Mary Holwell:

The importance of leadership within the early childhood education and care sector is well-recognised as being integral to the delivery of quality outcomes for children and families. So I'm really very interested in, what do you think you need to have to be an educational leader? What are those skills? What does it take to be the kind of educational leader who can drive or guide others to ensure that all children's potentials are realised?

Rhonda Livingstone:

I was thinking back to when we were developing the National Quality Standard and all the conversations that we had around the table, we didn't want to be prescriptive about what we thought an educational leader should look like, or we didn't want to be prescriptive in terms of the role, because we recognise that every educational leader will be different. They'll bring different skills and strengths and attributes to the role, but they'll also be working with educators and service leaders who bring different skills, and attributes, and strengths as well. So we try not to be too prescriptive about what we thought back in the day were the key features of an educational leader.

Rhonda Livingstone:

We did recognise that it was complex and that it was a multifaceted and diverse role. And in many ways it's a very sophisticated role because many of us who take on those roles have worked with children. And our training has been with working with children learners and now we're asking people to work with adult learners and to mentor and support. There's been lots of emerging research on the role of the educational leader and particularly in the Australian context, which is great, I think.

Rhonda Livingstone:

Also just when I think back to when the National Quality Standard was revised in 2018, and the change in the wording in terms of that element, talking about educational leaders being supported not just nominated. So there was a recognition that educational leaders, that was an important role of the approved provider and others in the team to support that educational leader, and looking at the different skills that are needed to succeed in that role, I think. I just wanted to share, we've done quite a lot of work in terms of trying to unpack the research and look at some of the contributing factors to success in those roles.

Rhonda Livingstone:

We've developed some fact sheets, but also the educational leader resource. And I just wanted to share with you a slide on some of the attributes that we've identified in the research and also from our own experiences of working in services. And clearly, some of them will be no surprise to any of you. Of course, having really strong communication and interpersonal skills is such an integral part of our roles, but also having that comprehensive knowledge of theory in terms of education and care. But knowing the professional standards and the approved learning frameworks and having a contemporary understanding of evidence-based best practice approaches to teaching and learning and your guidance notes are great in supporting people in that space as well.

Rhonda Livingstone:

I also think it's really important to have a knowledge of leadership theory and being able to use a range of different leadership styles. Because as I mentioned before, we're all individuals, we have different ways of approaching things, different styles, different strengths. Also, I think being able to critically analyse and challenge conventional practices and ideas, and using those thinking skills to support others, pretty clear reflecting, I think is also important.

Rhonda Livingstone:

As late as I think it's important that we have a sense of direction and purpose, and also we have that ability to influence and a willingness to work with educators because we will be working with people from diverse backgrounds and different levels of knowledge and experience. But also I think having that commitment to being a learner and co-constructing knowledge and continually... Sorry, continuing our journey of professional development, I think is also really important.

Mary Holwell:

I really liked that idea of being committed to being an ongoing learner and I think that applies not only to the role of an educational leader, but almost to the role of being an educator. It's about being open to ideas all of the time and moving your own professional development forwards both as an educational leader, but also as an educator, and I think it's something that we should all turn our mind to.

Rhonda Livingstone:

Absolutely. And in response to feedback from the sector, because we heard from lots of people that they didn't feel there was enough guidance for educational leaders, so we worked with a group of sector experts and practitioners in the sector. And I just wanted to share with you the different aspects of The Educational Leader Resource. This was developed in 2019, and it was made to speak to educational leaders in all different service types, but also for new and for emerging leaders as well as more experienced ones, but also to approve providers and educational leaders or educators who might be aspiring to take on that different, that educational leadership role. And it is a complex as I said, role. And so we broke the resource down into three components.

Rhonda Livingstone:

The first one looks at the role of the educational leader and it unpacks the expectations and requirements and it unpacks what it looks like to be a leader to lead others, to lead practice, but importantly to lead change, which I think is a significant role of educational leaders these days.

Rhonda Livingstone:

Then the second part presents a bit of a model around expanding and thinking about how to promote growth. It does identify some key capabilities and some abilities that the educational leader might use to grow and develop as a leader. And they identified the people who developed, we worked collaboratively in the development of this, but in that process, the four key elements that were explored that formed the basis of educational leadership. And they kind of aligned to the ones we talked about before, but they identified knowledge, professionalism, relationships, and reflection. So all of the things that we've really talked about in terms of inclusion and diversity.

Rhonda Livingstone:

And then the third part is the, where to next. That section really explores goal setting and action research. But also along with the resource, we've developed some support materials like some videos. And I really encourage you if you haven't had a look at the videos, they're up on the SQL website, and I've just got another slide that shows some of the additional resources.

Rhonda Livingstone:

The other thing I really like about these videos is that educational leaders from all different services and all different cultural backgrounds and different service types have talked about their style and their leadership roles. And I love the videos because they promote that view that it's not a one size fits all approach, and that it does empower educational leaders to build on their strengths and to support and work collaboratively with the educators that are part of their service chain. And of course there's lots of other.

Rhonda Livingstone:

We've developed two new ones, one related particularly to family daycare and another one to outside school hours care. So even though the resource speaks to all service types, we thought there was some unique opportunities in family daycare and outside school hours care. So we've developed two additional resources, and of course they're all free and available on the SQL website. And we've got a price for quality card game that unpacks that as well.

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