed next.
The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework

In the previous chapter, a framework entitled the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework (see Chapter 7) was presented. This framework brings together some of the key findings of this study and significant literature, including from the fields of quality in ECEC, leadership, and educational change, and applies this material specifically to the ECEC context. The framework identifies those features that enable the educational leader and those that can maximise the role’s potential for improving quality. The framework provides opportunities for those who have a stake in ECEC leadership to reflect upon and then enact the changes needed to improve quality through leadership.

As such, this framework is highly significant and should be of real benefit to the sector. It has the potential to guide policymakers and their agencies about funding considerations, future planning, and possible partnerships with other agencies and the sector in supporting leadership for quality; governance structures for thinking about the contextual factors that may influence their own service context; and the enablers that are likely needed to support the knowledge and build capability in their educational leader. The framework also provides leaders with an opportunity to build their professional identity in this role by showcasing the leadership attributes necessary for the role, and to advocate for the resources needed to enact their role well. Finally, the framework can be used by leaders or aspiring leaders to self-reflect and consider future development, or for planning future career paths.

Implications

Implications emerging from these findings are relevant to four stakeholder groups: policymakers within various government agencies; the bodies providing governance across the various service types; educators and other professionals working within the ECEC sector; and finally, training and education providers including universities and training organisations.
Implications for government

This study builds on existing research that has considered the educational leader role (see Chapter 3), and it will be of no surprise to those working in the sector that a key finding of this study is that implementation of the role has been problematic. The participants involved in this study repeatedly noted that educational leaders must have a high level of knowledge and skill in pedagogy, leadership, and change, therefore holding only a certificate III qualifications is not sufficient to be appointed to the role of educational leader. The findings indicated that new knowledge, outside of what is taught in education qualifications about leadership, and change leadership is needed. The absence of this leadership knowledge within the sector, together with the lack of clarity and commitment to the educational leader role, limits its potential and effectiveness. It would seem, therefore, that simply mandating policy is not enough. The implementation of new policy initiatives such as the introduction of an educational leader role constitutes a major change. Leading such change requires an understanding of the complexity of this long-term process and involves the development, resourcing and implementation of a detailed change process, similar to the change leadership practices presented in the ECEC Leadership for Quality framework.

A key implication, therefore, is that government agencies need to do more to implement this role successfully. In the last year, this need seems to have been recognised with several welcomed initiatives undertaken, including, and not limited to, the recent release of The Educational Leader Resource (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019) and a change from earlier versions of the Guide to the National Standard (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011, 2013), now with a strong link to the role of educational leader and committing governance bodies to supporting this role. The Guide to the National Standard (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018, p. 303) Element
7.2.2, now states: “The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementing of the educational program and assessment planning cycle”.

Although these resources go some way towards supporting the educational leader role, much more is needed if the full potential of the educational leadership role is to be realised. Recommendations include:

- Implementing the ECEC Leadership for Quality framework to guide and engage all levels of the ECEC system;
- Motivating the sector for change by providing an understanding about the connection between leadership, quality ECEC, and child outcomes;
- Promoting *The Educational Leader Resource* (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019) to ensure clarity about the role;
- Developing an educational leader self-assessment tool based on the Educational Leader Resource and the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework, which measures the abilities of the leader on pedagogy and practice, leadership, and leading change. This would provide further guidance to the leaders on how to enact this role, and how to improve;
- Investing in leadership and capacity building across all levels of the ECEC sector. This involves:
  - partnering with university and training organisations to develop courses within relevant ECEC qualifications, and develop evidence-based, targeted professional learning opportunities for all levels of the ECEC workforce;
  - partnering with the sector to establish an ongoing leadership mentoring program for educational leaders;
  - providing funding for educational leaders to attend approved leadership training; and
developing exemplar resources that are accessible and relevant to all ECEC service types that present different approaches to the implementation of the educational leader role, and examples of leadership;

- Reviewing the National Laws and Regulations associated with the educational leader role to ensure each service has an appointed educational leader aligned with minimum qualifications (e.g., early childhood teacher);

- Partnering with the sector to establish a career pathway for the educational leader that includes an industrial award recognition for the higher-level tasks and responsibilities of this role, and recognition for postgraduate studies in educational leadership; and

- Developing and implementing an Australian Professional Standard for Educational Leaders that is freely accessible.

**Implications for governance bodies of services**

The findings of this study indicate that within the majority of services represented within this study, the role of educational leader was implemented with little or no contextual consideration. This has meant that services did not sufficiently consider their own context (service type, size, location, service culture, service governance, mission) when determining how best to implement the educational leader role. Given the reciprocal determinism of context and leadership, the findings suggest a need to consider the various contextual factors that influence services locally to determine how best to support the management and operations of the service and enable leadership. Considering context would also support the following implication.

Participants in this study indicate that the level of management and leadership provided by the governance structure, service director and educational leader varied across services, meaning the range of responsibilities and tasks enacted by each role differed. It was found that some contexts prevented educational leadership when it rested solely within the service director (or equivalent role) or when it was achieved at personal expense and cost to the leader. Attention is
needed to review each of the service management and leadership positions to determine roles and responsibilities, and what can be reasonably and successfully achieved by each role, remembering that the new Guide to the National Standards (ACECQA, 2018) mandates governance bodies to support the educational leader role. The ECEC Leadership for Quality framework presented can assist individual services to consider their local context when reflecting on leadership and management roles and develop leadership implementation plans.

Within this study the educational leader was most often combined with the service director role; seldom was the role of educational leader distributed or shared with another. This situation was often not ideal, as management concerns were prioritised over educational concerns. The reason for this dual appointment varied, however; on the few occasions when leadership was shared, it was seen as supporting the service director, providing educational benefits, and empowering the educational leader. Acknowledging international research about teacher leadership, governance bodies of services need to look for opportunities to share leadership and encourage a culture that empowers multiple leaders. It seems reasonable to suggest that an investment in leadership is needed for the ECEC profession to ensure leadership is understood, valued, and the potential of distributing leadership realised. With the recent release of resources about the role of educational leader, in particular The Educational Leader Resource (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2019), a review of the local approach applied to implement the educational leader role would seem to be good leadership practice.

**Implications for educational leaders**

Many educational leaders in this study highlighted a need for knowledge about the role and the skills required to lead. Findings also suggested that for some participants, it was difficult to identify as being a leader without authority, title, and structures to enable them to lead. With leadership recognised as an important function for educational reform, and a component necessary for quality ECEC, educational leaders need to view themselves as leaders, prioritise leadership and
commit to leading. This involves developing knowledge and skills about leadership and change, and fostering personal qualities considered important for leading. The framework provides opportunity for educational leaders to self-reflect and determine where best to invest in their own personal growth. It also provides a tool to use with management to advocate for the role and negotiate the necessary enabling structures and resources considered most suitable for the local context.

**Implications for early childhood professionals**

The findings of this study highlight several implications for early childhood professionals. First, with evidence in hand about the link between leadership and ECEC quality, no longer is it appropriate for early childhood professionals to resist leadership and work alone. The ECEC Leadership for Quality framework recognises that everyone has the potential to be a leader and promotes collaborative and shared leadership styles and provides opportunity for all early childhood professionals to understand leadership, self-assess against the framework and where required building their own leadership capability.

The second implication for early childhood professionals is the transparency of the leadership attributes needed by the educational leader to successfully lead. In particular, knowledge and skill about leadership and early childhood were identified as foundational. These identified aspects provide a clear career pattern for those early childhood professionals who may have ambitions to take up a positional leadership role. The ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework provides opportunity for early childhood professionals to reflect on their leadership capabilities and determine where best to invest in their professional growth.

**Implications for universities and training providers**

This study identified issues around education and training that have implications for the ECEC profession. Participants of this study suggested leaders were ill-prepared to implement the educational leader role, with some leaders providing insight into the resistance they experienced
when they attempted to lead. Teacher education and vocational training organisations therefore need to better prepare the workforce so that leadership is understood and valued and professionals gain the required knowledge and skills necessary to lead and be led. This requires a commitment by institutions to prioritise leadership in their courses and vary modes of learning to meet the needs of this sector. Further, it is important for the existing workforce to have opportunity to develop the required knowledge and skills about leadership and leading change. This means that training needs to be targeted and varied for stakeholders who have involvement in ECEC leadership. University and training providers may find the ECEC Leadership for Quality Framework useful for considering learning objectives when designing programs.

Limitations

The limitations of this study have been discussed within the relevant chapters, and this section will review them. The first limitation relates to the sampling technique used within the survey phase of the study (Phase One). It was a non-probability, purposeful sampling technique which supported the recruitment of participants who were geographically dispersed. Whilst this gave the survey breadth, this sampling method restricted the ability to recruit multiple participants from the one service context. The inclusion of multiple participants from the one service would have been particularly useful when considering differences between the perceptions of educational leaders and early childhood professionals in terms of leadership tasks enacted and the beneficiaries of these actions. Multiple responses from one service may have strengthened the study’s findings.

A second limitation, outlined in Chapter 5, was that the survey design did not allow for the gathering of data from the early childhood professionals about the qualifications and experience of the appointed educational leader in their service. This information would have provided a fuller picture of the experience and educational backgrounds of educational leaders.
Future Research Opportunities

While this study contributes to the discourse about leadership for quality in Australian ECEC contexts, several related research topics have been identified that require investigation. First, further investigation is needed to understand styles of leadership in action. Educational leaders in this study frequently reported a commitment to relationship-focused approaches to leadership and applied collaborative styles of leading that were considered highly consultative in nature. Research is needed to determine how collaborative / consultative the processes are, or whether in fact participants felt obligated to agree with the positional leader.

The second area requiring further research relates to the limitation presented above about qualifications and experience held by the educational leader. Research is warranted to gain an understanding about the qualifications needed to undertake the educational leader role successfully. Findings in this study indicated that approximately a third of services involved in the survey had educational leaders with vocational qualifications only. How successful vocationally trained educational leaders with Certificate III or Diploma of Early Childhood Education qualifications (or equivalent) are in providing educational guidance to teachers with specialised knowledge and 4-year university qualifications needs further investigation. Also, the merits of appointing educational leaders based on length of time in a service (often framed as experience in a service) rather than the level of education needs investigation. This is particularly important given that in 2020, the National Quality Framework (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018) will require the appointment of a second teacher or suitably qualified person in approved service-based ECEC contexts that have 60 or more approved child places. As noted in Chapter 7, the sector in Australia is currently experiencing workforce issues with a high rate of teacher turnover, particularly in long day care service types, and ECEC teachers are in high demand. This means that it is particularly important for services to have a supportive culture in place locally that includes strong leadership so as to attract and keep teachers.
Concluding Statement

So many years on, I reflect back on the thoughts that ran through my head whilst sitting on that bus in Reggio Emilia. At that time, I was concerned that there was a vacuum in leadership within Australian ECEC services and that this was limiting the quality of service provision. As I draw this thesis to a close, I realise that much has changed in this landscape: we now have a role dedicated to leading, a framework to guide leadership for quality, and a growing number of services where leadership for quality ECEC is now the priority. However, for most participants in this study the implementation of the role has been problematic. Much remains to be done by all stakeholders to maximise the potential of this role as a key agent for improving the quality of ECEC, including sector-wide investment in and understanding of the importance of building the knowledge and capabilities associated with leadership necessary to effect real and sustainable change.


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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey

Thank you for participating in this research!

The focus of this research is to examine the role of the educational leader and its enactment within early childhood education and care. Additionally, the research will examine the role's impact on children's education and care from the perceptions of the educator working within the field.

The two main questions are:

1. How is the role of educational leader enacted in Australian education and care contexts?

2. What are the perceptions of educators of the contribution this role makes to children's education and care?

You are requested to read the attached On-line Survey Research Information Sheet that contains all of the information about the survey. The On-line Survey Research Information Sheet can be accessed by clicking on the following link:

/spls190/upload/surveys/39711/files/Griffith%20Uni_Ed-Leader_Informed%20consent_Survey.pdf

This research is voluntary and you are able to withdraw from the research at any time without fear of retaliation or retribution. However it is important to note that if the survey is returned
anonymously, you will not be able to withdraw once you have submitted your survey, as it will not be possible to identify individual responses. By completing this survey, you indicate to us that you are willing to participate in this research.

**Time requirement:** The survey takes approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete.

This research does not include Outside School Hours Care (OSHC). Although OSHC have educational leaders, this research focuses on prior-to-school settings.

There are 69 questions in this survey
Section A: General questions about the educational leader

Know

Q.1 Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided for all questions so that you can provide further detail if you wish.

Appoint

Q.2 Does your service have an appointed educational leader?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

**Base**

**Q.3 Is the educational leader based mainly at your service?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?)
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:
A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

**Ed. Lead**

**Q.4 Are you the educational leader?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:
Section B: Background questions

Gender

Q. 5 Are you male or female?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:
Make a comment on your choice here:

Age

Q. 6 What is your age?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ 15 - 17 years
● 18 - 19 years
● 20 - 24 years
● 25 - 29 years
● 30 - 34 years
● 35 - 39 years
● 40 - 44 years
● 45 - 49 years
● 50 - 54 years
● 55 years and over

Make a comment on your choice here:

Indig.

Q. 7 Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin
- Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin
- Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin

Make a comment on your choice here:

Cit.

Q. 8 Are you an Australian citizen?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the
educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes, Australian citizen
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

Born

Q. 9 In which country were you born?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:
- Australia
- England
- New Zealand
- Italy
- Vietnam
- India
- Scotland
- Other, please specific

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

**Lang.**

**Q.10 Do you speak in a language other than English at home?**

Mark one box only. If more than one language other than English, write the one most often spoken.
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No, English only
- ○ Yes, Italian
- ○ Yes, Greek
- ○ Yes, Cantonese
- ○ Yes, Arabic
- ○ Yes, Mandarin
- ○ Yes, Vietnamese
- ○ Yes, either - please specify

Make a comment on your choice here:
Eng.

Q. 11 How well do you speak English?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Very well
- Well
- Not well
- Not at all
- Not sure
Make a comment on your choice here:

Q. 12 Have you completed an education / teaching qualification, including VET (vocational education and training) qualifications? For example: Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No
- ○ No, still studying
Q. 13 What is the early childhood qualification you are currently studying?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’1 [Know]’ ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’2 [Appoint]’ ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘Not sure’ or ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘Not sure’ or ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘Not sure’ or ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘No, still studying’ at question ’12 [Quals.]’ ( Have you completed an education / teaching qualification, including VET (vocational education and training) qualifications? For example: Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes, completed qualification
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Study
- Post graduate degree (e.g. PhD, Masters)
- Graduate diploma or Graduate certificate
- Bachelor degree (honours)
- Bachelor degree (pass) 4 years
- Bachelor degree (pass) 3 years
- Associate Diploma
- Diploma
- Certificate III
- Certificate 1 or 11
- Other Certificate
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
Comp. Qual

Q. 14 What is the highest early childhood education and care (or equivalent) qualification you have completed?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and
° Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and
° Answer was 'Yes, completed qualification' at question '12 [Quals.]' (Have you completed an education/teaching qualification, including VET (vocational education and training) qualifications? For example: Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care)

Please choose only one of the following:

- O Post graduate degree (e.g. PhD, Masters)
- O Graduate diploma or graduate certificate
- O Bachelor degree (honours)
- O Bachelor degree (pass) 4 years
- Bachelor degree (pass) 3 years
- Associate Diploma
- Diploma
- Certificate III
- Certificate 1 or 11
- Other Certificate
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Exp. EC

Q. 15 How many years of experience do you have in early childhood education and care in Australia?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
- Answer was 'Yes' at question 1 [Know] (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question 2 [Appoint] (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question 4 [Ed. Lead] (Are you the
 educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

Exp. S

Q. 16 How many years have you worked at your current early childhood education and care service?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

For example: 2 years = 2; 6 months = .5

General questions about where you work
The survey may be anonymous. For participants who provide identifying information, no information will be published that identifies participants, service or locality.

**Postcode**

**Q. 17 What is your service postcode?**

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please write your answer here:

**Type**

**Q. 18 What is your service type?**

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)
educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Long day care
- ○ Kindergarten (Vic, Qld, WA, Tas)
- ○ Preschool (NSW, SA, ACT, NT)
- ○ Family day care
- ○ Other, please explain

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Lic.

Q.19 What is your licensed capacity? (How many children can legally attend your service each day?)

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Man.

Q. 20 How is your service governed (managed)?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Catholic school
- Government managed
• Government school
• Independent school
• Private for profit
• Private not-for-profit
• Local community
• Other organisation
• Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:
A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Role

Q. 21 What is your main role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the
educational leader? and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Principal / Director / Teacher-in-charge / Family Day Care Co-ordinator
- Lead Educator / Group Leader
- Family Day Carer
- Educator / Assistant / Aide
- Other contact worker
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Contact

Q. 22 Do you mainly teach and care for children (contact) in your role?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Child

Q. 23 What age range of children do you mainly teach or care for in your role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '22 [Contact]' ( Do you mainly teach and care for children (contact) in your role? 

Please choose only one of the following:

- Birth to less than 1 year
- 1 year to less than 2 years
- 2 years to less than 3 years
- 3 years to less than 4 years
- 4 years to less than 5 years
- 5 years to less than 6 years
- I work across all age groups.

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
Section C: Questions about you, the educational leader

How

Q. 24 How were you appointed to the role of educational leader?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ⃝ Applied for the position and I was successful.
- ⃝ Requested by management to accept the role.
- ⃝ Informed by management that I was the educational leader (no choice).
- ⃝ As Principal / Director / Teacher-in-charge / Co-ordinator, I was the only suitably qualified person.
- ⃝ In my state / territory it is a requirement as teacher, to be educational leader.
I volunteered for the position.

Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Right

Q. 25 I am the right person for the role of educational leader.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

- Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

PS

Q. 26 I have a role description (position statement) for the role of educational leader.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:
A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Direct

Q. 27 I use the role description for direction in my work.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’1 [Know]’ ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’2 [Appoint]’ ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’26 [PS]’ ( I have a role description (position statement) for the role of educational leader. )

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- O Yes
- O No
- O Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
PD

Q. 28 What type of professional development or training on leadership have you received to support you in this role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- I attended a workshop on leadership.
- Conversations with management on leadership.
- Readings on leadership.
- Meeting with manager to discuss role of educational leader and leadership.
- Other, please explain.
- No professional development on leadership.
• No discussions on leadership.
• Not sure

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Purpose

Q. 29 Educators have a clear understanding of the purpose of my role, educational leader.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

• Yes
• No
• Not sure
Q. 30 I have the management authority to give other educators instructions on education and care practices. (Ask educators to do things in their practice)

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
Q. 31 Is the role of educational leader a full time non-contact role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:
A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
Q. 32 How many hours per week of non-contact do you get for this designated role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' at question '31 [Full]' (Is the role of educational leader a full time non-contact role?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- No non-contact hours
- 1 - 2 hours per week
- 3-4 hours per week
- 5-6 hours per week
- 7-8 hours per week
- 9 - 10 hours per week
- More than 10 hours per week: please add hours in comments
- Not sure
Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

**Duties**

**Q. 33 List the duties and responsibilities you undertake with staff in your capacity as educational leader.**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

- Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and
- Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and
- Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- ☐ Teaching knowledge and skills
- ☐ Coaching and mentoring educators
- ☐ Supporting the development of programs and documentation
- ☐ Checking written programs and documentation
- Providing feedback to educators about programs and documentation
- Performance management of educators relating to education and care topics
- Discussing the abilities of children and how best to support children
- Reflecting with educators
- Providing professional learning opportunities
- Planning and leading staff meetings
- Not sure

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish

Routine

Q. 34 How do you complete the tasks required for the role of educational leader into your everyday working routine?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- [ ] During rostered non-contact time with educators.
- [ ] Writing newsletters / memos to educators to exchange information.
- [ ] Leading staff meetings.
- [ ] Conversations with educators at rest time - going into their rooms.
- [ ] Conversations with educators over lunch / meal breaks.
- [ ] My planning time.
- [ ] In my own time: before or after work.
- [ ] Not sure

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Section D: Educational leader's perception of the value of the role.
Q. 35 My role, as educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My role, as educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to management.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My role, as educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to educators.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My role, as educational leader offers leadership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that is of significant benefit to families.

My role, as educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</table>

Enactment

Q. 39 Educational leader's perception of their role.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I lead the educators at our service to make children’s education and care their central focus.</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I lead the educators to build the shared service vision and philosophy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I support educators to make the connection between theory and practice.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I support educators to embed the principles and practices of the approved learning framework used at our service.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I discuss with educators teaching strategies to uphold children’s rights.  

The educator and I work together using the learning outcomes to guide planning and future practice decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I discuss with educators teaching strategies to uphold children’s rights.</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The educator and I work together using the learning outcomes to guide planning and future practice decisions.</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Enact.2**

**Q. 45 Educational leader's perception of their role continued:**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I collaborate with educators and use a sound knowledge of each child, to guide the planning and practices for children's education and care.</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>I promote current research and contemporary practice to guide planning and inform assessment practices.</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I promote strategies for educators, children and families to collaborate through the planning cycle,</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
including assessment of documentation.

I promote strategies to build family and educator partnership that encourages discussion and consideration for children’s learning at the service and outside the service.

I use reflective practice strategies with educators.

I consult with educators to support them to consider, and adapt the environment and resources to support
Q. 51 Educational leader's perception of their role continued:

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Section E: Change

Q. 54 Do you believe your role is working well?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ☐ Yes
Section F: Change 2

Q. 55 What makes the role work well?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '39 [Change]' (Do you believe your role is working well?)

Please write your answer here:

Change 3

Q. 56 Why is the role not working well?
Q. 57 What strategies could assist in approving the role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please write your answer here:

Final

Q. 58 Please provide any final comments about the support you provide.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?)
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

Section G: Questions for the non-educational leader

Q.59 Who is the appointed educational leader for your service?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Early childhood consultant
- Area manager (manager external to service)
- Owner
- Principal / Director / Teacher-in-charge/ Family day care co-ordinator
- Lead educator / Group leader
Q. 60 How was the person appointed to the role of educational leader?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Teacher
- Family day carer
- Educator / Assistant / Aide
- Other contact worker
- Other non-contact worker
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
- □ Position was advertised and the person was successful with their application.
- □ Requested by management to accept the role.
- □ Informed by management that they were required to be the educational leader (no choice).
- □ As Principal / Director / Teacher-in-charge/ Family Day Care Co-ordinator, the person was the only suitably qualified person.
- □ In my state / territory it is a requirement that the teacher be the educational leader.
- □ The person volunteered for the position.
- □ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 61 List the other role / position the educational leader has in your service.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question 1 [Know] (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- None: role full time as Educational Leader
- Owner
- Principal / Director / Coordinator
- Teacher
- Lead educator / Group Leader
- Educator / Assistant / Aide
- Family Day Carer
- Floater (no fixed room)
- Other, please list.
- Not sure
Q. 62 The educational leader is the right person for the role.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ No

- ☐ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 63 I have a clear understanding of the purpose and role of the educational leader.
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 64 The educational leader has the authority to give me instructions on education and care practices. (To tell me to do certain things with my practice)

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 65 Is the role of educational leader a full time non-contact role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

- Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 66 How many hours per week do I get to spend with the educational leader for support with my role?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' at question '50 [85]' (Is the role of educational leader a full time non-contact role?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No non-contact hours
- ○ 1 - 2 hours per week
- ○ 3-4 hours per week
- ○ 5-6 hours per week
- ○ 7-8 hours per week
- ○ 9 - 10 hours per week
- ○ More than 10 hours per week: please add hours in comments
- ○ Not sure
Make a comment on your choice here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 67 List the activities the educational leader completes with you or with other educators.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- Teaching knowledge and skills
- Coaching and mentoring
- Support development of programs and documentation with educators
- Checking programs and documentation
- Providing feedback
- Performance management of educators on education and care
Discussing the abilities of children and planning how best to support them.

Reflecting with educators

Providing professional learning

Planning and leading staff meetings

Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here: A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 68 How do all of the tasks required to be completed by the educational leader get done through the normal week?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’1 [Know]’ ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ’2 [Appoint]’ ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘No’ or ’Not sure’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was ‘No’ or ’Not sure’ at question ’4 [Ed. Lead]’ ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

○ Rostered non-contact time with me.

○ I am provided with newsletters, memos to exchange information.

○ Educational leader leads staff meetings.
Meetings with educational leader at lunch times.

Educational leader comes into my room at rest time.

In the educational leader's own time

Other: please explain

Not sure

Section II: Early childhood professional's perception of the value of the role educational leader

Benefit ECP

Q. 69 Early childhood professional's perception of the value of the role of educational leader.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was less than 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question
'4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of the educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to management.</strong></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of educational leader offers leadership that has significant impact of my practice.</strong></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of educational leader offers leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>that is of significant benefit to families.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of educational leader offers leadership that is of significant benefit to children.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I value the role of educational leader.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</table>
Early childhood professional's perceptions of the enactment of the role of educational leader.

Enactment ECP

Q. 74 Early childhood professional's perceptions of the enactment of the role of educational leader.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The educational leader provides leadership that supports me to make</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children's education and care my central focus.</td>
<td>The educational leader supports me to understand and embrace the service vision and philosophy.</td>
<td>The educational leader supports me to make the connection between contemporary theory and practice.</td>
<td>The educational leader supports me to embed the principles and practices of the</td>
<td>The educational leader supports me to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
approved learning framework used at my service.

The educational leader discusses with me teaching strategies to uphold children's rights.

The educational leader and I work together using the learning outcomes to guide planning and future practice decisions.

Q. 80 Enact. ECP2

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was less than 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early
childhood education and care services?  \( \text{and} \) Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? \( \text{and} \) Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader? \( \text{and} \) Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? \( \text{and} \) Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? \( \text{and} \) Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]')

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I collaborate with the educational leader using a sound knowledge of each child, to develop the program.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The educational leader promotes to me the current research and contemporary practice</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to guide my planning and inform assessment practice decisions.

The educational leader promotes strategies for children, families and I to use, to support collaboration with the planning cycle, including assessing documentation.

The educational leader and I use reflective practice.

The educational leader promotes strategies
between families and me, to encourage discussions and considerations of children's learning both in and out of the service.

The educational leader and I discuss together, and then adapt the environment and resources to best support children's education and care outcomes.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q. 86 Enact. ECP3**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question 4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question 4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The educational leader provides opportunities for educators to engage in ongoing professional learning (inquiry).</strong></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The educational leader encourages me to take an active role in leading change for children's education and care.</strong></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The educational leader encourages me to view</strong></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section I

Q. 89 Do you believe the role of educational leader is working effectively in your service?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Sometimes
- [ ] Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

[ ] A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.
Section J:

Q. 90 What makes the role work well?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)

Please write your answer here: [A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.]

Q. 91 Why is the role not working well?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
° Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘1 [Know]’ (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘2 [Appoint]’ (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’ at question ‘4 [Ed. Lead]’ (Are you the educational leader?)
Q. 92 What strategies could assist in improving the role?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please write your answer here:

A comment box is provided so you can provide further detail if you wish.

Q. 93 Please provide any further comment about the support the educational leader provides you with your role.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?)
education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

Not aware of the role educational leader

Q.94 Tell us why you are not familiar with how the role of educational leader is enacted in your service?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'No' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'No' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] I am new to the service.
- [ ] It has not been discussed.
- [ ] The service focus has been on other priorities.
- [ ] Other, please explain.
Make a comment on your choice here:

**Section K: Declaring your standpoint**

**Q. 95 Questions to declare your true standpoint.**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All educators are leaders of education and care at our service.</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the director / coordinator of the service is a leader of education and care at our service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the educational leader is the leader of education and care at our service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both the director/coordinator and educational leader are leaders of education and care at our service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section: L
Q. 99 Do you have any final comment to make to the researcher about the role of the educational leader?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader?) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader?)

Please write your answer here:

Questions for participants who have never heard of the role educational leader.

Q. 100 Are you aware that the Education and Care Services National Regulation Division 1 Educational Leader, 118

Educational Leader:

The approved provider of an educational and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual at the service to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was NOT 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early
childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

Make a comment on your choice here:

Section: L Continues, Your concluding thoughts and comments

Q. 101 Do you have any concluding comments that you would like to make about the role of Educational Leader?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

- Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an
appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'Yes' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'Yes' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'Yes' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'Yes' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Not sure' or 'Yes' or 'No' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please write your answer here:

Phase Two Research: Interviews

Q. 102 Research Project: Phase Two is a remote interview (conducted either through via telephone / Skype / Go-to-Meeting) for approximately 45 minutes to discuss the topic of Educational Leader in more depth. Your confidentiality will be assured.

Are you interested and willing to participate in an interview?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' ( Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' ( Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'No' or 'Not sure' or 'Yes' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' ( Are you the educational leader? )

Please choose only one of the following:
You have indicated that you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. So that our research team can contact you in the near future, please provide your personal contact details.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in phase two of this research!

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Yes' at question '68 [124]' (Research Project: Phase Two is a remote interview (conducted either through via telephone / Skype / Go-to-Meeting) for approximately 45 minutes to discuss the topic of Educational Leader in more depth. Your confidentiality will be assured. Are you interested and willing to participate in an interview? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '1 [Know]' (Do you know about the role of educational leader in early childhood education and care services? ) and Answer was 'Yes' at question '2 [Appoint]' (Does your service have an appointed educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? ) and Answer was 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not sure' at question '4 [Ed. Lead]' (Are you the educational leader? )
Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- [ ] Name
- [ ] Telephone number (plus area code)
- [ ] Mobile telephone number
- [ ] Email address

It is important to note that as the survey may be returned anonymously, you will not be able to withdraw from phase one of this research once you have submitted your survey, as it will not be possible to identify individual responses.

Once completed, a summary of the finding of phase one will be published on:

www.lisapalethorpe.com

Thank you for participating in this survey!

01.01.1970 – 10:00

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey
Appendix B: Research Participation Invitation

The Perception of the Role of Educational Leader in Australian Early Childhood Education and Care
EDN/66/14/HREC

Who is conducting the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Investigator</th>
<th>Associate Professor Bev Flückiger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T) 07) 373 53458</td>
<td>E) b.flü<a href="mailto:ckiger@griffith.edu.au">ckiger@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Team:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor Julie Dunn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07) 373 55720</td>
<td><a href="mailto:j.dunn@griffith.edu.au">j.dunn@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Palethorpe PhD Candidature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M) 0432-446-567</td>
<td><a href="mailto:l.palethorpe@griffith.edu.au">l.palethorpe@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why is the research being conducted?
On the 1st of January 2012 new National Standards and Regulations for early childhood education and care services became law. This law required for the first time, the appointment of an educational leader to each early childhood education and care service. This Doctoral research (PhD) will examine the role of the educational leader and its enactment within Australian early childhood education and care services and educator’s perceptions of the contribution of this role makes to children’s education and care.

What you will be asked to do
Phase one: On-line survey
Phase one of the research will require participants to complete an on-line survey. Completion of this survey is voluntary. Completion of the survey and its return will be accepted as informed consent. Participants who complete the survey and indicate on the survey their willingness to be participate in Phase two of the research may be invited to participate in case study research.

Phase two: Case study (45 minute remote interview)
Case study research will include current early childhood education and care staff members (educators / directors/ teachers/ support staff) participating in a 1 x 45 minute interview with a research team member on the telephone or via video-conferencing (skype or Go-to-meeting). Participants will be asked to provide examples of
educational leadership enacted in the service (centre). These examples may be documents, policies or processes. Participants will be asked to sign a declaration form that they have required permission/authority to share these examples and that they do not broach any intellectual property/ownership rights.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants for an Australian case study on the role of educational leader will be selected through maximal variation sampling. Participants will be selected from phase one of the research, from participants who have identified themselves and expressed their willingness to participate in phase two of the research.

The expected benefits of the research

There is currently a lack of research on the role of educational leader. The findings of this research will aim to:

- determine what impact this role has to the early childhood education and care profession;
- provide guidance to the profession as to the possible potentials of this role;
- provide feedback to government about the current state of play;
- guide the future decision making and direction of educators, service management and government through reading the research outcomes and considering their own contexts, and
- gather data that will shape policy, inform practices and identify barriers that may prevent the full potential of the role.

Risks to you

This is no identified risk within this research.

Your confidentiality

Phase one: Survey will enable participants to complete the survey anonymously. If participants are willing to participate in Phase two of the research: Case study, participants will provide their name and contact details.

Phase two of the research will identify participants and include telephone or video-conferencing (skype or Go-to-meeting) interviews. Additionally participants may wish to provide examples of artefacts (such as position statements, QIP reports, staff handbooks, rosters, communication books) for thematical analysis. The examples provided can be de-identified if the participant wishes the service to remain anonymous to the researcher.

Within this research all data will be stored confidentially and anonymity assured. No identifying features will be released or published and when reporting findings all names will be changed to pseudonyms (not their real name) and identifiable features removed or changed.

Information collected, which may have identifiable features, will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet
in an office or in a password controlled computer hard drive.

Interviews may be translated confidentially into text through a professional transcription service. This service will not be provided the participants name. Transcripts of interviews will be forward back to the participant to check the accuracy of the interview transcription.

Your participation is voluntary
This research is voluntary and participants are able to withdraw from the research at any time without fear of retaliation or retribution. However it is important to note that if surveys are returned anonymously, participants will not be able to withdraw once they have submitted their survey, as it will not be possible to identify individual responses.

Questions / further information
For any further information about this research or involvement in this PhD study, please contact the Research Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Bev Flückiger, b.fluckiger@griffith.edu.au (07) 373 53458 or Associate Professor Julie Dunn, j.dunn@griffith.edu.au (07) 373 55720.

The ethical conduct of this research
This research has obtained ethical clearance. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 54375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you
Upon completion of this research, a copy of the Executive Summary of the research will be forward to each participant from phase two. A summary of the research conducted through phase one will be posted on the following website for participants to access: www.lisapalethorpe.com

Privacy Statement – non disclosure
“The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.
### Appendix C: Extract of Survey Code Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Related to Research Quest.</th>
<th>Directed to:</th>
<th>Origin of question and measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Added</td>
<td>From post codes: I determined what state/territory the participant was located. This was done manually.</td>
<td>Qld, NSW, ACT, Vic, TAS, NT, SA, WA</td>
<td>Q.1</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Question developed for this research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcode</td>
<td>Q.17</td>
<td>What is your service postcode</td>
<td>Open ended</td>
<td>Q.1</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Question developed for this research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Q.18</td>
<td>What is the service type?</td>
<td>LDC, Kind, Pres, FDC, Other</td>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Adapted from question and variables as National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TypeCom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary – Add any further comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lic</td>
<td>Q.19</td>
<td>What is your service license capacity?</td>
<td>Open ended</td>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Question developed for this research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LicCom</td>
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<td>Commentary – Add any further comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Q.20</td>
<td>How is your service governed (managed)?</td>
<td>Catholic, Gov man, Gov sch, Inden sch, Private for-profit, Private not-for-profit, Local community, Other org, Not sure</td>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Question and variables as National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ManCom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary – Add any further comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Q.21</td>
<td>What is your main role?</td>
<td>Principal, Lead educator, FD Care, Educator, Other contact</td>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>Educational Leader and Early Childhood Professional</td>
<td>Question and variables as National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Extract of Code Book – Survey Open-ended Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example from survey answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe your role is working well? (Educational Leader)</td>
<td>Role identity is needed</td>
<td>How role is understood by educators and educational leader.</td>
<td>Clarity for the EDL needed</td>
<td>Survey id: 47 I have only just started in this role and it is not a very defined role at present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Include: Whether functions of role are clear. What expectations are from EDL and ECP.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How role is renumerated/rewarded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditionally part of role of director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey Id: 218 When I was appointed My role was Director/Teacher then with the changes in 2012 I became Nominated Supervisor/ Educational leader I feel the changes in titles is just that, and it is confusing for most committees and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expectations of what the role should do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey id: 118 Not enough non contact time is given to move through the rooms in the service and view individual practice's and engage in discussion regarding individual education programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational leader role is embraced or challenged</td>
<td>Whether the role is valued – recognised for its contribution or whether there is an opinion that it does not belong.</td>
<td>Supportive of role</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey id: 28 I enjoy my role and have the support of management and all educators at my Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include staff resistance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role is valuable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey id: 130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Example of Interview Questions for Kindergarten

Survey No: 341
Educational Leader
Kindergarten, Queensland

Question:
Could you tell me what the role educational leader means to you?

Question:
In your opinion, what do you think it means to your colleagues? Early childhood profession at large?

Question:
Could you provide me your thoughts on what you believe is the purpose of the role?

Question:
Educator’s Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework states on page 6 “the Framework encourages everyone who works with young children to see themselves as pedagogical leaders”, if staff are all pedagogical leaders – do services need a positional leader such as the educational leader?

Question:
You described in your survey response how you were appointed to the role of educational leader “Informed by management I was educational leader (no choice). You go further to state this was a balance between being requested by management but really not given a choice. Could you please elaborate on what you mean? ….

Question:
You state in the survey response that you requested a clear purpose of the role and have received nothing for six months.
Could you share with me the support (from your service or organisation) that was put in place for this role educational leader?

Question:
What would your expectation have been for support?

Question:
Could you share with me what you have done to gain an understanding of the purpose and to enact the role?

Question:
Can you tell me about the tasks you complete in the role you have as educational leader?

Question:
Could you share a story of how you believe your role as educational Leader has provided leadership that has been beneficial to children?

Question:
You mention in your survey response that the role was handed from head office staff to you with no professional handover to all staff of the expectation of the role. As such, it is difficult to lead some staff … could you give some examples of what you mean?
You state “No extra time given to fulfil the expectations of this role make it unfair and sometimes I simply don’t have the time to get it done. Could you provide an example of a situation when this occurred?

Question:
Continuing the discussion about time, what are your expectations of extra time that you believe would make the role fair and you would feel you could succeed without impacting family work balance?

Artefacts
Can you think of something you have read, seen or heard either at the service or externally have either influenced your understanding of the role or supported you in the role?
Artefacts that you may be able to share?

Any questions that you might have?
Appendix F: Example of Interview Questions for Family Day Care

Survey No: 34
Educational Leader
Family Day Care, Queensland

Question:
What does the role Educational Leader role mean to you?

Question:
In your opinion what do you think it means to your colleagues?

Question:
What about FDC at large?

Question:
And the early childhood profession?

Question:
Could you provide me your thoughts on what the purpose of the role is?

Question:
You indicate in your survey response that you don’t see too much difference between what you did before in your coordinators role and what you do now in the position of Educational Leader. Could you explain why you believe this?
In your opinion, do you feel that this would-be case across the FDC sector or something contained in your scheme? What makes you think this?

Question:
You state in the survey response that you feel that all coordinators contribute as educational leaders. Additionally, The Educator’s Guide to the EYLF states on page 6: The Framework encourages everyone who works with young children to see themselves as pedagogical leaders, if staff are all pedagogical leaders – with this in mind do you think family day care needs a position like the Educational Leader? What about other early childhood services?

Question:
Could you describe the tasks you undertake in the role of Educational Leader in your scheme?

Question:
You state in your response that you believe the role adds value. Could you provide some examples of why you believe this?

Question:
In 2013 the role of educational leader became a legislative requirement for all services. Could you describe how you think you found out about the role and then got to the position of where you are today, in the role of educational leader?

Question:
Could you describe the support you have received for the role?
You mention the role can be quite time consuming when not having a designated day to be able to focus on the tasks of this role. Could you discuss with me the challenges of time?

Question:
You state in your survey request that you believe that providing time for educational leaders to focus on their tasks would be beneficial. What do you think is realistic and how could you envisage this occurring?

Question:
In your survey response, you mention collaboration and relation being important strategies for your role. What other leadership strategies do you use to support educators with change?

Question:
You mention that there is a role description for the role of Educational Leader. Is there any possibility of obtaining a copy of this position description? Are there any other resources and artefacts that support you in your role?
### Appendix G: Extract from Interview Code Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (high level node)</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Category (low level node)</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Change process**      | Motivating others about role  
Creating a shared vision  
Enacting leadership priority | Shared vision | S231: So you've created a shared vision where you all... Interviewee: I think so. I think it's created a much better centre and a shared vision and I mean even planning. Planning for things and seeing where we might head and it is better, yeah. |
| **Service based culture** | Staff behaviour and ways of acting  
Resistance to leadership | e.g. collaborative; Routine, customs  
Staff turn over  
Relationship & role demarcation with other staff/director  
Directors believing, they must be educational leader  
Positional role = leader = power  
Lack of leadership understanding | S284: Very difficult to mentor other teachers in your own setting - see it as forcing your ways on their practice. |
| **Work as a team – share load.** | Collaborative culture | S16: So I probably have always had a role of directing the curriculum and sharing that curriculum with the assistant. |
| **Teachers versus educators**  
(this may include bachelor versus diploma) | Teachers are equal | S79: But I think in a childcare centre it's a bit different because often the educational leader is the director of the centre who is managing everybody anyway, if that makes sense. Whereas in a kindergarten we're peers, we're equal; there's no one - she's a teacher, I'm a teacher and we just happen to have different groups of children. |
| **Division / tension between sectors** | School versus child care or cc versus kindergarten | S16: I think it was [into of EdL role] to ensure that a centre - I suppose it's - to me, the whole thing is aimed at children rather than necessarily us. |
| **Duties and tasks (Perspectives of ECP & EdL)** | What the EdL is actually doing | Assisting with programming | S156: manage to try and make sure that |
Appendix H: Key Initial Themes from Interviews (First Level)

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<tr>
<th>Initial theme (level 1 Node)</th>
<th>Initial theme (level 2)</th>
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Note: This information is an extract of the original first level themes from NVivo
Appendix I: Sample NVivo Coding

Note: The name “Shelley” is a pseudonym
## Appendix J: Final Themes Emerging from Data

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### Tension, enablers and barriers

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<td>Tension, enablers and barriers</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>Lack of understanding</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension, enablers and barriers</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>Culture of ECE</td>
<td>Passive recipients</td>
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<td>Tension</td>
<td>Culture of ECE</td>
<td>We are all equals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tension</td>
<td>Culture of ECE</td>
<td>Teachers autonomy</td>
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<td>Culture of ECE</td>
<td>Relationship focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tension, enablers and barriers</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>LDC verse Kindy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tension, enablers and barriers</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>Organisations with a parent committee</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Appointment of EDL | - | 19 | 45 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Leadership models | - | - | 18 | 69 |
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Qualifications | - | - | 4 | 7 |
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Qualifications | Perceptions of teachers | - | 5 | 6 |
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Qualifications | Qualification verse experience | - | 4 | 7 |
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Not traditionally part of the role | - | - | 9 | 18 |
| Who is EDL and how was it determined | Traditionally part of director’s role | - | - | 6 | 11 |

Note: This information is an extract of the final interview themes from Nvivo.
Appendix K: Sample NVivo Memo

Facilitator: Director - so is that a contact role or a not contact role?
Interviewee: Non-contact.
Facilitator: When you say we weren't qualified do you mean you as well? Or do you mean...
Interviewee: Yes.
Facilitator: ...the whole team?
Interviewee: Yeah, I do think - I mean I've been on my own...great in theory...20 - seven rooms...don't think we were out there. They've supplied enough of all the...and training but...I don't think - we needed more mentoring, yeah.
Facilitator: Sure so coaching and mentoring from someone say from outside your service coming in to assist you?
Interviewee: Yes.
Facilitator: Who do you think might have been in the best position to help with that?
Interviewee: Well I think one - a person that has worked in the field, not necessarily

Note: This information is an extract from NVivo.