

'Are you looking after yourself?': Care and consideration as dimensions of educational leadership in practice.

Mary Hughes¹

Julie Wright¹

¹ Holmesglen Institute

Despite an increasing focus on wellbeing in the workplace (Rivers, Thompson & Jeske, 2018) little attention has been paid to the emotional dimension of the work of educational leaders. VonKrogh, Geilinger & Rechsteiner (2018) emphasise 'care' and 'consideration' as important enabling factors for learning and innovation, grounded in their view that human skills that drive knowledge creation are based on relationships and community building. The notion of care in the workplace can be understood in different ways, depending on the context in which it is used. 'Care' can refer to aspects of OH&S and a 'duty of care' within a workplace setting, or it may refer to 'caring' for patients in a medical setting. In early childhood the term 'care' is most often used to describe supervision and care of a child or children in an early childhood education and care setting. It is also a risk management and compliance strategy.

This paper draws on a doctoral study that examined the role of the Educational Leader in an early childhood education and care setting and their day-to-day pedagogical leadership enactment. A single-case study was used to gain a greater understanding of the role of the Educational Leader, enabling the collection of rich and detailed data through interviews, shadowing and the collection of documents and artefacts. Once data collection had been completed, it was analysed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Three key themes emerged with one theme being the notion of care and consideration shown by the Educational Leader to others in the setting. This data was further analysed using Boe and Hognestad's (2016) three categories of care: humour exchange, social chitchat and a supportive leadership style. Findings from the data indicated that using humour as part of everyday interactions in the workplace can build a positive relationship between leaders and colleagues. Situations involving 'small talk' or 'chit-chat' occurred frequently during day-to-day interactions and were used to connect to colleagues before, during and after staff meetings. Supportive and caring actions by the Educational Leader occurred not just spontaneously but in planned episodes during interactions in the classroom and outside of it.

Staff wellbeing matters are an important component of leadership responsibility. This is an under-researched area and worthy of further investigation.