University of Huddersfield Repository

McMahon, Samantha

'You have to be a leader but don't want to come across as taking over': Leading Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care

Original Citation

McMahon, Samantha (2016) 'You have to be a leader but don't want to come across as taking over': Leading Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care. In: BERA Annual Conference 2016, 13th-15th September 2016, Leeds, UK. (Unpublished)

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/29456/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/
‘You have to be a leader but don’t want to come across as taking over’: Leading Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Samantha McMahon
BERA September 2016
Contact : s.mcmahon@hud.ac.uk
The study

• Qualitative study, narrative approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of practitioners as they undertook a programme of study to become an Early Years Professional (EYP)

• EYP introduced in 2006 to lead practice and be a ‘change agent’ (CWDC 2010 p.17) specifically to improve quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.
  – Sector-overwhelmingly female workforce (97%)
  – Low status
  – Low pay
  – Qualified at level 3 (EYP at level 6)
methodology

- Narrative approach to collecting, interpreting and presenting the data
- Sample - 4 participants enrolled on the Undergraduate Practitioner Programme (UPP) for EYPS - all practitioners, had to ‘top up’ FD to BA and meet EYPS standards, 12 month programme (2012-2013)
  - 4 interviews
analysis

- 3 layers of analysis, 1) presentation of the narratives as monologues, 2) Thematic narrative analysis (gender/class, performativity, professional mandate), 3) Thematic narrative analysis drawing on work of Bolman and Deal (2013), a multiframe approach to understanding organisational structures and practices and to reframing leadership.
  - Exploratory study-emerged from the data that organisational practices and structures significant in shaping the participants’ experiences of becoming a professional.
Bolman and Deal (2013)

- 4 frames
  - Structural frame: views the organisation as a factory, focus on organisational architecture - individuals need clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
  - Human resource frame: views the organisation as a family - focus on motivation - individuals want things that go ‘beyond money’ (p120.) from their work.
  - Political frame: views the organisation as a jungle - focus on power (allocation of scarce resources) - individuals need political skills.
  - Symbolic frame: views the organisation as irrational - focus on cultural glue - individuals bound to the organisation by stories, values and rituals etc.
findings

- EYP undermined traditional structural blueprint of the organisation, particularly when more qualified than the manager. Manager threatened, EYP unable to endorse their authority.
  - *She’s not even a level 4, I might have had a bit more respect for her if she had done her level 4’*
- EYP developed reflective skills and political skills of negotiation, alliance building and agenda setting. Power can be exercised at all levels.
  - *On that day I needed to go to Uni my manager wanted annual leave and there is not enough staff. She blamed it on the head so I e-mailed the head and put it out there ‘what’s the deal with this?’. My manager is really supportive now, it came from that little blow out*
- Moral leadership possible which supports and protects the workforce and is child centred.
- Leader should attend to the symbolic frame and aligning the needs of the individual with the organisation.
Relevance of findings

• Emerging models of leadership in ECEC suggest leader must rely on influence rather than authority to bring about change (Hadfield et al 2012)
• Challenges to this approach
  – Little has been written about how to lead through influence (-this study)
  – Traditional associations of leadership with authority difficult to shift (Rodd 2006)
  – Individuals resist change (Bolman and Deal 2013, Hadfield et al 2012)
  – Leaders lack training and skills (this study, Bolman and Deal 2013)
Contribution of this study

- Integrated model combining Change Curve Model (Kubler-Ross 1989), (stages of change: denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance) with Bolman and Deal’s multiframe approach:
  - to help the leader exert influence through anticipating how individuals might react to change
  - RESULT
- The change curve four frame model of leadership
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Curve Model: stages of change</th>
<th>Structural frame</th>
<th>Human resource frame</th>
<th>Political frame</th>
<th>Symbolic frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Identify what the existing structures are. Reflect and identify what changes may be needed.</td>
<td>Communicate little and often. Engage in reflective dialogue. Allow time to adapt. Avoid overwhelming individuals.</td>
<td>Network with colleagues and stakeholders. Build coalitions.</td>
<td>Tell a compelling story to colleagues and stakeholders. Co-create a vision. Communicate this vision to colleagues and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Create structures to support the process. Identify who does what and when.</td>
<td>Hold meetings with colleagues and stakeholders encourage collaborative reflections and gather feedback.</td>
<td>Build alliances with colleagues and stakeholders. Diffuse opposition, and confront conflict.</td>
<td>Be a visible leader. Continue to communicate the vision to colleagues and stakeholders. Continue to reflect on practice and provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Align the operational structure to the new culture.</td>
<td>Continue to build broad involvement. Communicate and get feedback from colleagues and stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate progress, celebrate success. Share stories of the journey and continue to develop the new culture, continue to reflect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References