

Editorial

The Teacher Leader in Early Childhood Education.

Sean Dolan | *New Zealand Tertiary College*

This issue of *He Kupu* celebrates teacher leaders in early childhood education. The articles in this issue explore current leadership trends in the early childhood sector and share key practices to affirm and support kaiako in their leadership journey.

The practitioner research section opens with a collaborative article with Sanitra Deo, a lecturer at New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) and early childhood team leader, Shuchita Jain. Together they unpack the notion of relational leadership and consider its application to authentic examples of practice in a New Zealand early childhood centre. The authors emphasise the significance of relational leadership in creating a positive team culture that builds upon trust, respect, and transparency.

Maddie Hendrie and Amy Thynne draw on their experiences in supporting Associate Teachers to make the case for the critical role Associate Teachers play in being a catalyst for leadership development in their centres of practice. Through mentoring and supporting student teachers, Associate Teachers' own leadership skills develop and grow as well as inspiring the same in their mentees. The authors suggest that developing leadership skills is important for both Associate Teachers and student teachers.

Joy McLelland focuses on the importance of emotional wellbeing in early childhood teaching and how it can contribute to teacher leadership. The article highlights the need for emotionally safe environments in order for teachers to thrive in their leadership roles. The three dispositions of contribution, resilience, and connection are identified as key factors that teachers can implement and reflect on to promote emotional wellbeing and become advocates for creating emotionally safe environments.

Kerry Glen explores the role of self-efficacy in shared leadership, challenging traditional models of leadership and emphasising the importance of a cohesive team in achieving positive outcomes for children. The presence of collective efficacy is linked to teaching teams that demonstrate high student success and overcome barriers to learning. Kerry highlights the importance of building efficacy beliefs in teachers to enhance their leadership abilities and create a collaborative and effective team.

Contributing to discussion of assessment in early childhood education, Janice Prentice shares how through assessment practices, teachers can realise opportunities to develop their leadership. The article highlights the collaborative nature of assessment in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. Janice confirms the importance of everyday collective leadership in the assessment process and the need for ongoing learning and reflection in this area.

In the final article of the practitioner research section, Fiona Woodgate calls for early childhood education leaders to critically reflect on their leadership actions from a culturally responsive perspective. Fiona highlights the influence of one's worldview on one's actions and outcomes. By critically reflecting on their leadership practices

Editorial

and decision-making processes, leaders can work towards creating more inclusive and culturally responsive environments.

In the peer reviewed section, both research articles specifically focus on the topic of mentoring in early childhood education. William Knight examines the gaps in existing mentoring programs for newly graduated teachers, emphasising the need for effective mentoring to retain and support teachers in their professional growth. Of additional interest is the researcher's application of an indigenous Māori research methodology known as pūrākau that provides a unique cultural perspective.

Following on, Elizabeth Polley explores the impacts of power dynamics in the mentoring relationship between lecturers and student teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in early childhood education. The article innovatively suggests that embracing Kaupapa Māori and adopting a communities of practice model can help reduce power imbalances and transform the future of mentoring relationships in ITE.

The three book reviews also discuss the theme of teacher leadership in early childhood education. Pearl D'Silva discusses the potential for children to demonstrate leadership qualities and explores the use of picturebooks to foster these qualities. Fiona Woodgate reviews a book that provides resources for leaders in the early childhood sector, covering various aspects of leadership including pedagogical, administrative, and ethical considerations. Jamie Warren reviews a significant publication that addresses head-on the contemporary challenges and complexities of leadership in ECE.

We hope that the articles in this edition of *He Kupu* will support you with additional insights into the importance of leadership, its connections to teaching practice in early childhood education and its potential to impact the lives of children and teachers in meaningful ways.