Mary Holwell:

So, I'd like to start, Rhonda, with a question that we've prepared for you. And that is in the We Hear You blog post, published by ACECQA, you have written about the role of the educational leader and have said, and I quote, "With the introduction of the role, a number of myths have emerged. One of these is that the educational leader must complete all of the programming for all educators. This is a very narrow and prescriptive view of this important role." And that's the end of the quote. I wonder, Rhonda, can you offer us an alternative lens through which we might view and consider this very important role?

Rhonda Livingstone:

Thanks, Mary. And thanks for inviting me to join you in a conversation. Especially around things that I feel really strongly about, and that's the educational leadership role and it's really exciting that you've been drawing on the ACECQA blog. For those of you who don't know the ACECQA blog, we have lots of different posts and they're all tagged so that you can search them easily. And we regularly feature articles that focus on the educational leader role because, I think, it's such a really important role in services. And, I guess, my alternative lens kind of views the educational leader in much more of an expansive growth promoting light. It's someone who empowers and enables educators. And when I think back to some of the people that I've had the opportunity to work with, they were people who supported, who inspired, who motivated, who affirmed, but also challenged and extended my thinking and my practice.

Rhonda Livingstone:

And when I think about the role, I guess, for some it's easy to fall into that view that the educational leader has to do all the programming for educators, but it's more about building the capacity of educators in terms of this important work. And by building the capacity of educators, of course, you're building the capacity in the whole service and in the whole sector when you think about it. And of course, that educational leader role can have a very positive influence on learning and development and wellbeing as well, which is so important at this time. Not only for Victorian children, but children all across Australia.

Rhonda Livingstone:

Can I talk a little bit more about the role of the educational leader? It is prescribed in the regulations and it is also part of the National Quality Standard. And it's articulated in, of course, Quality Area Seven: Leadership and Governance, and it relates element 7.2.2 really talks about the educational role leading the development and implementation. And for me, that word is really important in terms of leading. It's not about doing the work or being a compliance officer. It's about helping educators achieve the vision and focusing on positive outcomes for children and families. And so, for me, it's much more than a legislative requirement. It's more about a capacity builder, about building knowledge and skills and capabilities.

Mary Holwell:

Thanks, Rhonda. And what hit home for me in the answer that you gave there was that concept of inspiration and motivation that is part of what the educational leader does in delivering those kinds of things. It's about driving or steering people along a pathway. And I think that idea of inspiration and motivation really spoke to that for me when I was listening to your answer. So, thank you. At any point in time, Rhonda, if you've got some slides that you'd like Stephanie to show, just let her know and she'll pop those slides up on the screen for everybody. And now, I think I'll take you to another question that we have put together, and that is that the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Frameworks...

Rhonda Livingstone:

Just before we do that, sorry to interrupt you, Mary, I just did want to share a slide that I think sort of encapsulates the educational leader role. Because it is about building capacity and you can do that through enabling or empowering. And I'm just wondering if Stephanie could share that slide, because I just think that kind of, for me, sums it up. That an important part of the educational leader role is about empowering, giving assistance and support and maybe helping to remove obstacles. And it's really important that it underpins growth and there are lots of ways that, as an educational leader, you can enable educators. You can help them to understand how to observe and document children's learning, all that kind of stuff. But also, for me, it's more about empowering and building that capacity.

Rhonda Livingstone:

For those educators that you're working with to do something for themselves, to give them the skills and the resources and the strategies and the opportunities to practice and to be confident and independent. And particularly when I look at the data, the assessment and rating cycle is always the element that is most challenging for services. So, giving educators an opportunity to engage with that cycle of planning and to consider other ways, alternative ways, of developing curriculum. And also, sharing and engaging in professional development and providing opportunities for educators to network and to make decisions. But also, I think, and some of the work I know that you've been involved in or around action research projects... So, sorry, I just wanted to share that slide because for me, it really talks to the fact that when we empower educators, we support their agency and their decision-making.

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