

Book Review

Early childhood leadership in action: evidence-based approaches for effective practice by Stamopoulos, E., and Barblett, L.

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Stamopoulos and Barblett open the discussion outlining the difficulties in finding a singular, encompassing definition for leadership in an ECE (Early Childhood Education) context. Working towards a mutual understanding, they suggest the role of the leader is to "lead the learning of others, share power, and mentor and model ethical relationships and leadership" (p. xix). The authors emphasise the notion of "collective responsibility" (p. xix) and with it the need for collaboration with colleagues, highlighting the benefits of leading from within the team. The authors discuss the idea of "power with" rather than "power over" relationships in leadership (p. xx), which aligns with the current trend of shared/distributed leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand divided into three parts.

Part One identifies origins and theories of leadership; how these support leaders to understand leadership and how they personally teach and lead. Readers are encouraged to reflect on different models of leadership, acknowledge the gaps in the literature, and generate new ways of thinking about leadership in ECE. Readers are therefore encouraged to see change as an opportunity to strengthen their practice. The role and importance of pedagogical leadership is discussed in a separate chapter in this section.

Part Two examines how leaders can support others through relationship building, effective communication and implementing and sustaining effective teamwork, and emphasises the use of digital media and technology to support leadership. Chapter seven highlights the importance of leading partnerships with families and communities while Chapter eight discusses engaging with indigenous families and communities including those in diverse and remote regions. Although the chapter on embedding indigenous perspectives is based on Australian viewpoints, the information supports educators to know the needs of the families they serve and develop their world views and cultural competence.

Part Three concentrates on leading responsibly through evidence-based practice and ethics which supports children's rights, health and wellbeing. The authors discuss how educators need to understand what ethical leadership looks like, stating "there is a difference between knowing about ethics, and acting ethically" (p. 250). This is followed by Chapter 11, the final section, which concentrates on "leading early childhood professionals into the future" (p. 261). The key points in this chapter relate to professionalism through identity, mentoring, coaching and supervision through strengthened leadership of oneself.

Overall, this book is a great resource for all educators, and for student teachers already in leadership positions. The authors discuss "the notion that all educators lead no matter their position" (p. 262), identifying that all educators have the capability for leadership. The real-world voices and reflective questions encourage engagement with the

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book, as a tool to support leadership development and capability. Every section relates leadership back to a focus on positive outcomes for children, as intertwined concepts. The emphasis on 'leadership in action,' as identified in the title, and the evidence-based approach, supports the integration of these ideas in everyday teaching and leading and shows a commitment to quality practice.

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Reference

Stamopoulos, E., and Barblett, L. 2018. *Early childhood leadership in action: evidence-based approaches for effective practice*. Allen and Unwin.