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### **Exploring perceptions of how I influence and effect change to motivate team members**

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#### **Abstract**

It was important to me that the research I was going to undertake into my leadership practice would be relevant and meaningful; ultimately my leadership should be having a positive impact on children and families. When constructing the statements of leadership ability I used the Leadership branch of the Effective Leadership and Management Scheme (ELMS) (Moyle, 2006). I found I identified with Kolb's (1984) Learning Styles as well as Neugebauer's (1985) leadership typology and discovered comparisons with Goleman et al (2002) coaching style of leadership. An introductory statement read out at the beginning of the interviews explained the rationale for the research and the ethics applied. The use of different methods and the range of participants allowed me to examine more closely my leadership and gain greater insight as to how others perceive me. I developed a clearer understanding of my leadership styles and abilities, how to apply these more purposefully to improve effectiveness and resolved to encourage those I lead to advance their own leadership abilities.

**Keywords:** influence, motivate, change, team, perceptions.

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## Learning Contract

It was soon after starting work at my first children's centre that the prospect of undertaking the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) was presented as the way forward for my professional development. As Moyles (2006) explains, the development of the NPQICL is *"evidence of the importance now placed by policy makers on the training of early years leaders/managers"* (p.7). Moyles (2006) goes on to refer to a number of projects which demonstrate that quality practices for children can be linked directly to the quality of leadership. Similarly Whalley (2011) considers studies such as Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY, 2002) and Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE, 2004) when identifying the relationship between strong leadership and children's progress.

As in recent months there have been extensive changes to the way children's centres operate and deliver services and I have experienced considerable changes within my own role, embarking on the NPQICL journey at this point in time seems quite opportune. The programme requires that I examine my leadership practice and in so doing identify an aspect that I can explore and develop (National Standard [NS] 1.8). As part of the reflective practice one component of the programme is that of journaling which, although not something I have previously experienced, I can certainly appreciate its value. Whalley (2011) advocates by reflecting *"on the way we carry out our roles and others' perceptions of us, we are able to analyse whether things are as they should be or whether changes are needed and to base these on sound judgement."* (p.54); journaling can be used to good effect in support of this.

Having completed the on-line diagnostic I met with my Mentor and considered the outcomes alongside the National Standards for Children's Centres Leaders; this assisted with my learning needs analysis and prioritising areas for development within my leadership. Whilst I feel I am able in many areas, I am keen to learn more about leadership theory (NS 5.6) in order to strengthen my knowledge into a deeper understanding which will contribute towards marking a shift in my leadership. Whilst a key area identified through completion of the diagnostic was that of governance and finance (NS 3.4), it is not necessarily appropriate given my current post and the structural changes which have taken place; it is not pertinent to my current leadership role. Also, I have had experience in previous leadership positions where I have had responsibility for establishing and reporting directly to advisory boards as well as managing budgets.

Interestingly, following my first Mentoring session I began my journal; my first entry appears as a collection of disjointed thoughts. I have copied from memory a diagram illustrated by my Mentor of three circles within each other and made reference to Covey; underneath I have written "identified lack of control, considered how to influence, increase ability to influence (Journal, 29 Aug '12). Covey's (2004) circles of concern and influence provide an interesting concept given my current role and the challenges I encounter of middle leadership; his suggestion for increasing influence through proactive focus and identification and solutions for 'direct', 'indirect' and 'no control' are quite compelling (Covey, 2004) (NS 4.7, 5.6). I will explore further my leadership style and this concept of leading from the middle, as Robinson (2009) states "*Leading from the middle refers to positioning ourselves alongside those whom we've empowered*" (p.xvii) which, given my propensity for developing positive team work and 'growing people', seems a good place to start.

## **Critical Self Evaluation**

In this section I want to reflect on my learning during the course and the impact it has had on my leadership linking to theories, ideas and personal experiences expressed in my journal.

### **The Journey Begins**

My NPQICL journey began properly from that very first meeting I had with my Mentor. Through discussion around my professional heritage as well as analysis of my diagnostic, certain patterns became apparent. The tendency I had to talk of work practices and achievements referring to what 'we' do as opposed to what 'I' do was something I had been unaware of, although coming from an early years background where there is typically a *"climate where everyone 'mucks in together' and is considered equal"* (Moyles, 2007, p.28) this is maybe not all that surprising. In my Journal following the meeting I referred to the need to focus on 'I' and entered *"Identify as a Leader"* (29 Aug '12).

This first Mentoring session was quite enlightening and enabled me to gain a clearer perspective of what would be entailed by participating in the NPQICL programme. The fact that I would be expected to demonstrate a 'shift' in my own leadership, how this was to be achieved and what might be involved certainly provoked a range of thoughts and emotions. I agreed with Moyles (1998) *"having the qualities of a competent and effective leader is important for the well-being of children, staff and parents"* (p.28) so participating in this process was a logical step for me to take. I began to understand that I must take my reflective practice a stage further and apply this to my own leadership in a purposeful and discerning way if I was to achieve the desired outcome.(NS1.8)

### **Building the learning community**

#### **• Exploring journeys into leadership**

As a naturally reflective person I often consider the people I have encountered, the experiences I have had and the choices I have made in relation to their ensuing effects and recognise how they have helped shape who I am today. On Day One of the NPQICL I was asked to consider the leadership influences and opportunities I had experienced in the form of a timeline then share within a small group. The similarities that emerged through our discussion and our interpretation of these was beneficial in helping to understand what contributes towards the formation of leaders. In my Journal (19 Sept '12) I have recorded *"useful exercise, found commonalities:*

*organisers, doers, interpersonal skills, high work ethics (double edged sword!)*". Carnall (2007) cites a study on corporate leaders by Cooper and Hingley (1985) showing leadership influences such as *"Early childhood experience: early feelings of insecurity and loss led to subsequent drive and need to control their own future"* which was an experience echoed in my timeline and that of another member of my group. Goleman et al (2002) illustrates how effective leaders master emotional intelligence competencies, from the *"first awareness of a competence"* in *"late childhood or early adolescence"* and subsequently use the competence *"purposefully"*, *"regularly"* and *"effectively"* so *"leadership excellence develops in life"* (p.126) which also echoes some of the discussion points within our group.

- **Examining characteristics of early years' settings**

Considering questions posed by the programmes facilitators regarding my leadership and management responsibilities, and then by comparing experiences and impressions within a small group I realised I was not alone in the struggle to separate leadership from management. We compared, discussed and drew out our key findings then composed these to produce our own definition of leadership and management: *"Leadership is a motivational process towards a shared vision. Management is task orientated, enabling delivery"* (Journal, 19 Sept '12). As Kotter (1990) explains *"Leadership produces change. That is its primary function."* (p.35). He goes on to clarify that, whereas leadership is concerned with *"setting direction"*, management is about planning *"designed to produce orderly results, not change."* (Kotter 2002, p.35)

- **Being a leader**

During the afternoon of the second day I worked in my allotted task group for the first time; this involved working together in a team of leaders to produce our Team Learning Contract, *"Everyone was a little hesitant at first"* (Journal, 20 Sept '12) *"Everyone made a contribution, we all agreed before writing it down .... I suggested 'openness and honesty' then at the end 'won't always agree but will always work together'."* (Journal, 20 Sept '12). Daniel Goleman (1998) links Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory with effective leadership; I believe a range of EI competences were exhibited by the Group members during the task as highlighted by Goleman et al (2002) who describe four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, each with a range of competencies: Self Awareness and Self Management, (Personal Competencies); Social Awareness and Relationship Management (Social Competencies) (p.47-8).

### **Developing leadership in a research community**

## • **Micro-project**

Being able to engage with the other leaders of my Task Group in the planning and execution of the micro-project was an intense and exhilarating experience. Conducting research, analysing data and subsequently presenting the findings with imposed time limits for each part of the process involved a number of challenges. We established from the outset that collectively we wanted to focus on the process, identifying our intention to *“trust in the process”* (Journal (11 Oct '12)). The micro-project allowed me to acquire skills and knowledge that would assist later with the research element of the NPQICL programme. I was able to employ a range of learning techniques which are easily identifiable with the modes described in the Learning Style Inventory developed by David Kolb (1984) such as:

- ❖ *“Concrete experience: Having an experience that allows them to see and feel what it is like*
- ❖ *Reflection: Thinking about their own and others’ experiences*
- ❖ *Model building: Coming up with a theory that makes sense of what they observe*
- ❖ *Trial-and-error learning: Trying something out by actively experimenting with a new approach”*

(cited in Goleman et al 2002, p.193).

Following the conclusion of the micro-project the group conducted a process review which I have included in my Journal (11 Oct '12) describing ‘what went well’ as *“the process, the team dynamics, fun, not being ‘done to’ we took control utilising everyone’s skills”*. Covey (2004) describes creating *“the miracle of synergy”* which he defines as meaning *“the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”* describing it as *“catalytic”, “empowering”, unifying”* and *“creative”* (p.262-3); I believe this illustrates accurately how the group performed. One point for me to take forward and ensure I include in my own research project concerns ethics, as also identified on the Process review was *“we acted ethically – but didn’t record it”* (Journal 11 Oct '12). I felt I would also benefit from further reading on ‘research and ethics’ (NS 1.8).

## • **Introduction to academic reading**

Having identified a desire to improve my knowledge around leadership theory, I welcomed the opportunity to explore the academic texts that formed part of the Leadership Learning Group agendas. I hosted the first meeting at the end of September; each member of our group of four

brought an article about leadership. I gained a better insight into the texts through the group discussion that ensued. Each of us brought a different dimension to the dissemination of the topic, as individual as the articles we had chosen. We found common themes that prevailed as well as shared opinions as we scrutinized and probed into the significance of the meanings the writers were wishing to convey. The subject of the academic reading for our second Leadership Learning Group (LLG) was 'andragogy'; we had three texts, each by different authors, to critique and compare. We began by distinguishing between the concepts of pedagogy and andragogy, unpicking and teasing out the finer details, making comparisons between the texts. The different styles of the authors affected our individual responses to the articles and I reflected in my journal afterwards *"being able to critique the writings as a group meant we discovered more within the articles than each had found as individuals"* (Journal, 19 Oct '12). As Knowles et al (2011) explains, pedagogy is *"designed for teaching children"* (p.70) whereas *"In contrast, the andragogical model focuses on the education of adults"* (Knowles et al, 2011 p.70). With pedagogy the responsibility is fully with the teacher and the learners are submissive, in contrast to andragogy, where adults are responsible for their own decisions and the teacher's role is that of facilitator. Our LLG acknowledged and recognised the andragogical model being applied throughout the NPQICL process, and one point considered was *"sharing of power – Learning Contracts"* (Journal, 19 Oct '12). As Knowles et al (2011) suggests *"Learning contracts are a way to engage learners to take charge of their learning"* (p.271).

### **Developing as a reflective leader**

#### **• Clarifying values, principles and vision**

I am aware that I have personal values and beliefs which are integral to who I am and aspire to be. It is important to me that in my work I am not expected to be in conflict with these which is reflected by the first 'value' that I entered in my Journal *"Work with integrity"* (7 Nov '12), I have later observed *"I do not expect everyone I work with to always have exactly the same beliefs and values as I hold but working within the Early Years sector generally ensures that commonalities can be found ... shared aims and objectives has led to positive joint working and collaboration"* (Journal 7 Nov '12). I believe Goleman (1998) makes a valid point when he suggests *"People who follow their inner sense of what is worthwhile minimize emotional static for themselves"* (p.58).

#### **• Developing an effective learning community**

Early stages of the NPQICL programme involved the formulation of our learning community, one that evolved as part of an andragogical approach. As stated earlier, *“the andragogical model focuses on the education of adults”* (Knowles et al 2011, p.70) however, as our Task Group reformed to construct a mobile *‘illustrating qualities of an effective learning community’* we immediately placed *‘the child’* at the centre. This can be explained as the task *“was something each of us could relate to, had personal experience and knowledge of and we each clearly had a commitment to achieving within our own centres”* (Journal, 7 Nov ’12). It is worth considering the Team’s approach in relation to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model, with the child at the centre connected to systems (parents, educators carers, community group), where influences flow both ways (cited in Allen, 2011, p.116-7).

- **Exploring leadership styles and approaches**

Knowledge of leadership styles and approaches can be used to gain a better understanding of, and assist with the development of, effective leadership. By first considering four different leadership scenarios, then sharing and examining them within a small group, I was able to further my knowledge and understanding of leadership theory. What became apparent through discussion was that often a mixture of approaches or partial concepts were applicable. As Rodd (1998) suggests *“It must be recognised that leadership styles are not static ... there are many situations where a particular leadership style is more effective than another”* (p.17). Being able to adapt leadership style to meet differing conditions or circumstances can be effective (NS 5.6).

- **Making things happen**

I consider supervision to be an important part of effective leadership and agree with Rodd (1998) when she explains *“the leader helps staff members to use their knowledge and skills effectively in the performance of their work and to deepen their understanding of professional philosophies and values”* (p.116). As a result of our Task Group’s exercise on supervision I recorded (Journal, 8 Nov ’12) *“everyone made a contribution to what they felt was important for effective supervision, which was then agreed upon by the group : involvement, guidance, Individual, timing, confidentiality, safe place, mentoring, listening, empowering, praising, safe practice, roles and responsibilities”*

The format and strategies I employ when embarking on a project are generally fairly consistent. Sharing my process with two other leaders I discovered we employed very similar methods, just with a slight variation of words. We listed our approach, agreeing on the order, and then found

that the actions fell into three distinct processes. These corresponded with the three-step model proposed by Lewin (1974), 'unfreezing', 'changing' and 're-freezing' (cited in Rodd 1998, p.136-7). I shall consider this comparison when undertaking future projects (NS 4.7).

The final Team Task involved every member of the group giving feedback to each other on their individual skills and knowledge which I reflected was "*quite sobering and thought provoking ... felt quite anxious-out of comfort zone*" (Journal, 9 Nov '12). Discussion about how to carry out this task took longer than normal and feelings of discomfort were acknowledged by several of the group. The suggestion from one person that they preferred to give feedback verbally was welcomed; having each made some notes we took turns to receive feedback from our peers. Rodd (1998) advocates the use of positive feedback where "*professional growth and development are acknowledged*" and proposes that it is beneficial to "*learn the role of feedback and how to accept it and use it constructively*" (p.72) and Goleman (1999) stated "*Used artfully, feedback on competences can be a priceless tool for self-examination – and for cultivating change and growth*" (p.263). These are valuable points to be considered when conducting research into my own leadership and asking for feedback (NS 3.6).

# RESEARCH PROJECT

## **Introduction**

Having completed my learning contract and my critical self evaluation I am ready to embark on the research activity part of the NPQICL programme.

Initially I will set out the context for this report which will include a description of my current role and professional setting, as well as the experiences, beliefs and values which have influenced my professional development thus far. I will also identify what I consider to be my current leadership challenge.

I will explain my methodology in how I formulate my research question, what underlying leadership aspects I am keen to discover and how I intend to accomplish this. The research strategy, methods and selection of participants will be explained and my regard for ethical principals.

I will present my research findings and data outlining the types of evidence produced by applying the previously identified strategies and methods. I will go on to describe and analyse the evidence in comparison to the intentions and purposes of this research activity before drawing conclusions and identifying future plans.

## Context

My career in Early Years began in 1995, since which there have been many developments and changes within the sector. For many years I worked predominately in the voluntary sector in the urban area of a mainly rural local authority, before moving to a position within a leading Children's Charity in one of the largest cities in the Midlands. I am currently employed as a Senior Universal Worker, a newly created post which emerged as a result of significant restructuring which occurred between April and June 2012. I am responsible for leading a team of universal services staff which include New Births Workers, Targeted Early Years Outreach, Community Outreach and Inclusion Workers; this team was also formed as a result of the major changes.

My involvement in Children's Centres began seriously in 2007 when I was responsible for setting up a new Centre with structures, services, budgets and a business plan. With my move to the city I was again involved with establishing and reporting to multi-agency Advisory Boards, identifying and developing service needs as well as recruiting, developing and managing early years' teams. Kotter (1990) describes how over a period of time the accumulation of experiences is influential and is *"especially relevant with respect to leadership"* (p.113); he goes on to consider the positive effect of career experiences for those who have the opportunity to directly observe and interact with individuals who are either good or bad leaders. This is something I would definitely concur with; it is not only the experiences of good leadership that we can draw knowledge from. In fact, experiencing the negative impacts of poor leadership and observing the ensuing effects on those around usually promotes reflection on what ought to have been done and results in comparisons with previous experiences of good leadership.

Having gone through a consultation period as part of the change process, which resulted in redundancies in senior management and administration posts, a new organisational structure had emerged to accommodate the new locality way of working. New Staff teams were formed, family support, universal services and early years, to work across the reach area of six Children's Centres. With significantly reduced funding these teams were relocated at two hub sites within the locality. Of necessity I adopted a predominantly "Affiliative" leadership style (Goleman et al, 2002) which *"creates harmony by connecting people to each other [and] motivate[s] during stressful times"* (p.70). I recognised there were challenges to be met, not least that of how I ensured my leadership ability would be sufficient for the demands ahead. Robinson (2009)

asserts that he has *“become a more effective leader over the years”* (p.xviii) and later goes on to suggest that *“The best leaders know what they can do well and what they can’t do well. They know the strengths and weaknesses of their personalities”* (p.xiv). I certainly wished to aspire to a level of emotional self awareness which Goleman et al. (2002) characterized with the statement; *“Leaders high in emotional awareness are attuned to their inner signals, recognizing how their feelings affect them and their job performance”* (p.327). However, I also recognised the merits of the assertion by Fullan (1993) that *“The very first place to begin change process is within ourselves”* (p.138) and was determined to be mindful of this as I continued on my NPQICL journey.

## Methodology

### • Research Question

It was important to me that the research I was going to undertake into my leadership practice would be relevant and meaningful; ultimately my leadership should be having a positive impact on the children and families of the Children's Centres I work with. When formulating my research question I considered the challenges of recent months "*Relocation has been a particularly difficult change as whilst I appreciate the reasons for it, and recognise the positive aspects, there has been considerable upset to the staff affected due to poor standards of environment, failing IT support and loss of work colleagues (redundancy)*" (Journal, 7 Nov '12). Since my first Mentoring session, and later during Module One, I had made comparisons between aspects of my 'leadership role' in contrast with that of my 'management role'. By considering the differences, as demonstrated by Rodd (2006) derived from work by Law and Glover (2000), managers '*plan*', '*organise*', '*co-ordinate*' and '*control*' whereas leaders '*give direction*', '*offer inspiration*', '*build teamwork*', '*set an example*' and '*gain acceptance*' (cited in Moyles 2007, p.5-6). I realised that I continually use skills and competencies associated with both roles. Possibly as Rodd (1998) suggests "*part of the difficulty in understanding leadership in early childhood stems from a confusion with management*" (p.5). Being able to distinguish and appreciate the differences had become an important part of my learning journey, and I felt this should be reflected in my research. My research question "Exploring perceptions of how I influence and effect change to motivate team members" was finally arrived at; I reflected afterwards that "I was struggling ... describing to my LLG helped to clarify ... able to formulate my question" (Journal, Nov '12). I was reminded again of 'Wenger's (1998) "community of learners" (Whalley, 2011e).

### • Research Strategy, Methods and Participants

I began by looking at the contrasts between quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2008), (see table below); I then concluded that I would combine both in a mixed methods research approach. When considering which methods would be appropriate to use in order to gather data, I needed to take into account who would be the participants. One group of participants would be the Universal Services Team as well as the Early Years Team; I decided to include the Early Years Team as, in the absence of a Senior Practitioner for this group, I had also been leading and managing them since the relocation in June until late October. A second, smaller group of

participants would be formed from my peers; the Children’s Centre Teacher, the Early Years Practitioner and my Line Manager.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Points of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

(Bryman 2008, p.393)

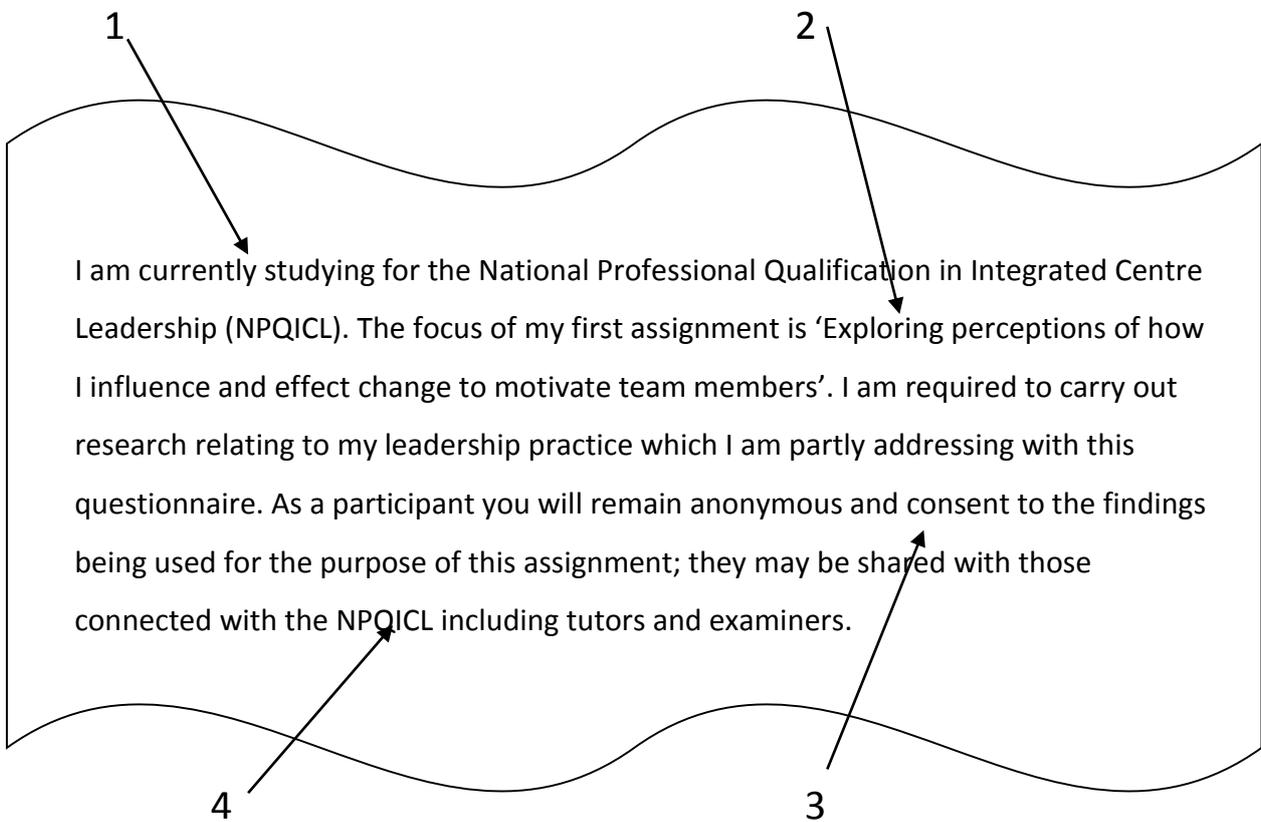
I decided on the use of a questionnaire for the first group of research participants consisting of two parts. Each question contained a statement on my leadership ability to be graded, a quantitative measure, as in a Likert scale *“to measure intensity of feelings about the area in question”* (Bryman 2008, p.146). The second part asked for illustrative examples as a qualitative measure.

I chose semi-structured interviews for use with my second group of research participants, as Bryman (2008) suggests the *“interviewer usually has some latitude to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies”* (p.196). Following the return of the questionnaires I used triangulation to assist with formulating questions for my qualitative interviews; Bryman (2008) explains ‘Triangulation’ as *“The use of more than one method or sources of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross checked”* (p.700). When devising my semi-structured interviews I considered the nine types of questions suggested by Kvale (1996) and three kinds of questions distinguished by Charmaz (2002) (cited in Bryman 2008, p.445-8).

• **Ethical Principles**

As I had identified during the Micro-project element in Module Two, I needed to be aware of the ethical principles involved when conducting research (Journal, 11 Oct '12); Bryman (2008) advises on what to “*consider in connection with ethical issues*” (p.133). This includes:

1. The purposes of the research;
2. What the research is about;
3. Informed consent;
4. What is going to happen to the data.



I also prepared an introductory statement to read out at the beginning of the interviews explaining rationale for the research and the ethics applied (Bryman, 2008 p.200-1).

**Analysis of evidence**

**Findings and Data**

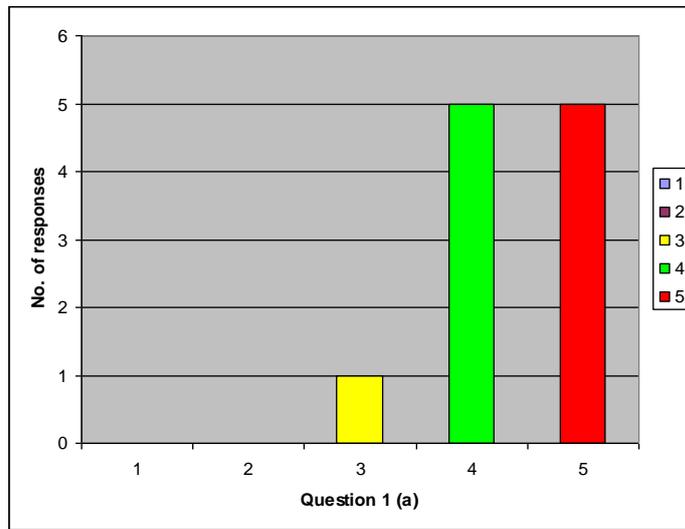
Twelve questionnaires were distributed; eleven questionnaires were returned.

There were five questions and each question was divided into two parts. The first part (a) was a quantitative research strategy which resulted in the following:

1	strongly disagree	purple
2	disagree	maroon
3	neither agree nor disagree	yellow
4	agree	green
5	strongly agree	red

Question 1(a) “I give direction and guidance whilst setting achievable goals and targets”

**Table Q. 1(a)**



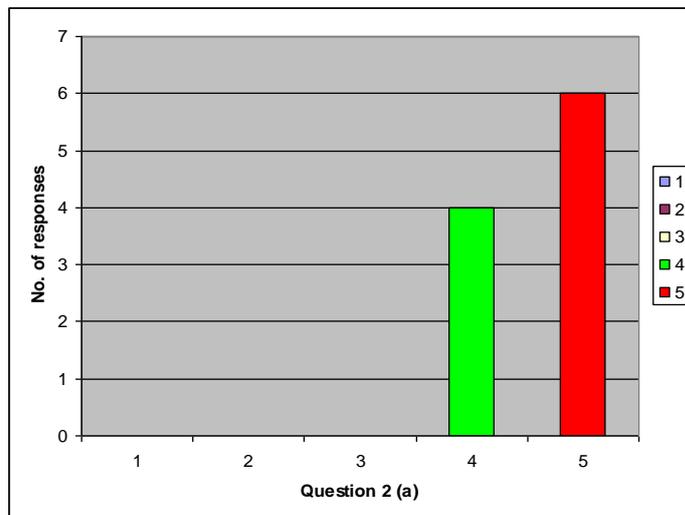
Note: One Research Participant had indicated

This scored was recorded as “4”



Question 2(a) “I offer inspiration, have ideas and articulate thoughts that motivate others”

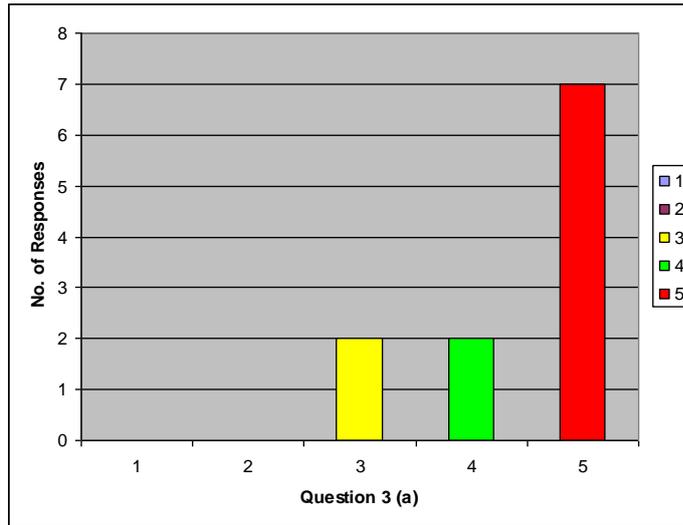
**Table Q. 2(a)**



Note: One Research Participant did not answer this question

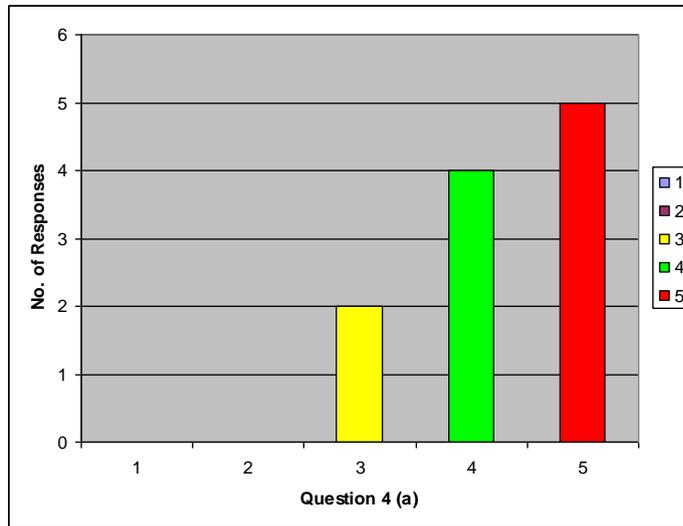
Question 3(a) "I build and encourage collaboration, creating and using teams effectively"

Table Q. 3(a)



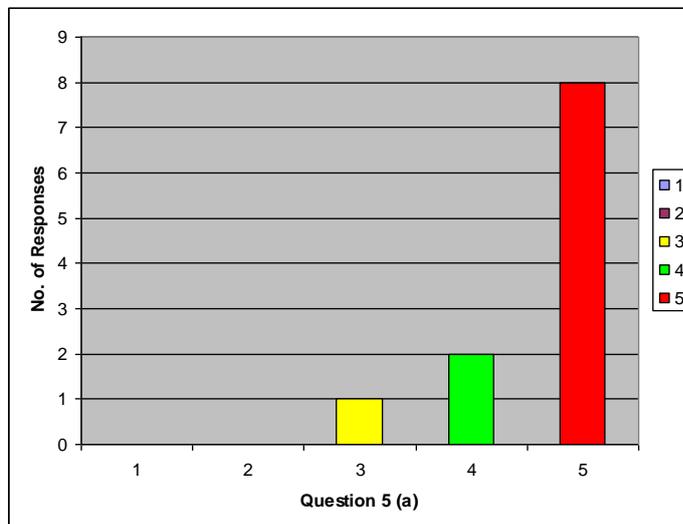
Question 4(a) "I respond to change positively and have a flexible and versatile approach"

Table Q. 4(a)



Question 5(a) "I behave responsibly and consider the needs, safety and well-being of children, families and staff; I aspire to help create an enabling, learning environment for all"

Table Q. 5(a)



The second part (b) was a qualitative research strategy which required the Research Participant to provide illustrative examples; some people made more than one contribution for a question whilst others made no response. Responses with key words, shared phrases or concepts have been grouped together (see Appendix 3).

By layering the data from these responses, common threads were identified to assist in the formulation of the questions for the semi structured interviews. In this way, Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria of 'trustworthiness' could be addressed as well as producing what Geertz (1973) calls 'thick descriptive' accounts (cited in Bryman 2008). A number of responses to questions two and three referred to "team meetings"; the "Enabling Environments training" was mentioned in the replies to question one and particularly in those for question two. As a result, the first two questions in the semi structured interview with my peers were influenced by these topics:

- "1. At Team meetings how would you describe the Leadership style and qualities I employ?"*
- 2. During the Enabling Environments training what skills and experience do you think I brought? Could I have contributed anything more, or done something differently?"*

The next two questions were designed to gather rich, deep data about my research question *"Exploring perceptions of how I influence and effect change to motivate team members"*:

- "3. Do you consider that I influence and effect change? In what way have I / should I achieve this?"*
- 4. How would you describe my interactions with those around me on a day to day basis i.e. staff, children, families, other agencies? What do I do well and what could I do better?"*

The transcripts for the qualitative data from these interviews appear in Appendix 4.

**Discussion and analysis**

The overarching question for my research project, *“Exploring perceptions of how I influence and effect change to motivate team members”* required that I collect data to investigate this aspect of my leadership. In order to effectively judge the results from my questionnaire, I was concerned that the questions should reflect recognised skills and abilities attributed to leadership. When constructing the statements of leadership ability, and the part of the questions requesting illustrative examples, I used the Leadership branch of the Effective Leadership and Management Scheme (ELMS) (Moyles, 2006). Whalley (2011a) suggests the ELMS model *“is essentially a tool by which practitioners who lead/manage Early Years settings can evaluate their own effectiveness and is particularly appropriate for those following the NPQICL route”* (p.7). Moyles (2006) explains

*“The ELMS tree is composed of four main sections called ‘branches’. The branches represent:*

- 1. Leadership qualities*
- 2. Management skills*
- 3. Professional skills and attributes*
- 4. Personal characteristics and attitudes*

*... on the branches are subsections called ‘stems’: these are embedded qualities, skills, attributes, characteristics and attitudes that grow out of the four main branches ... each stem has further subsections called ‘leaves’. These reflect more defined, precise qualities, skills ...”* (p. 12-3)

Questionnaire	ELMS Leadership Qualities
<p><b>1.(a)</b> I give direction and guidance whilst setting achievable goals and targets.</p> <p><b>1.(b)</b> Can you give an example of when I have helped you to find a way forward or identified ways for improvement?</p>	<p><b>1.1 Be visionary</b></p> <p>1.1a Offer direction and guidance</p>

**Research data indicates:**

**Table Q.1(a)** Majority support statement: 10 out of 11 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’; 1 person ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’

**Participants' key words, concepts:** 'supervisions', 'encouraging', 'support', management support strategies identified such as documentation, plans, procedures, suggesting that I employ certain Leadership behaviours described by Rodd (2006);

*"Values behaviour: building trust and openness*

*People behaviour: building caring relationships, with respect for individual differences"*

(cited in Whalley 2011a, p.7)

However, there was one statement, *"targets set too high-no breakdown"*; new targets, which are quite demanding, have been set by the local authority. However, this is something I have been addressing through supervision and team meetings; although, if staff do not attend then messages can get delayed or even missed altogether. This is something I can address.

Questionnaire	ELMS Leadership Qualities
<p><b>2(a)</b> I offer inspiration, have ideas and articulate thoughts that motivate others.</p> <p><b>2(b)</b> Can you describe a time when you feel I empowered you to act or get involved?</p>	<p><b>1.4 Be a leader</b> 1.4e Be able to motivate and persuade Staff.</p> <p><b>1.9 Ensure that all relevant people are empowered and enabled</b> 1.9b Empower and enable staff.</p>

**Research data indicates:**

**Table Q. 2(a):** All support statement: 4 people 'agreed' and 6 'strongly agreed'

1 person did not complete this question

**Participants' key words, concepts:** 'creative', 'inspired', 'involved', 'stimulating', 'team meetings – ideas and views'. These traits can be found in Goleman et al (2002) visionary style of leadership, one of its EI competences is *"transparency ... sharing information and knowledge so that people at all levels of the company feel included and able to make the best possible decisions"* as well as *"empathy ... ability to sense how others feel and to understand their perspectives"* (p.74)

I can also identify with the description provided by Bogue (1985) *"Leaders are organisers of time, talent and task"* (cited in Rodd, 1998, p.15)

Questionnaire	ELMS Leadership Qualities
<p><b>3(a)</b> I build and encourage collaboration, creating and using teams effectively.</p> <p><b>3(b)</b> Are there occasions when I have made you feel included and valued? What happened?</p>	<p><b>1.7 Understand the importance of shared values</b></p> <p>1.7a Be able to generate shared values amongst staff within the setting.</p> <p>1.7d Ensure that all members of staff and all parents feel included and valued.</p>

**Research data indicates:**

**Table Q. 3(a):** Majority support statement: 2 people ‘agreed’ and 7 ‘strongly agreed’

2 people ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’

**Participants’ key words, concepts:** ‘praise’, ‘listened to’, ‘having a voice’, ‘feel part of a team’.

Here I recognise attributes of Rodd’s (1998) Team Leadership; *“An effective team leader: ... lead by example thereby stimulating a particular team culture ... improving team morale and productivity ... ensures that constructive relationships are established ... fosters the self-esteem and confidence of team members ... coaches team members”* (p.113). However I also see elements of Goleman et al (2002) affiliative leadership style; *“open sharing of emotions ... tend to value people and their feelings”* (p.81), *“heighten team harmony, increase morale, improve communication”* (p81-2) . It is worth considering that Goleman et al (2002) cautions *“affiliative style should not be used alone”* (p.84).

Questionnaire	ELMS Leadership Qualities
<p>4(a) I respond to change positively and have a flexible and versatile approach.</p> <p>4(b) Can you provide two illustrations of how I have supported you in dealing with change?</p>	<p><b>1.5 Be flexible and versatile</b></p> <p>1.5b View change as a positive occurrence and respond confidently.</p> <p><b>1.8 Understand how to lead and manage change</b></p> <p>1.8e Know how to support staff, parents and children following change</p>

**Research data indicates:**

**Table Q. 4(a):** Majority support statement: 4 people ‘agreed’ and 5 ‘strongly agreed’

2 people ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’

**Participants' key words, concepts:** 'supported with location change and job change', 'creativity', supervision'. I feel my approach to supporting change is fairly accurately described by Rodd (1998) when she explains the leader's role is "to support the team's task accomplishment [and] to design processes and procedures which will support manageable action" (p.139). However, one of the people who "neither agree[d] nor disagree[d]" commented "confused, instructions different from management". Communication is very important but is often identified as being a challenge, particularly within multi-agency working. The new management structure has resulted in the Centre Manager being employed by a different organisation to that of the seniors and teams operating from there; different heritages and working practices can take time to understand.

Questionnaire	ELMS Leadership Qualities
<p><b>5(a)</b> I behave responsibly and consider the needs, safety and well-being of children, families and staff; I aspire to help create an enabling, learning environment for all.</p> <p><b>5(b)</b> Is there a time when you have particularly felt that your needs have been addressed?</p>	<p><b>1.2 Be responsible</b> 1.2b Be responsible for the safety and well-being of the staff.</p>

**Research data indicates:**

**Table Q. 5(a):** Majority support statement: 2 people 'agreed' and 8 'strongly agreed'  
1 person 'neither agreed nor disagreed'

**Participants' key words, concepts:** 'outside work' and 'personal' issues, 'workload'. I feel I employ Goleman et al (2002) coaching style of leadership and the EI competence "developing others [which includes the ability] to give advice that is genuinely in the employee's best interest" (p.78). Although the person who "neither agree[d] nor disagree[d]" commented 'my experience + skills were not heard'; I will consider how to ensure all staff voice any concerns they have, and realise they can do so with impunity.

I realised that the questionnaires did not allow for additional comments or invite participants to comment generally on what they thought I may have done well and where I had been less successful. I tried to redress this to some extent during the Peer Group semi-structured interviews.

## **Interviews with Peer Group**

Transcripts from the semi structured interviews appear in Appendix 4. The Peer group consisted of the Children's Centre Teacher and the Early Years Professional. Originally the Children's Services Manager was going to participate however she took annual leave during the two weeks preceding the Christmas break when I had arranged to conduct the interviews, and secured a promotion to another post starting in January.

## **Research Data (see Appendix 4)**

### **Interviewees' responses, key words, phrases and concepts, to question 1 regarding meetings and my leadership style:**

*'enthusiasm, engaging, charismatic', 'including everyone', 'agency staff feel as valued as other staff', 'make points based on children's needs', 'got vision, know how to get over barriers', 'kept them [staff] going when moved here', 'made sure all services delivered'.*

I find myself identifying with Neugebauer's (1985) leadership typology which describes "*The Motivator [who] places strong emphasis on both the task and relationships*" (cited in Rodd, 1998, p.16). Also, I find comparisons with Goleman et al (2002) coaching style of leadership; "*coaches help people identify their unique strengths and weaknesses*" and "*coaches keep people motivated*" (p.77).

**Responses to how I could improve:** *'when things go off at a tangent could improve on steering back to the focus', 'time management an issue for us both and for team to get together', 'constant interruptions, need to say 'no' particularly to Receptionist'.*

### **Interviewees' responses, key words, phrases and concepts, to question 2 regarding my skills and experience demonstrated during the Learning Environments training:**

*'skills of doing the practical exercise and getting everyone involved', 'share some of your experience through modelling good practice', '[in] a group discussion you commented on what people had done, praised initiative, suggestions for what could be done in future', 'made it fun', brought a different perspective', you made sure learning experiences for children were brought in', enjoyed by all staff' . Here I can identify Kolb's (1984) Learning Styles 'Concrete experience' and 'Trial-and-error learning' (cited in Goleman et al, 2002, p.193).*

**Responses to how I could improve:** *'could have done more on background and links to EYFS-both could', could follow on from that training with adult role and effective practice'*

**Interviewees' responses, key words, phrases and concepts, to question 3 in consideration of whether I influence and effect change:** *'since moved here, team have bonded together otherwise wouldn't be able to be doing what they are', 'feel you are responsible for this, down to how you have led the change'* I am reminded of Isaksen and Tidd (2006) adaptation of team formation model by Tuckman and Jensens (1977): processes of forming, storming, norming, performing and transforming considered with leadership dimension and challenges where *"some teams will seem to spend longer in one stage and even miss one out all together"* (cited in Whalley, 2011f, p98-9). The *'storming'* process appears to have been missed and the team moves between *'performing'* and *'transforming'*

**Responses to how I could improve:** *'need to delegate more', 'more time for leadership role', 'especially being here, very difficult to get time needed'*

**Interviewees' responses, key words, phrases and concepts, to question 4 regarding my interactions with staff, children, families and other agencies:** *'relate well to people, making children's interests and needs central', 'welcoming, friendly, supportive, very natural', 'naturally have presence at a group; can you you're a leader', 'we work well together, inspire, one idea leads to another', at meetings very good at getting your point across in a diplomatic way'*

**Responses to how I could improve:** *"things you do for staff [to support] you need to do for yourself", 'stems from workload ... could deal with stress if have time out of office'*

The improvement observations and suggestions from my peers have helped to focus my attention on areas to address as part of my next steps in leadership development.

## **Conclusion**

When “*Exploring perceptions of how I influence and effect change to motivate team members*” I gathered evidence to analyse different aspects of my leadership and performance. The use of different methods and the range of participants allowed me to examine more closely my leadership and gain greater insight as to how others perceive me. From the quantitative research I carried out I can conclude that overall perceptions are positive regarding my leadership guidance and managing change; staff feel motivated and valued. From the qualitative investigations I can see patterns emerging related to my leadership styles and abilities, and am able to recognise how I effectively employ relevant modes appropriately. There is room for improvement where staff were unable to agree or disagree around collaboration and also flexibility. One member of staff demonstrated quite different opinions to the other participants; there appears to be no apparent pattern. I must try to discover why this is so; possibly the staff member did not attend the team meetings, training opportunities and supervisions that seem to have impacted positively on the others. A disadvantage of using anonymous feedback is that the participants expectation is to not be identified therefore difficulty exists around approaching them individually afterwards.

The additional qualitative research of semi structured interviews with my peer group qualified findings from the initial study and provided constructive opinions to guide and assist in the formulation of my next steps. I have developed a clearer understanding of my leadership styles and abilities, and how to apply these more purposefully to improve effectiveness. I will continue to use the competencies that are essential to my leadership performance but I will also devote time to my further development of my role as a leader; strategies that I have in place for those I lead I will ensure I apply for myself. I will use my team leadership skills to encourage those I lead to advance their own leadership abilities and continue to build upon the already existing strengths.

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