Leadership and Management in Child Care Services: Contextual Factors and Their Impact on Practice

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Keywords

Abstract

There has been minimal Australian research focussed on the management and leadership aspects of directors' work in centre-based child care to date. In Australia, practices in early education have been largely drawn from studies in other cultural contexts, particularly research undertaken in the United States. It is timely that Australian research should inform its social policy about quality child care programs. The focus of this research was on the nature and characteristics of effective management and leadership practices in centre-based child care. Research (Jorde Bloom, 1992b; Morgan, 2000; Poster & Neugebauer, 2000; Rodd, 1994) indicates that quality of child care programs is influenced mostly by the leadership that the centre director can provide to staff within the centre.

The conceptual framework adopted in this study views leadership from a Social Systems framework. Central to a Social Systems framework is the notion that organisations do not exist in isolation rather, leadership and management in these settings are embedded in a broader social context. A Social Systems Model has received little attention in contemporary research on child care in Australia, and this study aims to build a framework for future studies in this area. The aim was to investigate leadership and management in child care in social, legislative and economic context. The findings seek to inform researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

Eight directors were purposively selected from community-based and privately based centres in urban and rural areas, and from accredited centres in South East Queensland. The selection of varying locations allowed the researcher to gain a broader perspective of the directors' daily lives, as different contextual and environmental conditions were anticipated to influence management and leadership within the child care centres.

Within this study, case studies of directors of child care centres were developed through interviews with the directors. The interview methodology focussed on exploratory semi-structured, open-ended questions in relation to management and leadership in centre-based child care. Directors were interviewed on two occasions within a three month period.

In the current context of the delivery of child care services in a market driven climate, the language of business and organisational theory has entered the lexicon of the early childhood field (Press, 1999). The findings indicate that the director of a child care centre needs to have training and experience in business management and leadership to enhance their competencies for management of centres in today's competitive environment. Growth in child care franchises is significantly changing and truly developing a "child care industry" (Murdoch, 2004). Also, consideration needs to be given to increasing accountability in child care service delivery, and how to better support directors in their role as advocates in the broader early childhood field. Further, families in specific communities have varying needs and early childhood programs should reflect the needs of the local community. Leadership models within child care centres should encompass the micro and macro influences on the operation of centres. Literature suggests that early childhood centres provide an opportune place to support families in a variety of ways through integrating support services to address the underlying social and policy factors that affect young children and their families (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Corter, 2001).

Publications arising

Nupponen, H. (2000). Leadership and management: Into the 21st Century (pp. 8-9). *Every Child, (6)*3, October. Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.

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List of Abbreviations

ABS   Australian Bureau of Statistics

AECA   Australian Early Childhood Association

DFYCCQ   Department of Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland

DFYCC   Department of Families, Youth and Community Care

EPAC   Economic Planning and Advisory Commission

FACS   Department of Family and Community Services

HUBS   Multiple services within one location

NAEYC   National Association for the Education of Young Children

NCAC   National Childcare Accreditation Council

QCCC   Queensland Child Care Coalition

QCOSS   Queensland Council of Social Services

QIAS   Quality Improvement and Accreditation System

QPCCCA Queensland Professional Child Care Centres Association

SBM   School Based Management

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made. The referencing citing system used in this thesis follows the procedures outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. I undertake to retain the original collated data on which this thesis is based for a minimum of five years, in accordance with University Ethics Guidelines. The research was conducted with a support of an APA scholarship from the Queensland University of Technology.

Signed

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CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW OF THESIS

1.0 Introduction

This research explores the role of the director in centre-based child care services. In this Chapter, background issues to the research are explained, including defining the nature of child care and the contextual issues in the provision of child care services in Queensland, which is where the research was conducted. Issues related to the role of the director in leadership and management in a long-day care centre are introduced. The significance of the research is described and the research aims and objectives are outlined. The nature of the research methodology is briefly reviewed and the overall structure of the thesis document is explained.

Many developments have occurred in the provision and delivery of child care services for young children and their families in Australia in the last three decades. Specifically, the development of an extensive child care system in the community and private sector has been significant. Three decades ago, there were minimal privately managed child care services to enable women with young children to work outside the home. Child care services that were available usually were established locally under the auspices of community organisations, church or neighbourhood groups. Now there is an extensive commercial child care service sector. Since 1994, there has been a steady increase in the number of children attending child care in Queensland. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2000) reported that almost two-thirds of children under 5 years (66%) have some form of child care, which may have included informal care by relatives and friends. The *Child Care Census* (2001) in Queensland indicated that the majority (90%) of children attending child care at licensed centres were below school age. Fourteen percent (14%) of these children attended long-day care centres on a full time basis. In addition, more children attended privately owned (75,706) child care services than community-managed (47,110) centres.

Child care issues remain at the forefront of government family and work policies. Greater political attention has increasingly attempted to ensure that child care is

accessible and affordable to families. There is also increased understanding of the importance of quality in service delivery for children's development.

It is important to note that 'political climate' in a broader sense can have wide connotations. In this thesis, 'political climate' refers to legislative context within the child care sector in Queensland, Australia.

1.1 The social, legislative and economic context of child care services

Child care in the Queensland *Child Care Act (1991)* is defined as "the provision of care of a prescribed type, on a regular basis, of a child, but does not include the provision of care of a child in the child's home or preschool education within the meaning of the Queensland Government, *Education (General Provisions) Queensland Act 1989*" (p. 6). Child care, as defined in the Queensland Act, may include kindergartens, long-day care centres and occasional care centres. Formal child care as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, (1999) includes long-day care centres (usually for children aged from birth to school age), family day care (which is provided in private homes by registered carers), and preschools and kindergartens which provide sessional and educational programs for children aged three to five years. The focus within this thesis is on child care provided within long-day care centres. Such centres usually operate at least 48 weeks of the year and provide care on weekdays for at least 8 hours a day.

Child care plays a crucial role in complementing parental care and promoting children's social and cognitive development (Berger, 1995; Berk, 1991; Ochiltree, 1994). Child care services enable parents, especially women, to enter the workforce or access further education and training. Child care also provides support to families who have children with disabilities and additional needs.

Children's development is influenced by many factors such as the many interactions within the family and the community (Ochiltree, 1994). For instance, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1989), an American psychologist, proposed that a child's development occurs in a system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding community. Among researchers, the established view is that quality

child care contributes to children's developmental outcomes, higher quality resulting in better outcomes for the child (DeBord, 1991, 1996; Vandell, 2004; Vandell & Wolfe, 2003). Recent research into brain development (Gunnar & Barr, 1998; Lindsey, 1998; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Newberger, 1997; Shore, 1997) proposes that more than a good early foundation is needed to provide young children with challenging and creative opportunities for ongoing learning well into their later years. Findings on brain development show that children's early years have a strong impact on their future academic achievement (Fleer, 2002; Thompson, 1998). Essential requirements for early brain development are obtained through relationships with other people; people that provide a rich variety of stimulation through vision, sound, touch, movement and other experiences that are integrated through emotional arousal (Thompson, 1998). Ultimately, quality child care preserves and enhances the family's capacity to function effectively in supporting the ongoing health and well-being of children (Edgar, 1997). Caldwell and Hillard (1985) argued that professional child care is a supplement to parental care. Professional child care is not a substitute for family care, nor a competitor for the role of parents in the upbringing of their children. Child care provides both care and also early education to children for their total development.

Under current Queensland legislation, a child care centre may have up to 75 children enrolled on any day, depending on their licensed capacity. Ages of the children catered for within a centre can be from 6 weeks of age and usually up to school age of 6 years. Some centres also provide occasional care, before and after school care and vacation care for school-aged children. Staffing depends on the number of children being served, for instance, from a minimum of two staff and up to twenty staff.

In Australia, staff employed in child care centres are usually referred to as child care workers or caregivers. Within child care centres, staff roles are designated as directors, group leaders and assistants. The director can be a contact director whose responsibilities include the direct teaching of children, as well as overall management and administration of the centre. The director may be a "non-contact" director who is responsible for total centre management without specific teaching

responsibilities on a daily basis, but who is likely to engage in teaching when staff are relieved for meal breaks, meetings, or other activities. The group leader's role entails providing the daily activities for the young children within a specific age group. The assistant's duties consist of supporting the group leader in caring and educating the children, as well as undertaking routine house keeping tasks within the child care centre.

The director of a child care centre in Queensland is required to hold an advanced diploma in an area of study applying to child care, a bachelor or a higher degree (*Child Care Regulation, 2003*). Group leaders are expected to hold qualifications such as a Diploma of Child Care and Education (equivalent to 2 years full-time study), while an assistant in child care is required to have a Certificate III or IV in early childhood studies. In August 2001, there were 3,655,139 people (1,807,730 males and 1,847,409 females) counted in Queensland. This represents an increase of 286,289 people (8.5%) since the 1996 Census, and an increase of 677,329 people (22.7%) since the 1991 Census (ABS, 2001). It is estimated that in Queensland during 1999, approximately 20,000 child care centre staff were employed in child care and education services (including preschools and kindergartens) compared with 10,864 in 1993 (Department of Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland [DFYCCQ], 1999). The number of staff had almost doubled within a decade and this reflects how extensively child care and early education services have developed.

1.2 Day of a director in child care

In Queensland, as previously noted, mandatory qualifications for directors include a qualification that is focussed on early childhood studies. However, such a qualification does not necessarily mean that any early childhood teacher will have the necessary experience, skills or aptitude for staff leadership and organisational management. Further, there is no widespread understanding of what is required to be an effective administrator in child care centres (Larkin, 1999). Directors need to be managers and they need to provide leadership in order to ensure high quality service delivery (Jorde Bloom, 1991a, b, 1997a, b; Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Bowman, 1997a) yet, Robert, Woodrow, and Moreton (1998) propose that many directors have limited management experience before commencing in their role as a director. Their findings

highlighted a high staff turnover in the rural and remote parts of Queensland. Rodd (1997) found that directors' reported interpersonal relations are a difficult part of their job and that there is a lack of opportunity for directors to enhance their skills in leadership and management.

Currently, the director's roles and responsibilities are diverse, encompassing management of staff, overseeing the quality of programs, ensuring health and safety regulations are met, as well as managing financial and administrative tasks (Decker & Decker, 1988, 1997; Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997; Sebastian, 1990; Seplocha, 1998; Simons, 1986). Centres operate under different ownership and management structures. Commonly these organisational auspices include for-profit commercial organisations, community-based services, centres sponsored by religious faiths and by local government. These different organisational structures affect the breadth and nature of the director's responsibilities. Recent research by Black (2000) and Burton (1999) confirm the complex nature of the work of child care directors. Their research findings reflect my personal experience as a child care director.

To develop the reader's understanding of the experiences of working as a director in a child care centre, I offer the following description as an illustration of the diverse responsibilities that I faced as the director and manager (1995) in a child care centre on a typical day.

> I would arrive at work at around 8.00 am. This was usually the time when many parents arrived, and for the next hour, I would be answering the queries that they had or engaged in general conversation. During this time, I would also talk with the staff and ensure that the day was running well for the staff and the children in all the groups. Once the parents had left, I would then retreat into the office and take care of any administrative tasks and correspondence. I had an administrative assistant to take care of the accounts, but it was important that I communicated with her so that I could liaise with parents about account concerns. I would then contact our collection agency and advise them of any overdue accounts that needed to be addressed. These were usually the extreme cases where no payment had been received for several weeks. I would

answer telephone calls and check records such as daily attendance sheets, enrolment forms, medication permission forms, excursion forms, and so on.

After the office procedures had been completed, I would go into the various rooms and talk with staff and children, and assist any staff member with problems and concerns. By this time, it was around the lunch hour, when I relieved staff who were due to have a break. I helped settle the children and take care of any health, hygiene and program issues that arose. Often there was some form of maintenance or staffing crisis that needed to be seen to, such as: the plumbing would not work and the toilets were overflowing; or it was raining and the roof leaked; the gate lock had broken; someone had vandalised our sandpit; the fridge was broken; the power had gone out, staff conflict, late or sick staff, etc. etc. Of course it was the director's job to ensure that whatever the crisis, all would be handled quickly and efficiently.

As I relieved staff for lunch breaks, I would check written program plans and note any difficulties that the staff were having. I would spend some time talking with the staff as they arrived back from lunch and we evaluated the morning program and discussed future planning. Often we discussed future training issues and planned some specific dates to work toward.

I usually had my own lunch with the children, hence when a staff member returned I would go on a break. After lunch, I would read the mail that had arrived and take care of correspondence. Usually the Director from the sister centre would arrive at this time and let me know of any concerns that she had. She was new to the industry, hence it was necessary to communicate openly and ensure that she was developing leadership skills that were necessary to be an effective director. We would discuss future meetings, accreditation procedures, regulations, staff conflict, hygiene issues, staff training, and collaboratively make decisions.

By three o'clock, parents would be arriving. I would greet them, talk with them, and respond to any concerns. At times, issues can be extremely delicate as parents disclosed information that involved child-rearing practices, marital issues, domestic violence, or confidential issues for which I did not feel competent to offer professional advice. It was important that during these times, I was a good listener and, if necessary, I researched where families could obtain outside professional support.

I would spend the late afternoon outside with the staff and children and ensure that the environment was safe and happy. If I was fortunate, at 5.00 pm I would prepare to go home, however, I would usually leave about 5.30 pm. Some evenings I attended further in-service training to keep abreast of current issues and trends in early childhood care and education.

This description provides some background to understanding the role of the director and why research on leadership and management in child care is important to inform professional development programs for directors. There is a need for analysis about the dimensions of the role in the delivery of quality services.

Directors of child care centres deal with complex funding systems from two and, in some cases, three levels of government such as the Local Council, State Government Departments and the Federal Government. Attention needs to be focused on meeting State Regulations and accreditation standards set by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001). Many centres employ large numbers of staff and how best to manage staff development is a concern for directors because there remain significant concerns about staffing quality. Research shows that staff turnover is high in child care services because of poor working conditions and low wages (Berthelsen, 1998; Cost, Quality & Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Larkin, 1999; Whitebook, 1999). Directors are required to have good interpersonal and communication skills to work with various groups, that is, children, families and micro and macro community. These include either management committees in community-based organisations or private owners of commercial centres. Increasingly difficult social conditions (such as more

single parent families; more women in the workforce) for some children and families require the director and the staff in child care settings to support families in innovative ways. For instance, Tennent, Tayler, and Farrell (2002) found that parents are now looking for various types of personal supports to assist them in their family role, rather than just care and education for their child(ren).

1.3 Leadership as a professional issue in child care services

Despite the development of child care services, both in the United States and in Australia, there has been little encouragement for directors to pursue formal leadership training or credentials. Many employers consider it unnecessary for directors to seek higher qualifications because higher degrees are viewed as "professional gatekeeping" requiring increased wages, thus increasing the costs in operating a centre (Bowman, 1997; Jorde Bloom, 1992a, b). Most directors in child care centres have had no professional training for leadership and administration roles (Hayden, 1997a, b; Jorde Bloom, 1992a; Larkin, 1999; Mitchell, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). This is despite recognition that leadership training is a critical variable in program quality (Bowman, 1997; Jorde Bloom & Rafanello, 1995).

Child care directors are effectively change agents. Humphries and Senden (2000) proposed that a leader needs to recognise that an organisation must continually anticipate opportunities for change, which will advance the mission and aims of the organisation. Child care centres are complex organisations influenced by the external environment (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002; Jorde Bloom, 1991b). Uncertainty and change in child care and family policies requires understanding of the political climate. Directors in child care also need to be sensitive to the local community needs in which their centres operate.

Neugebauer (1990) noted that studies in leadership and administration in early childhood had found that the director's style of leadership has a profound effect on a total teaching approach of the centre. In particular, Neugebauer proposed that the director's decision-making style was related to the quality of interpersonal relations within the centre. When decisions were made within a team environment, staff were more motivated, dedicated, trusting, and clear on centre objectives than were staff

who worked in centres where less attention was given to the quality of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the best type of a leader within an early childhood program was found to be a democratic motivator. This type of leader trusts their staff's decision making and creativity, rather than taking a strong supervisory role. In 2000, Neugebauer noted that:

> The director must set the course in order to lay out a vision that all staff can use as a road map to guide their day-to-day efforts ... Not only does the director set the course, but she must also keep her finger on the pulse of the organisation. (p. 99)

Effective leaders balance the concern for task, quality and productivity with genuine concern for people (Seplocha, 1998). Clyde (1995) interviewed fifty child care directors and found that responsiveness to staff was deemed important by 98.1% of the participants, as was building good working relationships with all staff. This type of director continually monitors and supports the performance of staff to ensure that the organisational goals and vision are achieved and that all parts of the organisation are performing as expected. As Sergiovanni (1984) pointed out, effective leadership is about focussing on client centred goals and to create a challenging environment, which provides staff with a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Child care directors are usually aware of their leadership responsibilities (Grey, 1999). However, they often are not aware of their own leadership style and how it can be developed effectively. A vision of what they wish to achieve in their role as leaders is important in order to reach organisational goals (Grey, 1999). A vision of quality in child care services benefits all members of the organisation and the children and families that a centre serves. Capacities to implement a vision of quality care include building supportive relationships with staff through open communication and encouraging participation in decision-making (Gardner & Terry, 1996). An organisational culture that is committed to continuous improvement in the quality of programs is necessary (Frede, 1995; Grey, 1999; Kapsalakis, Morda, & Waniganayake, 2000).

The next section of this Chapter addresses the significance of this research.

1.4 Significance of this research

There has been little Australian research focussed on the leadership aspects of the director's work in centre-based child care to date. This qualitative study will contribute to understandings about leadership in Australian child care centres.

Quality child care can enhance children's development (Adams & Phillips 2001; Ochiltree, 1994; Shim, Hestenes & Cassidy, 2004; Vandell, 2004; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). Positive interactions and experiences in child care can assist a child with their emotional, social and intellectual development (Colin, 1996). A decade ago, Ochiltree (1994) reported on forty years of research on effects of child care on young children and found that research conducted in Sweden (Anderson, 1989) found that good quality child care can benefit young children. Child care can be viewed as a number of possible care options that can contribute to children's development (Sommer, 1992). Sommer proposed that child care centres in Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland) can be seen as socialising children into acceptable group behaviour, and that learning such behaviour can enhance children's social development in later life. More recently, Vandell (2004) reported on 20 years of research addressing questions about the effects of child care quality on children's development. Vandell noted that children appeared happier and securely attached to caregivers in care settings that had lower adult-child ratios, and children were rated as cognitively competent during free play in child care settings that offered more opportunities for art, blocks, and dramatic play, and in settings in which caregivers had college degrees and specific early childhood training. Similarly, Sims (2003) reported on previous research and noted that children in quality child care presented with improved social competence.

In any society, values and beliefs about child care affect the services provided. In Australia, practices in early education have been drawn largely from studies in other cultural contexts, particularly research undertaken in the United States. This study proposes to examine whether it is possible to base Australian practice on such findings. In Australia, there is public support for child care. Across the states and territories in Australia there are higher regulatory requirements for centre-based child care (state regulations and National Accreditation standards) than, in general, across

the states within the United States (National Resource Centre for Health and Safety in Child Care, 2000). It is time that Australian research should inform its social policy about quality child care programs.

In Australia, leadership has emerged as an important professional issue for early childhood education during the 1990s. This is in response to the extensive development of child care services. Leadership of those services is important to the quality of service delivery. Social changes require higher levels of responsivity by services to family needs and effective leadership facilitates this. Changing family structures and employment patterns for men and women, workplace and employment conditions, as well as the increased recognition of the importance of early education have major implications for how child care services are delivered. Child care directors need to be cognisant with a range of social and family policies that are likely to affect future service development.

To understand the leadership and management issues faced by directors in their role, more research is required. It is important to gain a clearer perspective about the work of directors in child care in social, legislative and economic context. A Social Systems Model which is introduced in Chapter 2 is used to understand and interpret the data collected in this research. This study proposes that the Social Systems Model provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of organisational life in child care centres and provides a useful paradigm for program administrators when considering the impact of internal organisational structures and external influences on the director's role and responsibilities. While the Social Systems Model proposed by Jorde Bloom (1991b) provides a framework for studying the early childhood director, it is considered a rather limited model when exploring child care centres in today's climate of social and political context, including market competition and privatisation of child care centres. This study will expand the Jorde Bloom model by exploring additional dimensions, such as characteristics of directors as leaders and managers, and explores the child care centre from a business perspective within the Australian context.

When directors describe their work in a child care centre, they typically respond by drawing a limited view of their centres, usually consisting of formal reporting

arrangements and formal work units that make up the centre, rather than considering the impact of wider macro community (Jorde Bloom, 1991b). Findings from Jorde Bloom's research indicate that a systems approach for describing early childhood centres can lead toward a better understanding of the impact of change and can assist administrators to better understand the significance of their day-to-day roles and responsibilities.

The specific aims and objectives of the research are provided in the next section.

1.4.1 Aims and objectives of the research

This study explores leadership and management issues for directors in child care services. The aim is to investigate leadership and management in child care in social, legislative and economic context. The findings seek to inform researchers, policy makers and practitioners. In Chapter 2, a Social Systems Model is introduced as a means of exploring leadership and management issues in child care. This provides the conceptual framework for the research.

The specific research objectives are:

(1)   To identify the management issues and responsibilities that directors face in their role.

(2)   To explore how child care centre directors perceive their leadership role in the operation of child care services.

(3)   To examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community characterised by social, legislative and economic context.

(4)   To develop a model which integrates management responsibilities and leadership qualities to provide quality child care service.

The next section provides a brief introduction to the methodology of the research.

1.5 Methodology

This study adopted a multi-case study methodology that involved in-depth interviews as the form of data collection. Eight directors of child care centres in south-east Queensland participated. These directors were selected according to certain criteria including their experience as a director, their time of tenure in their current centre and the accreditation status of the centre. This ensured that the participants were potentially well informed and knowledgeable about current child care policy and that their practices in the centre were a reflection of their own goals as a director.

Among many definitions, a case study has been defined as an in-depth, multifaceted investigation of a social phenomenon, using qualitative research methods (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). The case study methodology allows the researcher to gather detailed and rich data about phenomena and explore in depth the experiences of the participants. It has been argued that the case study is a powerful method when how, why, who, where or what questions are being asked, or when the researcher has little control over events (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 1997; Yin, 1994). In this research, the multi-case nature of the data enables the researcher to compare and contrast the ideas of the participants from a diversity of perspectives. One advantage of case study research is its uniqueness, its capacity for understanding complexity in a specific context (Bassey, 1999). As Bassey proposed, when describing case study, "what we have is a paradox, which if acknowledged and explored in depth, yields both unique and universal understanding" (p. 36).

Each of the directors were interviewed on two separate occasions. The interviews were structured around a Social Systems Model to capture the interdependence of various internal and external influences that impact on the operation of a child care centre. Central to a systems theory approach is the notion that the primary system consists of interdependent subsystems, such as physical and tangible structures, operating processes, organisational culture, interpersonal relationships, and the external environment impacting on centre operations (Jorde Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991a). The interviews were audio-taped. From analysis of the transcripts of interviews, common themes were noted and the specific practices and beliefs that the

directors held about their organisational roles in the operation of their centres were identified. The findings of the research are reported descriptively.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 has defined child care and presented the nature of child care and leadership in child centres. A brief history of the development of child care centres in Australia, and the contextual factors relevant to centre-based child care in Queensland, were presented. The significance of this research and the researcher's position were mentioned. Leadership as a professional issue was briefly outlined. An introduction to the research methodology, aim, and specific objectives for this research were noted.

Chapter 2 offers a review of relevant literature on child care centres as organisations, and leadership and management in the broader community and in the child care contexts. It presents an overview of the professional context of working in child care. It examines child care centres as human services and business organisations through the lens of Social Systems theory. Selected perspectives on leadership and management are presented and the application of these theoretical concepts about leadership and management to the organisational culture of a child care centre are addressed.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology for the research. The procedures used to select the participants are described and the participants are introduced. Data analysis procedures are outlined. Issues to ensure the quality and rigor of the research process are also discussed in this Chapter.

Chapter 4 is based on the interview data regarding organisational dimensions of centre management using the broad Social Systems Model proposed by Jorde-Bloom (1991b). Essentially, the data in this Chapter focuses on management. The data explores the child care centres within the social and policy context, inclusive of processes, interpersonal relations, culture, evaluation strategies and child care outcomes.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of data with a primary focus on leadership. Directors' perspectives on leadership are explored. This data analysis focuses on the leadership experiences of the child care directors, the development of leadership skills, and child care quality and child care advocacy. The implications of the findings for understanding and supporting leadership and management in child care centres are developed.

Chapter 6 presents a further revised Social Systems Model, which integrates and extends the previous findings from the data Chapters. Management within the social and policy context is discussed. Further leadership issues are explored and a framework for developing leadership skills is presented. A final extended Social Systems Model as derived from the directors' responses in the data Chapters is introduced. A summary of the broad findings is presented.

Chapter 7 provides a summary and conclusion of this thesis. The Chapter begins by reviewing the research aim and objectives. Also, review of the research method is presented. Findings, implications of the study and limitations of this research are outlined. Suggestions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This Chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the research conducted for this thesis. It explores child care centres within a Social Systems framework. It looks at external influences on the operation of child care centres. This is followed by a discussion of organisational structures and their impact on the directors' role and responsibilities. Personnel issues in child care centres are looked at, including the role of the director in child care centres. Management and leadership literature is explored, followed by a review of recent research on child care directors. The final section talks about the Social Systems Model that provided the framework for this research. This leads to a summary position on the broad aim of this research which was to investigate leadership and management in child care centres within social, legislative and economic context.

2.1 Nature of child care within a social system

Leadership and management issues in child care services have received increasing attention in the last two decades because of the demand for, and the expansion of, service provision in formal child care settings, such as long-day care centres. The Australian Government, Department of Family and Community Services (2002) *Census of Child Care Services* showed that in Queensland alone 14,576 children under twelve years attended community based long-day care services (total number of children under twelve years of age in community based long-day care services in Australia, 107,317) and 65,108 children under twelve years of age attended private long-day care services (total number of children under twelve years of age in private long-day care services in Australia, 200,815). The interest in leadership and management of child care services and the organisational aspects of operating child care centres is evident by the range of professional publications focused on these

topics that were published in the 1990s (for example, Farmer, 1993; Blank, 1997; Bredekamp, 1997; Hayden, 1999; Rodd, 1994, 1998; Sebastian, 1990).

In the United States Jorde Bloom and colleagues researched the nature of work and leadership in child care centres (Jorde Bloom, 1989, 1991b, 1996; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a, b; Jorde Bloom et al., 1991a). They mostly utilised a Social Systems Model to examine child care directors' roles and responsibilities with a focus on training needs of directors. This research has advanced understanding of the range of complementary and competing influences in the operation of child care centres that both stem from, and affect, the management and leadership of the centre. This framework has relevance for understanding the work of child care directors in centre-based services in the Australian context. For instance, there are parallels between Australia and the United States in the historical development of child care services since the 1970s and many similarities in the organisational contexts in which child care services operate. For example, as in Australia, programs serving young children in the United States are provided in a variety of settings such as for-profit and non-profit child care centres. Research by Saluja, Early, and Clifford (2002) in the United States noted that within the for-profit sector, centres could be independently operated or operated by a national or local chain. Within the non-profit sector, centres can be affiliated with Head Start, public schools, a religious organisation or other types of non-profit organisations. Australia has similar structures within the non-profit and the for-profit child care sector as their colleagues in the United States. For instance, the non-profit sector child care centres could be affiliated with Creche and Kindergarten Association, Lady Gowrie, public or private schools or Church affiliated. The for-profit child care sector can consist of single units or be attached to privately owned chains of child care centres or sponsored by corporate organisations.

However, there are differences in the regulatory systems between child care centres in the United States and child care centres in Australia. In Australia, there are mandatory expectations for child care centres to adhere to state child care regulations (that is, in Queensland, *Child Care Act, 2002,* and *Child Care Regulation, 2003)* and all child care centres wishing to attract a fee subsidy across Australia need to take part in the National Childcare Accreditation System (National Childcare

Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001). The accreditation system is the first of its kind worldwide, where accreditation of child care centres is linked to eligibility for funding, that is, only child care centres that are accredited have access to fee subsidies provided by the Commonwealth Government to assist parents in paying for child care. Alternatively, Head Start programs in the United States have their own guidelines regarding teacher/child ratios, qualifications and the curriculum. Likewise, religiously affiliated settings may operate within guidelines put forth by the sponsoring organisations and are often exempt from state child care guidelines or regulations (Saluja et al., 2002).

2.1.1 Social systems approach

A Social Systems Model is not a new concept. The Social Systems Model used in this research is a general one that may apply to various group sizes regardless of the group's purpose. For instance, in centre-based child care it could be said that the centre is comprised of various units with differing age groups. This is one way of thinking about systems; however, it is a very basic description as it does not capture the many interlinking components that make up the whole of the child care centre. In its simplest term, the system described here is a set of interrelated parts, both internal and external, all joined to make a whole.

Systemic models have gained considerable credence since the seminal work of Bertalanffy (1972), Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989) and Moos (1976). Bertalanffy (1968) has defined a system as a set of elements in interrelations where the viability of this system depends on its ability to acquire energy through sharing of information. Bertanlaffy argued that without exchange of information, the interrelations and the system would not exist. The general systems theory has created a method to evaluate how a system is open and is influenced by the environment (Bertalanffy, 1968). Further, Bertalanffy's systems approach has provided psychology an overall method in exploring issues in the sciences by observing a problem and seeking a solution (Bertalanffy, 1999). Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989) views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships consisting of multiple levels of the environment, such as the child's family and the immediate community, and broad cultural values and programs. Moos provided diverse

applications of systems theory to organisational settings. Systems theory defines an organisation as a set of subsystems that are linked together to meet various organisational goals (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). Social systems are formed by people's interactions with the environment (Espejo, 2000). Many authors (e.g., Espejo 2000; Fitch, 2004; Johannessen, 1998; Lin, 2002; Snow, 2002) continue to value the importance of a systems approach because it focuses attention on the range of internal and external influences that may directly or indirectly affect the functioning of an organisation.

A social system as described here includes a set of interrelated and interdependent parts within a context in which individuals engage for various purposes, for example, workplaces (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989; Jorde Bloom et al., 1991a). At the core of systems framework is the concept that change within one component of the system will have a ripple effect and impact on the other components of the system. A systems framework provides understanding of how change in one component affects all other components of the system. It provides a means for evaluating the impact of any specific change on the overall organisation (Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b). Further, systemic thinking emphasises relations between elements, which is one of the basic prerequisites for the study of social systems (Johannessen, 1998). It has been suggested that social systems are produced by people's interactions, which "requires the participants' awareness of the processes grounding their purposes and values in social reality, and the use of this awareness to steer their recurrent interactions toward the production of desirable social systems" (Espejo, 2000, p. 949). A social systems framework was considered appropriate for this study because the aim of this thesis was to examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community, in social, legislative and economic context. This study proposes that these external components form a part of the larger social system in which child care centres operate and are considered an influential factor in the operation of these centres.

The next sections explore various concepts of systemic components and how they relate to child care centres.

2.2 External influences on child care centres

Government child care policy is a key external influence on how centres operate. To understand the work of child care directors, it is necessary to briefly visit the history of the development of child care services in Australia and identify how child care policy by the Commonwealth and state governments has evolved and impacted on service provisions. Child care services operate in a highly regulated environment. Key policy concepts of affordability, accessibility and quality also are considered. The nature of work in child care is examined as an external influence. The qualifications of staff and their conditions of work are set by external authorities through regulations and industrial awards. This range of external contextual factors influences the day-to-day operations of child care centres.

2.2.1 Social and policy contexts of child care

The growth in child care services in the last thirty years reflects a changing social, political and economic context (Economic Planning Advisory Commission [EPAC], 1996). A Labor government with a strong social policy agenda came to power in 1972 in Australia after a long period of conservative government. Feminist groups had lobbied hard for child care provisions to support increased female participation in the paid work force (Brennan, 1997). Brennan (1994) speaks robustly about the politics of Australian child care, noting that Labor placed great emphasis on the potential of education to enhance equality, particularly pre-school education was deemed important to compensate for poor home backgrounds. Under the leadership of Whitlam, the Labor government had promised to make pre-school available to every Australian child. Child care too, was mentioned in the policy speech (Brennan, 1994). Brennan noted that in mid 1972 a small band of women produced a pamphlet entitled *Child Care: A Community Responsibility,* which put forward an outline of child care policy with emphasis on child care needing to be regarded as a social responsibility not unlike education or the care of the sick (Brennan, 1994). The Commonwealth Government became involved in this area of social policy with the introduction of the *Child Care Act* (1972). Prior to this, child care provision was solely a responsibility of state governments, primarily for regulation of standards in service delivery. It is estimated that at that time only about 2000 children in Australia

had access to child care programs that were operated by non-profit organisations such as the Victorian Association of Creches, the Sydney Day Nursery and Nursery Schools Association, and, in Queensland, by the Creche and Kindergarten Association (Brennan, 1994).

The Commonwealth Government became involved in the 1970s because the supply of child care places failed to keep pace with increasing numbers of women returning to the workforce who required child care (Brennan, 1994). Through the 1970s and the 1980s, the Commonwealth Government increased support for the development of the community-based, non-profit child care sector. The Commonwealth Government provided capital infrastructure to build centres and provided funding to subsidise salaries of staff in community-based services.

Government policy directions began to change towards the latter part of the 1980s (Brennan, 1997). Commonwealth funding was partly redirected in the form of a subsidy to community-based centres to offset the fees paid by families for child care. Through the implementation of the 'fee relief system' [known as Childcare Benefit since July 1, 2000], the government aimed to increase the availability of child care for target groups and ensure that child care was affordable to all families. Needs-based planning was placed on the agenda to make certain that child care places became available in localities where there was greatest need. Priority of access guidelines were developed to ensure that families had access to child care services for employment-related or for family support reasons. Child care policy was centred about "facilitating workforce participation", "enhancing productivity" and "assisting the welfare to workforce participation" (Brennan, 1994, p. 173).

In 1991, in order to provide greater equity for parents using private long-day care centres, and in recognition of the unmet demand for affordable child care places to meet the work-related child care demand, the Commonwealth government extended fee-relief [Childcare Benefit] to the private sector. This stimulated the growth of an extensive private child care sector. However, this extension of the Childcare Benefit to the private sector resulted in a greatly increased cost to the government to support child care services and made the child care industry highly attractive for investment (EPAC, 1996). Since 1990, the child care field has seen the development of more

commercial and employer supported child centres, rather than non-profit, community-based services.

In 1993, the Commonwealth Government took another important initiative in establishing the National Childcare Accreditation Council, and through this body funded, the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long-day care centres. This has been a critical development in children's services in Australia. Building on state regulatory requirements, that is, minimum quality standards, the accreditation system was developed and implemented to enhance quality of service provision. Child care centres, through a self-study process focus on how to improve their service delivery and external assessors moderate their progress. This system has been maintained since a review in 1999. The current focus areas in the accreditation system include interactions and communications, the program, child protection, health and safety and management. Since 1994, centre-based services have been required to register for accreditation in order to be eligible for the fee subsidies through the Childcare Benefit that centres pass on to parents to offset their costs. This action thus "forces" centres to participate in accreditation.

While the majority of funding to support child care services, as distinct from preschool services, stems from the Commonwealth Government, some funding is provided by state and territory governments (such as "Access and Equity" funding in Queensland, to include children with special needs in child care). The Australian state and territory governments are primarily involved in child care services because they hold responsibility for the regulations under which child care services operate. These relate to building standards, provisions of equipment and materials for program delivery, health and safety standards, and staffing ratios and qualifications. In Queensland, if a centre is able to meet the regulatory standards, then it is licensed to operate. The *Child Care Act* (1991) and its review in 2002 has resulted in new legislation that was implemented in 2003. Another influential body that now impacts on the social and policy context of child care is *The Child Care Advisory Council.* It was established by the Commonwealth Government in 2000. It provides expertise to inform child care policy. It's brief is to establish a vision for child care policy that accounts for social and demographic change and set policy directions.

2.2.2 Affordability, accessibility and quality of child care services

Key concepts frequently discussed with respect to child care services are affordability, accessibility and quality. These are considerations that the child care director must be mindful of in the operation of a centre. There are ongoing debates about how well child care policies and funding programs meet children's and families' needs and the debates centre on these features.

2.2.2.1 Affordability

The changes to Commonwealth child care policy in 1997 included the removal of the operational subsidy to community child care centres, as well as the cap on the extent to which fees paid by families was subsidised by the Childcare Benefit. This occurred at the same time as the expansion of the private child care sector led to greater market competition. At the time, the affordability of child care to low income families was strongly debated (Press, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000). Both community-based and private centres closed because of poor financial viability and/or because of an oversupply in child care places in some localities, especially south-east Queensland. Between 1996-1998 there were 36 closures of child care centres in Queensland. There were claims that families could not afford child care, even with full-time work; and that women were locked out of the workforce because of high child care costs (Queensland Child Care Coalition, 1998). Affordability is linked closely to access to child care. There is little policy discussion in Australia concerning universal access to a place in child care centres as a goal or right for children (Organisation for Economic Growth and Development, 2001). Debates about affordability are an ongoing political issue. For instance, Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) (2003) reported that there has been a marked increase in the number of parents of young children in the paid workforce to the extent that over 56% of families now have two parents working. This surge in working parents of infants has given rise to a serious shortage of services, particularly in less profitable areas. At the same time there has been an increase in the cost of childcare to families by over 17%. Further, the turmoil the industry and families have experienced over the past decade points to the vulnerability of the sector to shifting cost structures and affordability problems. While early childhood education services may be funded by

various sources, there is a continuing need for a substantial government investment to support a sustainable system of quality, accessible services for young children and their families (Organisation for Economic Growth and Development, 2001).

2.2.2.2 Accessibility

It is acknowledged that particular communities and families have trouble in gaining access to child care services. Families who live in rural and remote communities, Indigenous communities, and families from non English-speaking backgrounds are considered to have less access to mainstream child care services. Another key issue about access concerns the limited number of places for children under three years in centre-based programs (Press & Hayes, 2000). This occurs because the cost of providing programs for infants and toddlers is higher than providing programs for older children because of the regulatory standards related to group size and higher staff-child ratio.

The Commonwealth Government has determined priority of access guidelines for long-day care centres participating in the Childcare Benefit Scheme (EPAC, 1996). The first priority is for workforce participants where a single parent, or both parents, are employed, seeking employment or studying/training for future employment. The second priority includes those children or parents with a continuing disability or incapacity. The third priority is for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The fourth priority reflects the needs of parents at home with more than one child below school age or single parents at home.

2.2.2.3 Quality

Quality is an extremely complex concept and may be defined differently by professionals, staff, parents and regulatory authorities. The definition also may be subject to change over time. Measuring quality depends on the objectives of care and perspectives that are adopted (Berthelsen, 1998; Culkin, 2000; Ochiltree, 1994; Wangmann, 1995). The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) funded by the Commonwealth Government has an important role in building quality standards in long-day care centres, although it is based on assumptions of common and universal

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standards of quality which, nevertheless, can be interpreted and implemented with reference to local community needs.

Quality in child care has been defined as how well the developmental outcomes for children are enhanced through the physical, social and emotional interactions that are afforded to them in the child care setting (Whitebook et al., 1989). From the standpoint of parents, quality is related to their satisfaction with the care and education that is provided for their children and the degree to which their own needs are met (Berthelsen, 1998). From the standpoint of staff, quality is linked to their working conditions and the financial rewards, as well as the qualities of the work environment that enable to derive satisfaction from their work (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002).

2.3 Organisational structures

In this section, concepts about child care centres as organisations are explored. This is followed by a discussion on viewing child care centres from a business perspective. A conceptual framework of business performance is presented.

2.3.1 Child care centres as organisations

Traditionally, most early childhood education programs in kindergartens and preschools have been relatively independent (Brennan, 1994). Programs were delivered with less involvement of a wider bureaucracy, for example on curriculum issues, than occurs in school-based education systems. While many child care centres are under the auspices of community or religious organisations to which the director may be answerable, nevertheless, the day-to-day management of the service rests with the director (Jorde Bloom, 1992b; Jorde Bloom, 1995; Kagan & Bowman, 1997a). This occurs even when child care centres or kindergartens are under the auspices of a larger organisation, such as the Creche and Kindergarten Association in Queensland who set and provide advice on policy and operating procedures for centres which are affiliated with the organisation. However, child care centres may still operate with relative independence of any larger organisation because they are a

single unit in a specific geographical locality, distant from the central organisation, and thus may have procedures and processes that address local community needs.

Community-based child care centres are typically small organisations although their overall governance may come from a larger sponsoring organisation (Press & Hayes, 2000), for instance, a University or a large Church organisation. There may be a local management committee with parents and community representatives, which provides oversight of centre operations. Child care directors may have more or less influence in these committees, usually determined by their length of tenure in their position. Even with the rise of commercial child care chains and franchised services, a centre as a part of such a chain will still have unique procedures as a result of the interpretation of common operational policies by the director and staff within the local community context.

In Queensland, the regulatory standards set by state legislation (*Child Care Act 2000; Child Care Regulations, 2003)* and the Commonwealth Government's Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation Council, *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Source Book,* 2001) set standards for quality practice to which all child care centres are required to adhere. However, although government regulations and the Quality Improvement and Accreditation system create standards to negate unacceptable low quality there are additional factors to consider in quality practice. As Grey (1999) pointed out, good quality stems from motivation within a centre to raise standards above the minimum and to engage in activities that promote continual improvement.

Child outcomes (that is, their overall social and cognitive development) are related to the quality of care and education that they receive in a centre. For example, Vandell and Wolfe (2003) reported that children in higher quality care and education programs have better cognitive development than children in lower quality care and education centres. The importance of quality of learning experiences and care in early years has been identified by the Commonwealth of Australia in the proposed *National Agenda for Early Childhood* (2003). This report emphasises that the early years lay the foundation for the child's later success in schooling and life chances in general and prioritises improving the system of coherence across child care and

education. The report also identifies that all children should have access to quality early learning experiences in formal and informal contexts especially prior to school entry. The provision of quality care and education should be the primary objective of all child care services (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002).

Child care directors are expected to not only oversee the day to day running of a centre but they are also responsible for meeting the larger organisational goals over time, not unlike the role that principals have today in school-based systems (Bennett, 1999; Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1998; Brown & Anfara, 2003). In the last decade, public school systems have undergone a wave of reform to devolve decision-making responsibilities to school and community level. This is commonly referred to as school-based management (SBM). This involves centralising key decisions about policy and future directions, while increasingly decentralising processes through which policy decisions are implemented and delivered at school levels (Bennett, Crawford, & Cartwright 2003). As school restructuring and reform efforts have evolved through numerous phases how best to accomplish these policy issues remains a complex subject (Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1998). The continuing efforts to restructure education has led toward repeated calls for schools to reculture in terms of teacher professionalisation in that administrators are encouraged to promote increased collegial interaction through shared decision making (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Many changes have occurred in primary schools in Queensland from a position when decisions made at the central and regional offices have now become part of the principal's primary role (Bennett et al., 2003; Cranston, 2000). Devolution of responsibility and school-based management has seen a shift in functions in that the principal and staff are now required to take more control over the budget, personnel, and organisation at the local level including greater involvement in decision-making (Smaby, Thomas, Harrison, & Nelson, 1994). Some may view this as a positive move as there is now less imposition of state and district level rules and allows the development of inventive and creative solutions to problems that may occur.

Findings from a longitudinal study on primary school principals on school-based management in Queensland shows that principals today are required to demonstrate a

wide variety of management and leadership skills, and make complex decisions including facilities management, budgeting, staff management and people skills, thus representing a marked reallocation of tasks from earlier times (Cranston, 2000). Changes in social and political climate and in bureaucratic structures are resulting in increased pressure on early childhood directors for greater accountability toward the provision of quality programs in early childhood education (Press & Hayes, 2000). These various roles and responsibilities have always been part of a child care centre director's role, however the situation is aggravated due to increasing need to address complex government policies and procedures (Hayden, 1997b), additional accountability in various forms as well as addressing increasingly complex family needs (Tennent et al., 2002). Corter (2001) identified that early childhood centres provide an opportune place to support families in a variety of ways through integrating support services needed by families. This is supported by Commonwealth of Australia (2003) *National Agenda for Early Childhood,* which reports that the idea of a 'one-stop' shop or a 'multipurpose' early childhood centre is popular. The report proposes a range of strategies to achieve a multipurpose child care centre including: better outreach services to families; greater involvement of family members; more effective referral systems; and implementation of new innovative ways to encourage various support agencies to work together.

The issue of school-based management can be applied to early childhood contexts. A key tenet of school-based management is that schools are self-managing institutions responsible for the administrative and financial decisions that directly affect the school. Early childhood directors face similar challenges because of ongoing policy and funding changes (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002; Leppert, 2000; Press & Hayes, 2000) at a larger organisational level or by external regulatory and funding authorities that require directors to be responsive to these external influences on day-to-day decision-making and operational processes.

While parallels can be drawn between the work of directors and principals who work in public education systems, for example, in primary schools, there are a range of circumstances in child care centres that distinguish the roles because of the organisational contexts, as identified by Larkin (1999):

1. The licence to operate a child care centre includes only minimal education requirements for professional staff;

2. Most caregiving and administrative staff are women;

3. The organisational hierarchy is relatively flat;

4. Children's attendance is not mandatory;

5. Most are small intimate workplaces where staff must work in teams; and

6. There is no clearly defined curriculum.

Further, child care centres require an attendance fee paid by the parents, whereas public school systems in Australia do not. Because the children are young the child care director must work closely with parents and the children's teachers to ensure a successful accommodation between home life and the child care group setting. There is no bureaucratic hierarchy and this increases the director's accessibility, accountability and isolation. Being the final decision maker with no peers to assist or consult with creates a feeling of isolation. There is a vulnerability to being criticised stemming from decision making and having to appear unruffled; the need to protect confidential information from families; and being so busy in the role that to listen and respond to others' needs adequately is not always possible (Larkin, 1999).

2.3.2 The child care centre as a business organisation

Child care centres are increasingly expected to adopt management practices similar to those in small business in order to remain viable in a competitive sector. This has been a critical issue since the Commonwealth Government policy changes on funding in 1996-1997. The notion of a 'child care industry' is current parlance that sits uneasily with those who are committed to a non-profit view of services to children and families. Large commercial child care chains have emerged in the last few years and it is likely that they will become an even stronger force in the child care industry (Jokovich, 2002; Laszlo, 2003; Lim, 1997; Manne, 2002a, b; Murdoch, 2004; Press, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000). Laszlo (2003) reported that 72% of all child care places in Australia are located in the private sector. Press and Hayes

(2000) noted that this privatisation of child care centres has resulted in a different social construction of child care, moving from a view of child care as a community service to that of child care as business. In 2004, a chain of private child care centres dominate the field nationally with 550 company owned centres and a further 228 managed facilities (Murdoch, 2004).

Through the 1970s and 1980s child care centres, for the most part, were devoid of a profit motive. The motive for business/industry is to gain profit, whereas, traditionally the mission for community child care centres was to deliver a service to meet children's and families' needs. For child care services in a competitive economic environment, the values that characterise a for-profit business and the values of child care as a community and social service are at odds (Press, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000). The discourse about child care as an 'industry' and 'business enterprise' developed as privatisation and competition policy across the child care sector increased. This move was not without its critics who were concerned about the for-profit motive on the provision of care for young children (Press & Hayes, 2000).

After 1996-1997, community-based child care services needed to become self-funding, as well as more entrepreneurial because of competition with the private sector to maintain their market share (Bowes & Hayes, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000). There has been a stronger focus on the performance of child care centres as business enterprises requiring skilled management and leadership. This has occurred even while advocacy is maintained to retain the community service orientation and a not-for-profit identity. It has been argued that a competitive environment in child care ensures quality because consumers (parents) selecting services will buy the best service that they can for their children (Press, 1999).

Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) proposed a model for analysing the business performance of child care centres. Their model, as presented in Figure 2.1, is based on the work of Lumpkin and Dess (1996), and focuses on the external environmental factors that affect child care centres such as the level of change in the industry in which an organisation operates and the profitability of the industry. The model accounts for community perceptions and engagement; as well as the organisational factors in terms of structure, resources, strategies and culture. The entrepreneurial

orientation of directors through their capacities to be innovative, proactive and creative is viewed as important.

The model recognises the relationships between key components such as organisational structures, processes and characteristics of the business environment on performance outcomes. These factors are also evident in Figure 2.3, (presented later within this Chapter) within the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) as applied in this study, where structure, processes and the external environment are all influential in achieving desired outcomes. However, Figure 2.1 has a stronger focus on the language of business when discussing "sales growth", "market share", and "profitability" when compared to the Jorde Bloom Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b).

Environmental Factors
- Dynamism (level of continuity or change)
- Munificence (profitability or growth)
- Complexity
- Industry Characteristics

Manager: Entrepreneurial Orientation
- Autonomy
- Innovativeness
- Risk taking
- Pro-activeness

Centre Performance
- Sales growth
- Market Share
- Profitability
- Overall performance
- Stakeholder satisfaction

Centre: Organisational Factors
- Size
- Structure
- Strategy
- Strategy-making processes
- Firm resources
- Culture
- Management team

Figure 2.1. **Conceptual framework of business performance (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002, p. 25).**

Organisational factors such as size, structure and resources contribute to outcomes, but are also highly influenced by the entrepreneurial orientation of the manager (the child care director). The business framework proposed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) and presented here (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002) identifies key factors contributing to outcomes for the centre from a business orientation of service delivery that may affect the relationship between a manager of an organisation and performance measurement. Although not clearly articulated by either Lumpkin and Dess (1996) or Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) the arrows presented here in Figure 2.1, point out that at various points these organisational and environmental factors interlink and interact and influence overall organisational outcomes. These issues will be explored in later Chapters of this study.

While increasingly a business organisational model may reflect the operations of a child care centre, nevertheless, the educational context remains a key function of the operation of the centre. This educational function governs the day-to-day work of the centre in providing care and educational programs in a professional way that ensures the health, safety and the well-being of the children.

2.4 Personnel issues in child care centres

Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) argue that the key to quality programs in child care centres is the quality of staff. Morgan (2000) proposed that specifically in young children's programs, the key to quality is the director. In their review of child care quality, Vandell and Wolfe (2003) indicated that the formal education and specialised training of staff determine the quality of care that children receive. In the United States, Boschee and Jacobs (1997) found that centres rated as high quality, employed teachers with specialised training in early childhood education. Bella and Jorde Bloom (2003) noted that models of leadership training can differ from one-day management institutes to complete master's degree programs. While indicators of quality need to take account of the qualifications of staff, such indicators should also measure staff satisfaction with their workplace and the quality of their relationships with their colleagues because satisfaction with the work environment leads to higher quality performance in the job (Curtis, 2000).

The qualification standard that is currently mandated for preschool and kindergarten teachers in Queensland, Australia is a 4-year teaching degree compared to base levels of a 2-year or 3-year tertiary qualification for those working in child care. This maintains a professional distinction between those who work in child care services and staff in other early education programs.

Research indicates that child care workers have poor working conditions and low rates of pay (Berthelsen, 1998; Wangmann, 1995; Whitebook, 1999). This issue is still current in 2004. The low status of child care workers is reflected in poverty-level earnings, poor benefits, unequal opportunity and high turnover (Hard, 2005; Whitebook, 1999). Whitebook goes on to say that more than one third of child care workers in the United States leave the sector each year for better paying positions elsewhere. In Queensland Australia, two year trained child care workers come under industrial awards *Child Care Industry Award*, *State* (2003) and three and four year trained teachers come under the *Early Childhood Education Award, State* (2003) where employees have a right to negotiate wages and conditions with employers under enterprise bargaining agreements. However, minimum pay rates and basic working conditions are set under national and state industrial legislation. Employees (and unions) have some ability to negotiate pay and conditions and if consensus cannot be reached between parties, arbitration within an Industrial Commission is available. During 2002, under the Child Care Industry Award child care staff worked 38 hours per week if employed full time. They were allocated eight days sick leave per year and four weeks annual leave. Overtime claims were permitted. There are significant differences between staff in centre-based child care and teachers in pre-schools and schools. Teachers in centre-based child care receive lower levels of pay, yet have much larger administrative responsibilities, fewer holidays and less preparation and planning time than their colleagues in pre-schools and schools (Press & Hayes, 2000). Furthermore, there are disparities between workers within centre based child care. A two year trained child care worker and a three or four year trained teacher in child care may have similar responsibilities if employed as a director in child care. Yet, there are vast differences in these staff's pay levels. These wage differences point toward the diverse perspective that child care is viewed – as educational or as a welfare service to families (Press & Hayes, 2000).

As previously mentioned, within the child care industry the staff turnover is very high. High turnover usually results from working in a low status occupation with poor working conditions. Also, directors in child care are not at all prepared for the complexity of their role (Hayden, 1997b; Jorde Bloom (1997a, b); Robert et al., 1998) which results in additional stress and high turnover. High turnover affects the quality of children's experiences because there is a lack of continuity in the relationships that children have with caregivers (Berthelsen, 1998; Wangmann, 1995). Brennan (1994) noted that "caring for young children is the epitome of 'women's work'. It is a low-paid, low-status occupation, often perceived as unskilled" (p. 120). Significant challenges in the work of directors of child care services are the ongoing issues related to staff recruitment, retention and supervision.

The 'human functions' of dealing with people seem to offer the greatest challenge for directors of early childhood centres (Jorde Bloom, 1992b; Larkin, 1999; Rodd, 1997). Hayden (1999) argues that directors in early childhood settings are facing enormous challenges about how to keep staff motivated and how to develop creative and innovative programs in the midst of economic and political change. The director also needs to be available and approachable to staff and provide leadership that motivates and influences staff to work toward continual improvement of the program.

2.4.1 Staffing

The child care industry is becoming increasingly competitive as large corporate players enter the market. It is a highly regulated industry and directors need to be aware of constant changes in policy that affect their practice. Family structures are changing (Hayes, Neilsen-Hewett, & Warton, 1999; Weeks & Wilson, 1997) hence directors are required to have the skills and expertise to respond to families' increasingly complex needs. The director has multifarious roles and responsibilities including implementing parent partnerships; building teams; administration related to government policies; and copious record keeping to meet regulatory and accreditation requirements.

Most directors in child care centres learn what they need to know on the job (Hayden, 1997a; b; Jorde Bloom, 1992b; Mitchell, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). Only a few directors have previous experience of operating a small business or in the management of staff. Hayden's (1997b) survey of 191 directors in child care centres and preschools determined that directors were promoted to their positions from the teaching ranks. Hayden (1997a) identified that many directors had learned the role "the hard way" by taking on the position of director before they considered themselves ready for the responsibilities.

Within service organisations, such as child care centres, the relationships among those who provide the services are deemed important. Effective service delivery requires a strong interpersonal orientation. Service providers need high levels of interpersonal skills to work with clients and colleagues. This theme is emphasised in the organisational literature about early education contexts (Bowman, 1997; Espinosa, 1997; Jorde Bloom, 1991a; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b; Seplocha, 1998). For example, in the findings of a study conducted by Seplocha (1998), it is clear that effective directors share responsibility and attempt to create an environment consisting of high degrees of trust and collegiality. Within child care centres, directors provide the leadership that shapes the workplace so that staff can work effectively together (Grey, 1999; Hill-Scott, 2000; Jorde Bloom, 1992a, b; Kagan & Bowman, 1997a; Mitchell, 2000; Poster & Neugebauer, 2000).

Mellors (1996) noted that there are many pressures for directors in child care. They need to have strong leadership skills, people management skills, to be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, and to be equipped to use advanced business tools. Mellors noted that the weight of research evidence suggests that the skills of leadership can be learned. This is supported by Kearns (1996) who conducted a postal survey of directors in 324 long-day care services in NSW and identified that there are a number of areas of need for professional development of directors including issues of time management; highly developed communication skills; and knowledge about resources to assist directors in their leadership role.

The director is positioned to facilitate change that determines the organisational climate of the centre (Culkin, 2000; Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon, 2000; Jorde

Bloom, 1997a; Kagan & Bowman, 1997b). To be effective in their role, directors need to engage in ongoing learning in a job that has been described as demanding and stressful (Hayden, 1997b; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a; Rodd, 1997). Strategies for skill development include undertaking further study, inservice training and collaborative decision-making, with the goal of creating a learning organisation (Bass, 2000; Galbraith, 1998).

Inservice training has been perceived by directors to be the most effective strategy to enhance supervision skills (Kearns, 1996). Tertiary courses were also perceived as effective but were not reported as being utilised. Early childhood professionals' perceptions of their leadership role showed that more opportunities for professional development, including opportunities to network and discuss aspects of their role and responsibilities with other directors, are needed (Rodd, 1997). There is ongoing demand for professional development programs for directors in rural and remote areas in Queensland (Robert et al., 1998). Their study found that there is an ongoing demand for professional development activities to bring new staff up to date with current trends and issues. Engagement in professional development was highly valued by the directors, yet this engagement was limited by the lack of opportunities, especially in remote areas.

Further, developing the skills to be an effective director may be achieved through mentoring (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; Larkin, 1999; Scandura, Tejeda, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). Mentoring usually involves an experienced person advising a less experienced person within a one-to-one relationship. A mentor provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity to the other person (Bauer, 1999; Larkin, 1999). Mentoring can enable both parties to disengage from the intensity of the day-to-day work, and reflect on their practice (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; Scandura et al., 1996). Employees, who have access to an experienced mentor, report staying longer with an organisation. The person who is the mentor may accrue other benefits such as increased job security and career advancement (Scandura et al., 1996).

Seplocha (1998) identified important ways in which the director can provide effective leadership. She proposed that child care directors need to:

1. Articulate a clear vision of what the centre is aiming to achieve;

2. Translate this vision into realistic goals and expectations for children, staff, parents and the community;

3. Establish a climate that is in support of the goals; and

4. Offer support and encouragement to staff when unforeseen change occurs.

A range of mainly survey-based studies have focused on the nature of directors' professional responsibilities or professional development needs (Clyde, 1995; Hayden, 1997a; Jorde Bloom, 1997b; Jorde Bloom, 1999; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a, b; Kearns, 1996; Larkin, 1999; Robert et al., 1998; Rodd, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). Across these studies, significant issues identified included:

1. Directors felt under prepared for the range of tasks that needed to be undertaken in their role (Hayden, 1997a).

2. Various models of professional development were effective in enhancing directors' competencies and confidence (Kearns, 1996).

3. There may be different professional development needs at different career stages (Jorde Bloom, 1997b).

4. Directors do not see themselves as advocates for child care in the community (Clyde, 1995).

5. Without membership of a larger educational system, the director is vulnerable to isolation and the erosion of their confidence (Larkin, 1999).

What then are the implications of current thinking about leadership and management for child care directors? What does the successful director "look like"? The literature points out that the position requires diverse skills and knowledge. The director's primary goal is to create an agenda for quality programs to be delivered and to support the development of staff to achieve that agenda. Evaluating and measuring outcomes by diverse indicators at both micro and macro levels, is also important.

The next section looks more closely management and leadership from a broad base of literature but with applications to the child care context. Issues such as transformational leadership, shared leadership, distributive leadership and school-based management are discussed. The issue of women as leaders is also explored.

2.5 Management and leadership in human services

The word 'manage' comes from the Latin word manus, a hand, and is related to doing things by hand; the word 'leadership' comes from an Anglo-Saxon word, which means a road, a way, the path (Sarros, Butchatsky, & Santora, 1996). In current organisations, managers are required to implement organisational plans and, as leaders, they also must create a vision for the organisation (Clegg & Gray, 1996). In this view, leadership and management are separate but also integrated functions (Crawford, 2003).

Humphries and Senden (2000) proposed that "managers attend to the details of efficiently running a program; leaders are oriented to the broader issues and future developments" (p. 1). In this view, managing refers to the broad range of administrative activities and tasks that the manager establishes in the character and tone of the organisation. Managing is predictable and involves careful planning, analysis and logic (Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996).

Leading is about the interpersonal influence that the manager has, to ensure that activities and organisational goals are accomplished (Cacioppe, 1998; Khaleelee & Woolfe, 1996; Klagge, 1996; Morden, 1997a). It has been suggested that management brings order and consistency, while leadership is about coping with change (Crawford, 2003). An either/or approach dominates in a time of constant change when organisations need the best of both: the practical, analytical mind of a manager, and the experimental, visionary mind of a leader (Feeney, 1998; Morden, 1997b).

Clegg and Gray (1996) noted that leaders and managers have the same functions in that they are visionary; they build a climate of trust; learn from mistakes; create a healthy and empowering environment; they are flexible, adaptive; and create learning

organisations. Leaders in educational settings also must be able to manage in that there are many occasions within an organisation when managers as leaders must be able to allocate resources, deal with budgets, and organise in order to enable people to accomplish tasks and to move the organisation toward its vision. Therefore, skilled managers may be leaders, if they are able to deal with the many complex management issues that move the organisation toward its aims and goals (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993; Robbins & Mukerji, 1990; Sarros et al., 1996).

As child care centres are mostly small organisations with flat management structures, leadership and management functions are clearly intertwined. A director's role in child care centres requires both, leadership and management, thus a separation of the leadership and management roles is neither possible nor desirable (Applebaum, Herbert, & Leroux, 1999; Hard, 2001; Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996). For instance, managers need leadership skills to develop and implement a vision for what they wish to achieve (Clegg & Gray, 1996), and leadership involves management functions such as setting goals and objectives, while developing a team culture around performance and organisational achievement (Rodd, 1994). Being a leader and being the manager who coordinates the day-to-day functions of the child care centre are not synonymous nor are they mutually exclusive roles. It is more likely that competent centre management is a necessary first step to becoming a centre leader (Kapsalakis et al., 2000).

2.5.1 Management in child care centres

In child care, a director's job description and role may vary according to the employing organisation. However, as Hayden (1997a, b) and Rodd (1997) noted child care directors will hold many common responsibilities. Responsibilities include planning, implementing, and evaluating the program. Staff management is important, as is complying with regulations. There are decisions to be made about health and safety, nutrition, and working with families. There are administrative decisions about finance and budgeting and purchasing equipment. There is also a need to contribute to the profession through advocating on behalf of young children and families (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997; Kagan, 1994; Kagan & Bowman, 1997a, b; Rodd, 1994, 1997; Sebastian, 1990). A manager's responsibilities are focussed on planning,

organising, staffing, and controlling (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997; Mukhi, Hampton & Barnwell, 1988; Sebastian, 1990). These ideas will be further explored in the following section.

2.5.1.1 Planning

Planning is a basic function of a manager. This includes thinking about the organisation and determining how it is positioned within the environment, how to further develop the organisation and utilise its strengths and how to cope with unexpected threats and sudden opportunities. Planning also looks at the broad goals of the organisation and how to break these down into manageable tasks (Mukhi et al., 1988). Hildebrand and Hearron (1997) argue that all staff members within child care centres should be included in the planning process. This ensures that everyone involved understands the processes required for success and have a clear understanding of the desired path. Planning processes can be used to support collaboration among staff. In other words, as staff work together, they are better placed to develop a sense of common purpose and are more committed as a result to achieving goals.

2.5.1.2 Organising

Hildebrand and Hearron (1997) suggest that organisational activities in long-day care centres involve arranging elements (for example, people, supplies, and equipment) and coordinating joint activities. They noted that there are an infinite number of elements that must be integrated. These critical processes begin after goals are identified. Account must be taken of regulations (for example, group sizes, staff/child ratios) and the availability of resources (for example equipment and materials) in order to meet centre objectives and deliver programs that take account of children's developmental and other needs.

The director's responsibilities include ensuring staff rosters provide continuity of care (including the correct staff/child ratio throughout the day); organising relief staff during regular staff absences; organising accessible resources and venues for outings and training; ensuring maintenance of centre equipment and buildings; as well as organising effective administrative systems (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997).

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2.5.1.3 Staffing

Staffing includes the process of recruiting and dealing with the human resources of the organisation (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997). Regulations concerning the qualifications of staff have to be met. Staff need to be supervised by the director and their performance evaluated and opportunities for professional development made available. In child care, there is a high staff turnover (Berthelsen, 1998; Whitebook et al., 1989; Whitebook, 1999). This is recognised as a significant issue that jeopardises the quality of programs since there is a lack of continuity in children's experiences. However, not all turnover may be negative if it is necessary to replace staff who are not performing well. The abilities of the director to keep the staff motivated and performing to high standards is important.

The director's responsibilities include an objective assessment of qualifications and abilities of potential staff members. The director orients, supports, develops and evaluates staff members; maintains constructive relationships with staff; carries out an objective evaluation of staff performance, and plans and carries out a program for continual staff development.

2.5.1.4 Controlling

It is usually the director's job to guide staff if they are having difficulties in implementing their programs (for example, daily or weekly assistance with written plans and child observations to ensure age appropriate activities). It is important for the director to monitor activities to ensure that planned goals have been accomplished and implement any significant changes (Mukhi et al., 1988). Controlling within an early childhood setting means (a) stating the standards expected, (b) measuring performance against standards, (c) and correcting deviations from established standards and plans (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997). Once specific standards are set within a centre every staff member should know the importance and reasoning behind them. Part of the director's role is to ensure that all staff are responsible for their actions, and when issues do arise, take action immediately to rectify the concern. The director will have success in this area of managing if staff

are selected carefully, if they orient new staff well, and offer continual support and training.

The quality of management practices assists in creating a coherent and colleagial working environment, where the focus is on careful planning of routines and tasks to reach specific organisational aims and objectives. Management activities aim to coordinate action so that goals can be reached in an efficient and effective way. Furthermore, innovative managers make continual improvements to ensure that the organisation will thrive in a changing environment (Jorde Bloom, 1991a, b, 1997a).

2.5.2 Leadership in organisations

Leadership has been defined as "knowing what the next step is, and having the confidence and commitment to take it" (Sarros et al., 1996, p. 42). Leadership has also been defined as a process that ranges from the avoidant through to the transactional, to the inspirational, idealised and transformational (Avolio, 1996; Parry & Sarros, 1996). "Leading must be seen in context and should not be considered separate from strategy, organising, learning and all those interactions that make organisations" (Clegg & Gray, 1996, p. 29). Leadership is a "process of interpersonal influence from a person unto other(s) in the direction of a goal, where the other(s) subsequently act of their own will in the direction sought for by the leader" (Baruch, 1998, p. 1). Leadership is a key issue in the development of groups and organisations and has been explored extensively in the behavioural and management sciences (Baruch, 1998). Researchers have sought to identify the means and strategies by which effective leaders "get the job done" (Sarros et al., 1996, p. 4).

Leaders are required to keep abreast of trends in the political, social and economic arena and think strategically about change and improvement. Leaders need to consider the broader issues and future developments of an organisation and look towards opportunities for change (Humphries & Senden, 2000). "Future leaders need to be proactive rather than reactive" and, "they [leaders] will convert mandates and problems into challenges and opportunities" (Bass, 2000, p. 22). There are a number of different theories about leadership such as Transformational Leadership; Shared Leadership; and Distributive Leadership. These theories and their relevance

to this study are discussed below. Further, information about school-based management and leadership are explored, as well, women as leaders are discussed.

2.5.2.1 Transformational leadership

The transformational model of leadership has been influential since the work of Bass (1985). Transformational leaders seek to motivate, influence, empower and develop the skills of others (Adamson, 1996). Leadership is a function of capacity and motivation, meaning that people are more motivated by affective factors than cognitive factors (Crawford, 2003). Leaders need to understand the importance of influencing the manner in which people work together to create an organisational culture where people have an intrinsic need to do their best.

Transformative leadership explains and describes the importance of the relational aspects of leadership (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders motivate their followers to perform well while developing the skills of the followers to allow those individuals to make their own decisions, which consequently enable them to take greater ownership and responsibility for tasks (Adamson, 1996). "The needs, values and goals of leaders and followers mesh and create meaning and community in the context of the organisation" (Rogers, 1988, p. 143). This form of leadership has been described as cultural expression because it is about creating with followers a vision for the organisation that is relevant for a specific organisational culture such that followers are empowered (Sergiovanni, 1998).

2.5.2.2 Shared leadership

In contrast to the transformational model is the theory of shared leadership (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003; Pearce & Conger, 2003). Within this model, leadership is embedded in the social system at different levels, leadership is conceptualised as a relational process, a distributed phenomenon occurring at various levels and dependent on social interaction and networks of influence rather than traditional one-directional models of leadership. The leader engages the group not the individual; people listen to each other; the team is empowered, dynamic, and all are equal (Locke, 2003).

Leading within this model may prove to be challenging, as it requires letting go of power. Shared or participative leadership may not always be possible if an organisation does not have adequately skilled and experienced staff. The group must have the ability and relevant professional knowledge to enable it to reach consensus and make informed decisions (Locke, 2003). Locke suggests that perhaps a vertical form of leadership may be more appropriate in some cases. This would involve a top-down, authoritative stance, with some shared decision making principles. However, despite the group members understanding of what needs to happen, some situations require a position of power and authority to implement change (Seibert, Sparrowe, & Leiden, 2003). The authors further noted that such a leadership approach requires high investment in building and maintaining group relationships while asserting a position of authority for instigating action. The focus remains on collegial activity.

2.5.2.3 Distributive leadership

Another form of shared leadership is known as distributive leadership with a strong emphasis on skill development through collaboration and sharing of ideas. In educational contexts, the intensification of tasks due to the asserted pace of change leads to overload with an endless schedule of meetings and administrative deadlines with only a limited number of hours in the day to complete them. Overloading is constant and can be physically and emotionally draining and cognitively demanding (Gronn, 2003). To manage, physically and emotionally, it is suggested that leaders adopt a distributive leadership framework (Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2002; Lakomski, 2002). "Distributed leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop skills and expertise through working collaboratively" (Harris, 2002, p. 3). The ideology within this paradigm shifts the "doing" and "thinking" from one to many. It is about the division of labour and creating a workplace that requires and facilitates collaboration, teamwork and cooperation (Gronn, 2003).

Distributive leadership is identified as a form of collective leadership, incorporating many individual's viewpoints and maximising the human capacity of an organisation. The idea of distributive leadership is not new (Lakomski, 2002). The

distribution of different aspects of leadership could be seen as the result of conciliation and evolving informally through day-to-day activities. Leadership thus flows throughout an organisation (Lumby, 2002).

2.5.2.4 School based management and leadership

As earlier noted the research interest in school based management has been about unpacking what it means to lead and manage in school systems because of the increased devolution of management decision-making to schools from centralised bureaucracies. It has been argued that, for school-based management to succeed, it is important to create a truly professional environment in which everyone is engaged (Smaby et al., 1994). This is a form of distributed leadership. School based management, and devolution of responsibility has become the norm in educational settings within the last decade (Bennet, 1999; Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1998; Brown & Anfara, 2003). Administrators are encouraged to promote collaboration and shared decision-making toward professional growth initiatives (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). To accomplish this successfully, leaders in educational systems must empower others and advocate towards continual learning (Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1998).

The role and responsibilities of educational leaders (who may be school principals or child care directors) now includes encouraging flexibility, promoting collaborative planning and shared decision-making and employing these qualities as a medium for successful change and reform (Beyer & Ruhl-Smith, 1998; Simpson, 1998). Educational leaders are also required to be active change agents in sustaining a robust flow of information; obtaining sufficient resources; coordinating continuous feedback from their colleagues, community and outside agencies; defining boundaries and interdependencies between outside agencies and schools; and insisting upon accountability to the organisational mission (Simpson, 1998).

Importantly, for local school-based management to be successful, existing organisational structures need to be reviewed so that people at the local level are given more authority to make decisions and allowed to introduce changes (Wohlstetter, 1995). These ideas have relevance within a child care context. Child care centre directors are now, more than ever before, required to make complex

organisational decisions. Successful school-based (and/or child care) management must place priority on building capacity for change, and engaging in creative efforts to communicate with families and the community (Delgado, 1998) because of a strong focus on achieving customer satisfaction as an outcome of education (Simpson, 1998; Wohlstetter, 1995).

Distributive leadership, by its very nature, distributes and allocates tasks so that organisational results are joint products, which cannot be individually disabled (Gronn, 2003). Principals (also directors) can be key players in the broad array of activities and the rejuvenation of new cultures for quality implementation of new forms of leadership and management (Wilkinson, 1998).

The next section looks at women as leaders in educational settings. Most early childhood practitioners are female (Larkin, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000) and therefore, almost without exception, directors of child care centre are women. Thus, identifying the ethos and/or characteristics of feminine leadership has relevance to this study.

2.5.2.5 Women and leadership

In the early childhood sector, female teachers dominate the field and thus directors of early education services are almost always women. Women have used their skills of nurturing and caring for others to structure child care services to adequately meet the needs of women and families (Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon, 2000). Due to this high number of females in the field, Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2003) proposed an interpretation of the early childhood field as the 'pink ghetto'. In 2002 in Australia, the child care workforce consisted of an estimated 60,000 paid staff providing care in Commonwealth-funded child care services (ABS, 2002). The ABS 1996 Census showed that only 3.3% of Australian child care workers are male (Press & Hayes, 2000). This finding is similar to the situation in the United States where Saluja et al. (2002) found that only 1% of the staff employed in early childhood programs were male.

There is recognition of the manner in which women's ways of connecting with others and their understanding children and families' needs is important to the delivery of

child care services (Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon, 2000). Lunn and Bishop (2002) proposed that feminine leadership styles are seen to empower rather than dominate, are facilitative rather than authoritarian, and that women have strong intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that facilitate co-operation. Similar findings were reported by Hard (2001) who proposed that women have developed an interactive leadership style that is centred on relationships with colleagues and collaborative decision making. Within this context, leadership has been proposed as being about "social sense-making" that uses interpersonal influence to advantage (Jorde Bloom, 1995; Singer, 1996). This does not suggest that males would not also present with these characteristics. For instance, van Engen, van der Leeden and Willemsen (2001) conducted a field study and investigated whether the gender-typing of the organisational context influenced leadership behaviour of male and female managers. Their findings indicated that male and female managers are more people-oriented, more transformational, and less task-oriented when leading in a feminine-typed context, and less people-orientated, less transformational, and more task-orientated when they lead in masculine-typed context. It is not the intention of this thesis to argue gender differences; these are reported elsewhere (for instance see, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Stelter, 2002; Thompson, 2000). Rather, the aim here is to point out those characteristics that are reported to demonstrate a female ethos to leadership (which can be practiced by males and females). However, it is appropriate to mention that one of the most striking differences between male and female managers/directors is that there are not that many of the latter category in large corporate organisations (van Engen et al., 2001). The authors go on to say that the labour market continues to be highly segregated by sex in that women are seen in professions that have traditionally been held by women (such as child care centres) and are under-represented in 'masculine-typed ' jobs and in higher positions.

There is growing evidence in literature and research stating that women managers demonstrate behaviours consistent with transformational styles of leadership (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hard, 2001; Limerick & Lingard 1995; Ozga & Walker, 1995; Rosener, 1990; Seplocha, 1998). Transformational qualities are centred on a notion that the leader is a motivator who has the capacities to influence, empower

and develop the skills of others (Adamson, 1996). In educational contexts, Ozga and Walker (1995) noted :

> Women ... run more closely knit schools than men, and communicate better with teachers. They use different, less dominating body language. They seem to be more flexible [than males] and sensitive. (p. 37)

Transformational leadership may not be the only model for leadership for child care services but as suggested by research, women are more likely to exhibit transformational styles of leadership. Thus this warrants examination in studying leadership and management in child care because of the high percentage of female child care directors.

The transformational leader attends to the culture of the organisation and makes individuals feel part of something worthwhile. The emphasis is on relationships, respect for others, processes rather than products, and the valuing of networking and collaboration. Shautz (1995) commented that women seem to place greater emphasis on cohesiveness and integration, demonstrate less stress and conflict, use less anger as a control mechanism, participate in many more group activities and tend to avoid authoritarian solutions. This is perceived as a feminine ethos of leadership (Fagenson-Eland & Lewis, 1998). Bernard (1981) proposed that the female ethos is generally characterised by mutuality, co-operation, and affiliation. Loden (1985), drawing on this work proposed a feminine leadership model, which has qualities of low control, greater empathy and a focus on quality output. Such an operating style is typically, but not always, gender related. However, Rogers (1988) argued that the transformational leadership paradigm essentially is about those qualities associated with a female ethos. Child care work is a highly feminised occupation, not least because of the nurturing role which is at its core. Research points to an affirmation that the female ethos of leadership raises the awareness of those within the organisation and focuses on developing a democratic community that is ethical at both personal and organisational levels through which staff are empowered to take control and make decisions that affect their lives (Applebaum et al., 1999; Manning & Robertson, 2002).

Women tend to view the world as a web or relationships and their mode of leading includes hearing others and being open to others through expressing how they feel (Rogers, 1988). Women place strong emphasis on teaching (others) and learning, and use a leadership style that is less hierarchical, more democratic and demonstrates supportive and enabling strategies (Hard, 2001; Ozga & Walker, 1995). Also, it has been established that early childhood services have a strong focus on supportive relationships which are characterised by ideals of respect, sensitivity, commitment to continual growth and change, collegiality of shared goals, and setting standards for the staff concerning values and ethics (Grey, 1999), thus feminine characteristics of leadership are anticipated to have relevance to this study.

2.6 Research on management and leadership in child care centres

To examine what we already know about the early childhood director in managing and leading in an early childhood setting, this section presents a summary of research studies conducted in the United States, Britain and Australia. Significant issues and understanding that emerges from examination of this research include considering leaders as change agents; recognising that directors go through a career cycle with different needs at different levels of the cycle, and identifying what it means to be a leader and manager of child care centres. Until recently the majority of studies about directors in early childhood education have been conducted in the United States, but some Australian studies have been conducted in recent years.

Mainly survey-based studies have focused on the nature of professional responsibilities and directors' professional development needs. The majority of the studies report the implementation of training programs for directors (Clyde, 1995; Hayden, 1997a; Jorde Bloom, 1997b, 1999; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a, b; Kearns, 1996; Larkin, 1999; Robert et al., 1998; Rodd, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). A summary of studies with directors in child care is presented here. The studies are ordered by date of publication. The summary indicates the state and/or national context in which the studies were conducted because contextual factors are assumed to impact on the leadership practices.

Jorde Bloom and Sheerer (1992b), in the United States, reported on the design and outcomes of a training program for 31 child care directors using a social systems framework. Measurement tools to assess change included the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Scale (Bredekamp, 1986), Training Needs Assessment Survey (Jorde Bloom, Sheerer, Richard, & Britz, 1991) and The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (Jorde Bloom, 1989). The results of this study indicated that training had a positive effect on participants' level of perceived competence, the quality of teaching practices in their classrooms, and the organisational climate of their centres. Additionally case study data documented feelings of increased self-confidence and self-efficacy on the part of the participants. Outcomes suggest that this training model improved the expertise of directors and promoted substantive change and improvement in their centres.

Clyde's (1995) research in Australia also identified that training was deemed important by the directors. Clyde's study involved interviews with 54 early childhood directors identifying skills that directors believed they brought to their role and the skills that they needed to develop. The analysis of the directors' responses indicated that training should take place both prior to assuming the role of the director and continually throughout their career. The directors in this study seemed aware of the need for more skills in working with staff, parents and members of the community. While most directors were keen to have the opportunity to participate in centre decision making, not all of them had the desire to do so. The majority of the directors perceived themselves to be role models; however they did not feel that they had a part in professionalising the field outside of their own child care centre.

Later, in an Australian study, Kearns (1996) found that directors identified a number of professional development needs to assist them in their role. Kearns conducted a postal survey of directors in 324 long-day care services in NSW. Open-ended questions as well as rating and ranking scales were used to examine directors' roles and responsibilities with a particular focus on their supervision practices with staff. Fifty-three per cent (53%) of directors believed that they were adequately prepared for their role, while 33% considered themselves inadequately prepared. Fourteen per cent (14%) of directors indicated that they had no formal preparation for supervision

of staff. No strategies were reported as being used on a regular basis to enhance supervision skills. The findings identified that there are a number of areas of need for the professional development of directors including issues of time management; highly developed communication skills; and knowledge about resources to assist directors in their staff supervisory role. Inservice training was clearly perceived as the most effective strategy to enhance supervision skills; tertiary courses were also perceived as effective but were not reported as being utilised.

Similarly, Rodd (1997), in Britain, found that lack of opportunity for training was an issue for child care directors. Rodd, conducted a pilot study to investigate early childhood professionals' perceptions of leadership. The study consisted of a series of group interviews using mainly open-ended questions. The findings indicated that directors held a reasonably clear understanding of what it meant to be a leader and manager of an early childhood centre. The participants reported that interpersonal relationships were the most difficult part of their jobs. The lack of opportunity for training in leadership and management was an issue. The directors felt that children and parents came before leading and managing responsibilities. Rodd concluded that there is a need for further professional development but, more importantly, the directors needed opportunities for networking and discussions about aspects of their role and responsibilities.

Jorde Bloom (1997b), in the United States commented on the directors' career stages and proposed that training should be tailored according to the specific stages. Jorde Bloom interviewed 257 directors to identify their training needs. In this study only 32% of the participants felt confident and self-assured when they first became a director. Seventy-nine percent (79%) indicated that they were not at all prepared for the kinds of issues that they encountered. This study found that directors at different levels of their career cycle have different needs. Stages in career cycle identified in the study included: the beginning director, the competent director, and the master director. Conclusions drawn were that once the stage of the career cycle is identified, training can be specific to that stage. However, not all directors experienced all stages. Some directors experienced recurring cycles of the stages as they moved from one early childhood administrative role to another.

Hayden (1997b) also found that there is a further need for ongoing professional development for early childhood directors. In Australia, directors were surveyed about their roles in administration and management responsibilities in child care centres and preschools (Hayden, 1997b). The survey was completed by 191 directors of child care centres and preschools in the inner city and western regions of Sydney. A series of follow up interviews was also conducted with 55 randomly selected directors. Issues such as background, experience and levels of preparedness for management were studied. This study found that a large number of directors were not aware of the complexity of their role before taking up the position of director. The study shows that despite low wages, long hours, and lack of recognition, the directors were committed to their work. Role models who can inspire and mentor new directors were an important factor in recruitment to the role. Directors who 'fell into their role' or assumed it reluctantly were in need of more training and other support mechanisms. The need for ongoing support and for accessible, flexible in-service professional courses was identified.

Further, research in rural and remote parts of Australia also reported lack of professional development opportunities for directors (Robert et al., 1998). Data was collected through interviews, surveys and training, which involved seminars and workshops. In this research many directors had limited management experience before commencing in their current position. This highlighted the high turnover of staff in the rural and remote areas. This has resulted in an ongoing demand for professional development activities to continually bring new staff up to date with current trends and issues. The decision to engage in further professional development was highly valued by the directors yet this engagement was dependent on availability in remote areas. The research also shows the diverse training backgrounds of directors. Long distance travel and high cost of training limit the directors' ability to attend further professional training (Robert et al., 1998)

On a more personal level, Seplocha (1998) in the United States examined the work of six high quality child care centre directors to investigate their perspectives and views of leadership and decision making in early care and education. The data collection included in-depth observations, structured and unstructured interviews as well as

centre document analysis. The findings indicated that effective early childhood leaders are experienced and knowledgeable in child development and early childhood education. These leaders are active in the community. They exhibit leadership vision, are collaborative and encourage teamwork. The study also showed that leaders play a vital role in creating quality through their convictions, demeanour, views, and decisions. A good leader exhibits commitment, care, knowledge and a willingness to explore new ideas.

Jorde Bloom (1999), in the United States, reported on an action research case study focussed on the work of an early childhood director. A climate assessment instrument, the *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey,* was used as the basis for implementing a change program in the director's centre to improve the quality of work life for the staff. The study identified the initial areas of dissatisfaction by the staff and then the director actioned change to address the staff concerns. The action research approach engendered collegial support for change and enthusiasm by staff for increased professional development and greater involvement in decision making. The director's confidence in herself as a leader was also enhanced.

In the United States, Larkin (1999) reported on her doctoral thesis (Larkin, 1992) and previous research identify training as an important issue for the directors. Larkin conducted a multiple case study of 16 Boston area preschool directors to explore how these administrators described their experiences of their role and how they became leaders in the field. The first part of the study looked at common aspects of the job across a range of organisational types. The second part of the study examined each director's transition into the leadership role to understand why these directors chose to become early childhood educators and what they found to be the most useful preparation. The study found that directors struggled with issues of isolation without a peer group. Also, being an authority figure while needing to provide a caring nurturing environment caused some tension in their roles. Another difficult part of their role centred on internal issues, rather than organisational management concerns. Directors reported that having an assistant director and/or a mentor as a sounding board assisted them in their day-to-day work as well as provided them with support in addressing macro issues with peers in other educational settings. Directors did not

perceive themselves to be advocates in the broader field. Directors reported that to better prepare them for their role, future training should encompass both practical and theoretical knowledge and some form of internship.

Overall, previous research findings indicate that the majority of the directors were not well prepared for the complex and demanding role expected of them, and that training was noted as a vital part of their ongoing professional development. Further research is needed to explore the specific needs and characteristics of the director in child care and their perspectives on leadership. This study will add to this body of knowledge in an Australian context.

The vast growth of child care services in the last few decades has required increased professionalism in service delivery and a need for many more personnel who have the skills and knowledge to lead and manage child care centres. Leadership in child care services has many functions, "… pedagogical, management, advocacy, community and conceptual" (Kagan & Bowman, 1997a, p. 7). Sergiovanni (1998) theorised that leadership is about improving practice. Pedagogical leadership, is focused on providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum (Lunn & Bishop, 2002). In the view of these latter authors, teachers are committed to children, and children are not sacrificed to accountability. Pedagogical leadership entails building relationships with others, sharing of ideas, getting to know people, and demonstrates an authenticity in dealing with like-minded members.

Despite the immense growth in child care services, most directors in child care centres have had no professional training for leadership roles (Hayden, 1997a, b; Jorde Bloom, 1992a; Larkin, 1999; Mitchell, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). This lack of training is evident in spite of the fact that there has been a developing recognition that leadership training is a critical variable in program quality (Bowman, 1997; Jorde Bloom, & Rafanello, 1995). For instance, as mentioned earlier, Jorde Bloom and Sheerer (1992b) reported that appropriate training for directors had a positive effect on participants' level of perceived competence, the quality of teaching practices in their classrooms, and the organisational climate of their centres. Additionally case study data documented feelings of increased self-confidence and self-efficacy on the part of the participants. Outcomes suggest that this training

model improved the expertise of directors and promoted substantive change and improvement in their centres.

Directors in child care centres are usually skilled in delivering programs for young children, however they are more reticent about their capacity as leaders and advocates in early childhood education. This was evident in Clyde's (1995) and Larkin's (1999) research where child care directors reported that they did not perceive themselves to be a part in professionalising the field outside their own child care centre. Similarly, Lunn and Bishop (2002) noted that nursery teachers had difficulty in defining themselves as leaders. They saw themselves primarily as teachers.

As the need for effective leadership increases, it is important to identify the personal and professional characteristics of directors that are significant to the delivery of quality programs, as well as aspects of their working environments that develop collaborative and participative organisations. The director is the 'gatekeeper to quality' by setting the standards and expectations for others to follow in the child care context (Jorde Bloom, 1992b; Jorde Bloom, 1997a; Jorde Bloom & Rafanello, 1995; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b; Seplocha, 1998). Highly skilled directors of early childhood centres are critical to program success (Boschee & Jacobs, 1997; Culkin, 2000; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a; Kagan & Bowman, 1997a; Vandell & Wolfe, 2003). Seplocha's (1998) study showed that leaders play a vital role in creating quality programs through their convictions, demeanour, views, and decisions and through their willingness to explore new ideas. Hence, this openness to be advocates as well as being open to new ideas brought a high level of quality to their work.

When exploring leadership literature in the child care context in the United States, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of advocacy. An effective leader in a child care centre is one who "persuades local power brokers to put improved early care at, or near the top of the community's agenda" (Crompton, 1997, p. 49). Blank (1997) emphasised that strong leadership in early care and education programs involves "having a vision, planning strategically for the long term, and moving beyond the press of everyday responsibilities" (p. 39). These are related to ideas

proposed by Newman (2000) who advocates the necessity of visionary leadership in early childhood settings.

Personal attributes or skills beyond the responsibilities of centre management are critical competencies necessary as a leader in child care services (Kapsalakis et al., 2000). Leaders who will move the early childhood profession forward in the twenty-first century, must become visionary and provide leadership that will revive early childhood education in times of continuous change (Newman, 2000). Without vision, leadership becomes just management. Leadership in child care centres needs to be futures orientated and such leaders require skills in strategic planning. This suggests that directors in child care centres are required to be active change agents.

For the purposes of this research, drawing on the ideas presented by Fairholm and Fairholm (2000), Khaleelee and Woolf (1996) and Klagge (1996) and Morden (1997b), a description of leadership is proposed. Ideas drawn from these authors present a framework for leadership in early childhood care and education settings in that a leader has the ability to communicate vision, influence others and is futures orientated. Leadership is not something concerned with just specific style and technique, but the quality of the relationships that the leader has with staff.

This description guides this research. Vision defined here is about an organised perception or phenomenon, a perceived pattern of communal possibilities to which others can be drawn, calling for open caring relations with others (Morden, 1997b). These processes are designed to merge the divergent members of a group around a single philosophy, common set of values and agreement of organisational goals (Klagge, 1996). The leader's role includes understanding workers' needs and requirements as well as being responsive to change both internally and externally (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000). These tasks require the leader to have high levels of energy to influence others, conceptual ability, resilience and capacity to maintain anxiety over a period of time (Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996).

This description of leadership will be compared in the analysis of findings from this study, specifically looking at how directors view their leadership role and responsibilities in the delivery of quality programs for young children and families.

Empirical research in leadership and effective strategies in implementation of quality practice in the field in Australian child care centres is sparse. Consequently this results in practitioners not having access to vital information that identifies the skills, knowledge and experiences needed to provide effective leadership.

The range of tasks required of directors are diverse and complex. Drawn from the literature in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, Figure 2.2 provides a summary of the complexities of leading and managing a child care centre. The literature indicates that child care centres are viewed as multifaceted environments that impact on the role and responsibilities of the director. Specific skills and knowledge are required to assist directors in meeting organisational aims and objectives.

Child care services operate within complex environments

- Extensive development of early childhood programs due to funding changes in the 1970s has made this a competitive environment;
- Early childhood programs are not always viewed as educational programs;
- Day to day management of early childhood programs rests with the director;
- Most directors rose to their positions from the teaching ranks with no prior training in leadership and management;
- Child care centres are more likely to have less hierarchical organisational structures than corporate organisations;
- Privatisation and large chains of child care centres have emerged in the last few years;
- Values that characterise not-for-profit and values for business are at odds in this sector;
- Competition policy has increased market share;
- Low wages in child care centres contribute to high turnover of staff which impacts on the quality of care and education.

Roles and responsibilities of directors

- Create a professional environment in child care centres;
- Build and maintain strong interpersonal relationships;
- Provide leadership that shapes the organisation;
- Have the ability to influence quality of care and education;
- Provide quality child care for positive child growth and development;
- Ensure outcomes are related to the quality of care and education while children are in child care centres;
- Guide staff and monitor centre activities;
- Both lead and manage, as child care centres are mostly flat organisations.

Skills, knowledge, and other capacities of directors

- Engage in continual learning and support others to learn new skills;
- Act as a mentor, undertake further study, training and engage in collaborative decision-making;
- Recognise that education and training leads toward quality practice;
- Be proficient in management practices similar to a business;
- Become more entrepreneurial in their actions due to competition policy;
- Be skilful in dealing with human resources of an organisation;
- Be skilful in creating a coherent, conventional working environment;
- Have effective leadership skills;
- Provide competent centre management;
- Be able to adapt to change and motivate others.

Figure 2.2. **Work as a child care director.**

So far, this Chapter has presented a review of selected literature in relation to organisational issues and management and leadership in child care services. A number of issues have been discussed including the influence of the external environment and organisational structures on directors' roles and responsibilities. Personal issues in child care were explored. Management and leadership roles were discussed within the context of the wider literature. A summary of recent research on directors in child care centres was presented.

2.7 Jorde Bloom (1991b) a Social Systems Model

The literature in this Chapter has identified a range of ideas about management and leadership in organisations such as: external influences on child care centres; organisational structures; personal issues in child care centres; management and leadership issues including structure, processes and quality outcomes; and theory on transformational, shared and distributive leadership. School based management and women in leadership positions were discussed. These ideas have relevance to the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that is used as the conceptual framework for this research. Issues such as the external environment, culture, people, processes, structure and outcomes form the basis of this framework. The child care centre is viewed as a social system taking into account the structure of the centre, processes, and people that contribute to the culture of the centre. The external environmental influences are taken into account and perceptions of outcomes are explored. The findings lead towards a better understanding of the multifaceted role of the director, and a model of leadership, that builds a framework for future studies in this field. This study proposes that a new level of understanding about leadership in child care centres emerges based on the aim of this research, which was to explore leadership and management issues for directors in social, legislative and economic context.

Overall, previous research findings indicate that the majority of the directors were not well prepared for the complex and demanding role expected of them. This research provides additional data on characteristics of directors to gain a wider

understanding on the specific needs of the director in child care and their viewpoint on leadership and management.

In the broad systems model proposed by Jorde Bloom and colleagues (Jorde Bloom, 1989, 1991b, 1996; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a, b; Jorde Bloom et al., 1991b), independent components within the social system of the child care centre are identified as structure, people and processes. These parts collectively determine a unique ethos for any child care centre, its culture. Many factors operating in the external environment also affect the operation of the centre. Therefore in combination, structure, people, and processes all contribute to the centre culture, which together with the influence of external environmental factors affect how well the child care centre can achieve desired outcomes. This broad Social Systems Model with its relevant components is presented in Figure 2.3.

The manner in which the components of the model proposed by Jorde Bloom et al. (1991b) have been operationalised for the purposes of this research is described below:

External environment: The centre is influenced by a variety of wider systems that sit outside the centre. External factors can include the local community context, for example, the socio-economic status of the community. Important external (macro-factors) examined have included the professional, policy and regulatory environment in which a centre operates, as well as the economic environment, and the ideologies about child care held in the wider community.

Structure: The structure takes into account tangible facts of the physical environment as well as the organisational procedures. This includes the physical properties and environment of the centre and the site; the size (for example, number of children and staff); organisational bases (for example, ownership, sponsoring organisation, lines of authority and division of responsibility between a sponsoring organisation or an owner); as well as the formalised policies and procedures of the centre and its mission and philosophy.
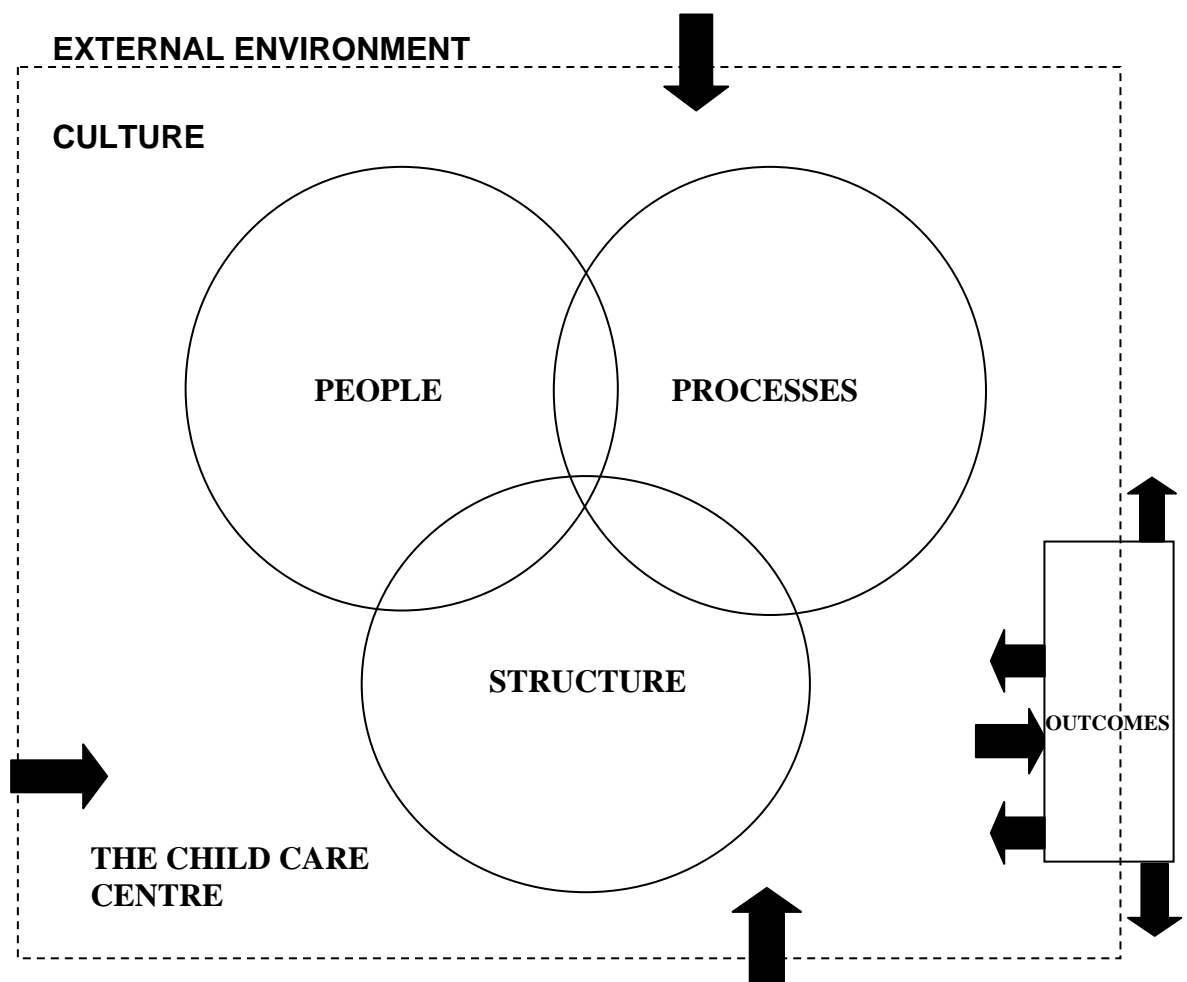
Figure 2.3. **A Social Systems Model in child care centres (Jorde Bloom et al., 1991b, p. 314).**

Processes: The processes utilised encompass how things are done including the manner in which decisions are made and by whom; problem-solving and conflict management processes. Processes also include the ways in which supervision of staff occurs within each program within the centres and how the quality of programs and teaching practices are evaluated.

People: In a child care centre, many individuals participate – children, parents, and staff. These people differ by various socio-demographic characteristics (for example, gender, age and education) and other personal characteristics. The commitment and motivation that staff have for their work is very important and the satisfaction that

they have in their work affects the quality of the relationships between staff members, between children and staff, and between families and staff.

Culture: The relationships between, and the intersection of, structure, processes and people give rise to the organisational culture and climate. There evolves over time certain practices and meanings which are commonly understood between individuals working in any particular context. Thus, specific traditions and orientations emerge which may unite (or not unite) members of the staff in their daily interactions. The quality of the organisational culture is dependent on how well these common understandings and beliefs about practices are shared and valued. The elements of shared understanding may provide points of order and stability.

Outcomes: Child care centres as organisations are expected to produce certain outcomes. These are the result of the intersection of all the previously nominated components - structure, processes, people, culture and external environmental factors. One important outcome is the quality of the centre's programs and its impact on the children's development. Parental satisfaction with their children's experiences within the centre and the support parents feel from the staff that contributes to parental well-being are also important outcomes. These aforementioned features contribute to higher order outcomes such as the professional reputation of the centre and the viability of the centre as an ongoing service.

A social systems view of organisations provides a way of looking at child care centres as an integrated whole, made up of interrelated and interacting parts (Jorde Bloom, et al., 1991a; Mumford et al., 2000). This study proposes that, within the Social Systems Model, the director is "centrally" positioned. The director is required to think strategically about all the systems in which a centre operates - structures, processes, people, culture and the external environment in making decisions. Understanding parts of the interconnecting components within the systemic model is critical to understanding centre performance (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002). The Jorde Bloom (1991b) Social Systems Model is considered appropriate for this study because of the specific character of the framework in this model. For instance, wider literature on social systems has generally looked at large populations and/or institutions (Espejo, 2000; Johannessen, 1998; Mumford et al., 2000; Mwita, 2000)

with some organisations consisting of many layers of hierarchical structures; whereas child care centres usually consist of flat lines of management (Applebaum et al., 1999; Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996) and, until recently have operated in isolation from the larger corporate entities. Further, the Social Systems Model provides a fitting framework for this research as the model had previously been used in the United States, specifically when conducting research on child care directors. Also, as has been earlier established (section 2.1) there are similarities in the United States and in Australia in how services are delivered to young children, which provides consistency to using this model within Australian child care context.

2.8 Summary of the chapter

Due to extensive growth in the child care sector, a rapidly changing environment, as well as increasing complexity of families' needs there is a requirement to review how child care centres are led and managed to achieve organisational and community vision. Skilled leaders are needed who have the energy and ability to influence others to take the organisation forward. Directors in child care centres are responsible for the day to day operation of their centres as well as accountable to a larger organisation and/or government departments. They require specific knowledge in leadership and management, both at the micro and the macro level. Most directors have risen to their positions from the teaching ranks, rather than having prior training for the position, consequently they have had to learn "the hard way" while engaged in the job. More emphasis is required in creating a professional environment, including adequate training for the role, as the director is in an influential position which can shape the child care centre.

There is increasing interest in ensuring that child care centres provide quality practice within their community. Although quality of care and education has different connotations to practitioners, families and community, a common element of quality has been linked to staff's level of education and how this relates to child outcomes. All staff require adequate training in early childhood education to enable them to provide an age appropriate program for young children. Another important facet of quality in child care centres is linked to high staff/child ratios to meet children's individual needs. Although in Queensland, the *Child Care Regulation*

(2003) states the minimum standards for staff/child ratios, this does not always guarantee quality. Leadership in child care centres can influence quality and set standards that go beyond minimum standards.

Privatisation of child care centres has resulted in a vast growth in the sector and made child care a competitive market. Child care centres are now required to adopt management practices and business principles that were not essential previously. This is a new concept as the ideals and values that characterise a business and the philosophy of not-for-profit service provision have different connotations. New learning needs to occur in the sector while retaining the ideology behind care and education but also recognising the need to review how child care centres are currently managed in a competitive business environment.

Effective leadership and management can assist in creating a coherent, collegial working environment where staff are motivated and engaged in working toward organisational goals. Literature identifies this as a shared form of leadership (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003; Gronn, 2003; Locke, 2003) with emphasis on building and maintaining open, caring relationships with staff, families and the community. Child care centres are mostly flat organisations thus directors are required to both lead and manage their centres. It is evident that for effective leadership and management to succeed, managers/directors need to be visionary (Brown & Anfara, 2003; Manning & Robertson, 2002; Siegrist, 1999) yet have the skills and ability to be competent in multifarious administrative duties.

Most directors felt under-prepared for their role before they took on the position (Hayden, 1997b; Jorde Bloom, 1997b; Robert et al., 1998). Limited access and availability to further professional development has added to this pressure, despite various models of professional development being effective in enhancing director's competence and confidence in carrying out their duties (Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b; Kearns, 1996; Rodd, 1997). Jorde Bloom (1997b) shows that directors go through "stages" in their development, thus professional development tailored on their developmental needs at different career stages may assist directors in their role. Directors do not consider themselves as experienced in advocacy (Clyde, 1995; Rodd, 1997), which negates in professionalising the sector in the wider community.

This indicates that directors may benefit from additional support in their role as they are in a unique position to take part in a broad array of activities and the rejuvenation of new cultures towards implementation of quality programs.

The ideas presented here will be investigated through the research aim and objectives that guide this study. The focus of this research is to explore leadership and management issues for directors in child care services. The aim is to investigate leadership and management in child care in social, legislative and economic context. There is much to learn about the characteristics and expertise necessary for leadership in child care centres. Changing social policies, expansion of services, commercialisation, demographic shifts, and the need for new alliances to integrate services are important. Furthermore, previous research in United States and Australia has not considered how policy and social change impact on leadership in child care centres. This study explores how these changing conditions affect the nature of leadership in the field. Broader theoretical understanding about management and leadership in child care centres is needed to ensure to deliver quality programs. Only a well-prepared and diverse group of leaders in this field will successfully navigate these challenges. Research to date has not attempted to consolidate relevant practical and theoretical ideas about leadership and how to implement theory into practical situations, or anticipate the leadership and managerial skills necessary in child care centres (Jorde Bloom & Rafanello, 1995).

The next Chapter will describe the methodology adopted in this study, which is based on a case study method using interviews as the main form of data collection. The focus is to explore how child care centre directors perceive their leadership role in the operation of their services.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This Chapter provides an overview of the research design and methods. The methodology is described as a qualitative approach, using multi-case studies. Characteristics of case study methodology are outlined. The process of data collection involves interviews and the features of conversational interviewing are discussed. The role of the researcher and the criteria for selecting the participants are also outlined as are the research procedure and ethical considerations. Data analysis processes are explained. Finally, issues related to quality of the research are discussed, focused on generalisability and validity. The specific research objectives are:

(1)   To identify the management issues and responsibilities that directors face in their role.

(2)   To explore how child care centre directors perceive their leadership role in the operation of child care services.

(3)   To examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community, in social, legislative and economic context.

(4)   To develop a model which integrates management responsibilities and leadership qualities to provide quality child care service.

As discussed in the previous Chapter, a Social Systems Model provides the framework for this research. This perspective accounts for features of the external environment that impact on the operation of the centre and specific systems within the centre. In this research, through interviews with child care directors, using the systemic model as a focus for the interview questions, the role of director in contemporary Australian child care centres is explored. Previous research focused on the work of directors has primarily involved survey-based studies. The research

process in this study enables more in-depth exploration of the experience of being a director.

3.1 Qualitative research

The research is based on a qualitative paradigm. Qualitative research has its roots in cultural anthropology, history and psychology (Bassey, 1999; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative methods of inquiry focus on the researcher's engagement in the research field as an explicit part of process (Flick, 1998). Qualitative research, according to Neuman (1997), aims to capture meaning through the researcher's immersion in the data. The intention in qualitative research is not as strongly focused on generalisation as quantitative research. However, common elements, themes, or categories of experiences of the participants are often organised so that some coherent and consistent story is presented (Creswell, 1994, 2003).

Qualitative researchers use multifarious forms of reasoning in their interpretation of data (Creswell, 2003). The researcher filters the data through a personal lens. This is distinct from quantitative research that is about prediction and control of variations in the phenomenon. While quantitative research subscribes to a range of assumptions about objectivity in data collection and analysis, this does not characterise qualitative research, which looks for variation in the social and cultural construction of the phenomena. Myburh, Poggenpoel, and Van Der Linde (2001) reported the differences between quantitative and qualitative research as:

> The quantitative paradigm … main aims are to objectively measure the social world, to test hypotheses and to predict and control human behavior. In contrast, the qualitative paradigm … main aim is to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life.
> (p. 1)

Hara (1995) proposed that quantitative and qualitative research approaches in education arise from different research needs. Each research style has a legitimate place. The research is exploratory and interpretative and a qualitative approach was considered appropriate in order to gain greater understanding of the role and

responsibilities of directors in child care centres within a climate of policy change and an increasingly competitive child care industry environment.

3.2 A case study approach

Eight child care directors participated in the research. Each child care director was interviewed on two occasions. A narrative about the experiences of each child care director was developed through the interview data. Each description could be portrayed as a case study and the overarching research process as a multiple-case method (Rosenwald, 1988). Case study usually refers to research that investigates few cases (or, just one) in considerable depth. Such research is usually conducted in naturally occurring social situations (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). Case study methodology allows the researcher to collect rich data to build a solid practical understanding of specific issues. For the purposes of this research, a case study is defined as an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, gathering qualitative data about a single social phenomenon (Feagin et al., 1991). In this case, the experience of being a child care director is explored.

The case study method has a long history in the social sciences and is widely used across a number of disciplines. Case study research revolves around the in-depth study of a phenomenon using a single case or a series of linked cases over a defined period of time. The researcher tries to locate the "story" of a certain aspect of social behaviour in a particular setting and the factors influencing the situation (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Case studies are descriptive, complex, and holistic (Stake, 2000). Case studies may collect and present detailed, but relatively unstructured information, from a range of sources.

Case studies captures the uniqueness of individuals' experiences, rather than aiming to use the findings for wider generalisation (Gomm et al., 2000). Case studies are often the preferred method of research when they are epistemologically in harmony with the researcher's experience. Consequently, this facilitates a greater understanding of the phenomena in question. Case studies aim to optimise understanding of the individual case (Stake, 1994). Rather than generalisation in case studies, the focus should be on particularisation (Stake, 1995, 2000). The knowledge

from any particular case becomes useful because of the full and rich knowledge gained through detail of the particular. Based on the presented data, readers of the research can then draw their own conclusions from the findings and apply it to their particular situation. However, care must be taken to make clear the researcher's speculative and tentative assertions in any interpretation of the data. It is not uncommon for case study researchers to make assertions from a relatively small database (Stake, 1994). The focus should be on what use others will make of the findings or how others may facilitate the transfer of the findings from one setting to another (Stake, 2000).

General statements emerging from case studies data could be called "fuzzy generalisations" (Bassey, 1999, p. 52). Bassey proposed that by using this terminology, an indication is given that there are likely to be exceptions. It gives the data an element of uncertainty; it reports that something has happened and may happen elsewhere; and this is an invitation for other researchers to test this out. The main concern should be to understand the uniqueness of any case without claims of generalisation. The important issue is if a macro theory is generated, how explicit the findings are, and whether they are sound (Stake, 2000).

Successful case studies consider alternate points of view, producing a story with emphasis on time and place, providing rich ingredients to make the experience explicit (Stake, 1995). Case studies advance understanding of individual, organisational, social and political phenomena. It is argued that case studies continue to have an epistemological advantage over other inquiry methods as a basis for "naturalistic generalisation" (Stake, 2000, p. 24). A case study approach is appropriate for this research as it allowed for a collection of cases to be studied in some depth, and the method allowed the researcher to explore the social actions (being a director) from the perspectives of the participants.

3.3 Data collection through interviews

Data from the directors were collected through semi-structured interviews gaining insight into specific issues. Interviews are a widely accepted technique for conducting systematic social inquiry (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Qualitative

interviewing is a versatile approach with an emphasis on listening to people as they describe how they understand the world in which they live and work (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In interviews, the different epistemological positions of the individuals engaged in the process emerge through meaningful interactions (Glesne, 1999; Seidman, 1991), and knowledge is constructed in collaboration with the interviewer. Thus, the nature of the language style and the words used by researcher and the participants shape the nature of the data collected; how interpretations of the data are made; and allows the researcher to engage deeply in the interview process and in the participants' experiences in order to develop shared understanding (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). In-depth qualitative interviewing can help understanding of how culture is created and maintained while exploring specific social and political phenomena (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) there are three issues that should be considered to ensure that the interviewer and interviewee are able to successfully understand each other: first, understanding of the culture, which influences how the interview is heard and understood; second, interviewers are not neutral actors, rather they are participants in an interview process where their emotions and cultural understanding will impact on the interview; and third, the purpose of the interview is to hear what the participants are saying, giving them a public voice. By showing genuine concern for the interviewee, trust and interest needed for an in-depth interview will grow and deepen as part of the ongoing process of conducting the research. Even when the interviewer and the participants seem to be speaking the same language within the interview, the words used may have different cultural connotations (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The researcher's own bias, prior knowledge, questioning style and how responses are heard, influences the nature of the questioning. It is important for researchers to be aware of their own bias, vocabulary and cultural assumptions so that their own opinions are not imposed on the interviewees' ideas.

One difficulty associated with the interview method is that the researcher is not able to directly observe the participant in their daily activities (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexandra, 1995). Consequently the researcher is deprived of the

ethnographic content, which can bestow deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. However, Glesne (1999) identified this as a special strength of interviews since the researcher can learn about what cannot be observed without prolonged engagement. If there are clear and well-defined research questions, then interviews allow the researcher to understand the experiences of a range of people in a short period of time.

The data from interviews should be not seen as mirrors of reality because the data are constructions within the interview experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Minichiello et al., 1995). The interview should be considered a special form of conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). It engages the researcher and participants in a process to construct meaning and create a narrative about the social world under study (Miller & Glassner, 1997). Minichiello et al. (1995) suggested that experienced interviewers can gain powerful understanding of the world of participants if interviews are conversational in style. Although qualitative interviews are more focused than ordinary conversations, they follow rules of ordinary conversation in that only a few topics are covered in-depth and there are smooth transitions between the topics of conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Conversational interviews are most useful when multiple interviews with each participant are conducted, as this enhances rapport (Minichiello et al., 1995). In this research, data collection was carried out over a three-month period; two interviews were held with each of the eight participants, with a two-week interval between interviews.

The researcher was responsible for the manner in which the interviews were held. It was important to ensure a collaborative discussion developed with each participant (Minichiello et al., 1995). The researcher gently guided the conversation, leading it through stages, asking specific questions and encouraged the interviewee to answer in depth and at length (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In conversational interviews, the social aspects of the research process are important. Such interviews challenge conventional assumptions of research in that the interview is described "as a setting for data gathering by the researcher to the researched" (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998, p. 64). In this view, the researcher and the participants are partners and co-constructors of knowledge.

In a conversational interview, the process is recursive because the researcher's questions build on responses from previous questions and participants are provided with opportunities to explain their experiences (Minichiello et al., 1995). As with ordinary conversations, interviews follow similar ways of clearing any misunderstandings in that whoever does not understand seeks further clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). While the issues central to the research questions are explored, the interviews are flexible because the researcher seeks a balance between providing open-ended questions to allow the participants to tell their story, yet ensuring that the interviews provide sufficient information to address the research questions (Minichiello et al., 1995). Qualitative interviews are a practical tool when exploring social, political and economic changes in the world of work and people's lives (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The interview questions were developed in line with the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b), which provided the framework for this study. In this research, an interview guide (Appendix A) was used to assist the researcher to cover the major issues to be addressed. The researcher also developed new questions in the course of the interviews to explore the participants' perspectives in unique ways. The second interview in this study placed a stronger focus on characteristics of leadership than in past research in this field. Previous research in centre based child care, using a Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom 1991b; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b) has mainly looked at the training and professional needs of directors, rather than emphasising the underlying characteristics of directors in their roles as leaders and managers.

3.4 The researcher's role

Qualitative researchers assume that it is impossible to eliminate the effect of the researcher completely within the research process. The researcher determines the manner in which the research is conducted, that is, how and what data are collected, and how it is interpreted (Neuman, 1997). Two issues are important – first, the nature of the relationship that emerges between the researcher and the participants; and second, the perspectives that the researcher brings to the entire research process through prior experiences. These issues are discussed below.

First, in taking a position that research is collaborative inquiry there is a risk that the dynamics of the power relationship between the researcher and the participant are ignored. Power differentials are inherent in all social relationships. While conversational interviews empower participants because the researcher is responsive to the participants' perspectives, nevertheless, any participant is forced into a position of trust with the researcher because the researcher maintains some control over the interview to meet the researcher's interests; and inevitably the researcher makes the interpretation of the data from the participants (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998).

Second, the researcher brings a range of personal values, assumptions, and biases to the research process and these influence the outcomes of the research and its conduct, through the nature of the data collection, as well as in the manner in which the data are interpreted (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994). Therefore, it is important to clarify the researcher's experiences and interest in the topic under investigation. This places the research findings in perspective for the reader and the reader can then add their own interpretation of the researcher's bias in understanding the research findings.

In this research, I have brought knowledge of child care policy in government and experience as a child care director and consultant to the data collection and analyses. This knowledge both informs and influences my understanding of the participants' experiences. From 1994 to 1997, I was a director/manager and a consultant to several early childhood settings. As a director of a child care centre, I was involved with all major administrative activities and decisions and worked very closely with the owners, staff, and the community. Subsequently, I have been involved with policy-making and implementation of child care policy at Commonwealth and state levels in public service positions.

To manage my own bias I engaged in in-depth self-reflection as well as participated in in-depth discussions with an experienced researcher. These discussions enabled me to monitor my own subjectivity and engage in on-going self-reflection. The discussions allowed me to review my own preconceptions and assist in gaining clarity of vision. This reflective phase allowed me to suspend judgements until I had

gathered all the evidence, to really hear what the directors were saying to me. This view is supported by Glesne (1999) who proposed that a researcher monitoring their own subjectivity would increase awareness of how data could be distorted while increasing awareness of personal values, attitudes and beliefs.

3.5 Participants

Qualitative researchers often select their participants to ensure a rich information contribution (Glesne, 1999). Information-rich cases help to add breadth and depth to the data, that as much information as possible about the issues that are central to the research project is collected. This was so in this research.

Specific criteria were used for inviting child care centre directors to participate. The criteria included the nature of qualifications, number of years in the current child care centre and the accreditation status (QIAS) of the centre. These are clear quantifiable criteria associated with higher quality child care (that is, higher level qualifications in early childhood education, the amount of experience as a director, and the independent assessment of the child care centre by the processes of accreditation). A partial focus of this study was to explore the experiences of directors who are delivering quality child care programs.

In selecting the participants criteria were considered in the following ways. First, the directors would need to hold an early childhood or child care qualification, a minimum of a Diploma of Child Care and/or a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education. Second, to gain an information-rich case, I wanted to include directors who had been in the field for at least five years; and had, at a minimum, two years as a director within their current centre. Third, the centres in which the directors were employed needed to be an accredited centre under the National Childcare Quality Improvement and Accreditation System and so, within that system, the directors were providing quality programs. Therefore, I selected centres, which held a current three-year accreditation rating. At the time (2000), this was the highest level of accreditation rating and indicated that the centre was not required to undergo the accreditation process again for another three years from the year in which that status was awarded.

The child care directors were employed in both community-based and privately owned centres. The centres were all located within the greater Brisbane area. Four were adjacent to the city and four were in outer Brisbane. The selection of these varying locations and diverse organisations would bring greater variation in the directors' experiences. In different geographical contexts, centres cater for families with different socio-demographics. Additionally, different organisational structures (for example, community-based centres versus private centres) impact on how programs are delivered and how centres are managed.

Child care centres in different areas of the Brisbane region were identified from Department of Communities (2004) web page and from the web page of the National Childcare Accreditation Council. This information is in the public domain. Pseudonyms were used for the directors' names to protect their identity.

In the first instance, the directors in this study were contacted by phone about their interest in the project and if they met the criteria for engagement. A letter (Appendix B) outlining the project and its purpose, was then sent to potential participants. The letter indicated that phone contact would be made to respond to any further queries, which the directors had with regard to the project. This process also allowed the directors enough time to contact any management committee of the centre, and/or the owner, or other authorised person of the centre to discuss any issues before agreeing to participate.

It should be noted that the participants' experience and qualifications are not representative of the wider population in the field. The directors in this study were carefully selected as one of the objectives of this research was to examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community characterised by social, legislative and economic context. It has been well documented (Berthelsen, 1998; Larkin, 1999; Wangmann, 1995; Whitebook, 1999) that due to the complexity of the role of the director, low wages and little career advancement, the child care sector has ongoing difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified workers. The early childhood sector continues to be an underdeveloped profession and often an unrecognised field of expertise in that preschools and child care centres are not seen as part of a centralised

schooling system and not supported as equally important to a child's early education experience as the elementary and secondary years (Larkin, 1999). In the past directors' salaries in early childhood programs have not kept up with inflation (Jorde Bloom, 1992b). In Australia there is limited acknowledgement of a career designated as child care administrator, rather directors are often selected from a pool of teachers with minimal training in management and leadership (Hayden, 1997b).

Eight participants were identified and pseudonyms provided for each participant. These participants in the research and the child care context in which they worked are described in Table 3.1. It should be noted that most of these participants were both very experienced and well qualified.

Table 3.1

Research Participants and the Child Care Context

Director	Description of the directors' workplaces and demographic information
Irene	Irene is employed in a centre that operates on a TAFE college campus. The centre is affiliated with an organisation that supports community-based child care centres throughout Queensland. The centre is operated by a parent management committee. The centre has been operational for eight and a half years. It caters for 64 children. The centre employs 14 full time and five relief staff.

- *Qualifications:* Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Community Welfare, Certificate IV Workplace Trainer, Bachelor of Education.

- *Experience:* Twenty-three years in various positions - Pre-School teacher, Family Support worker, Family Day Care coordinator, Resource Officer – Access and Equity, Director (Child Care).

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Samantha   Samantha is employed in a centre that is a part of a large privately owned chain of long-day care centres. It has been operating for three years. The centre caters for fifty-six children. The centre employs seven full time staff.

- *Qualifications:* Associate Diploma of Education (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood, Graduate Diploma in Education, Masters, in Educational Counselling.

- *Experience*: Six years in early childhood education - Group Leader (Child Care), Assistant Director (Child Care), Director (Child Care).

Elizabeth   Elizabeth is employed in a centre operated by a large community organisation, which also provides a Family Day Care Scheme, Occasional Care and Limited Hours Care services. The organisation has these services throughout Australia. The centre, that Elizabeth directs caters for 45 children. This centre has been operational for ten and a half years. The centre employs eight full time staff, and eight relief staff.

- *Qualifications:* Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Education (Administrative Leadership).

- *Experience:* Eleven years in early childhood education - Assistant (Child Care), Graduate Supervisor (NSW) (Child Care), Teacher (Child Care), Director (Child Care).

Table 3.1 (Continued)

| Lisa | Lisa is employed in a privately owned long-day care centre. Since the data collection phase, this centre is in the process of transferring to become a part of a chain of child care centres. The centre has been operating for 5 years. It caters for 75 children. The centre employs 16 full time staff and two relief staff.

- *Qualifications:* Associate Diploma of Education (Early Childhood), studying Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood).

- *Experience:* Seven years in early childhood education - Group Leader (Child Care), Assistant Director (Child Care), Director (Child Care). |

| Cherry | Cherry is employed in a centre that is sponsored by a religious organisation and is part of a primary and secondary school campus that also operates under the auspice of the religious organisation. The centre has operated for thirteen years. The director is accountable to the primary school principal. The centre caters for 50 children. The centre employs 12 full time staff and 18 relief staff selected from a pool of college students.

- *Qualifications:* Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood).

- *Experience:* Five years in early childhood education - Pre-School Teacher (Child Care), Assistant Director (Child Care), Pre-school Teacher (Primary), Director (Child Care). |

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Marleen	Marleen is employed in a centre that is sponsored by a university on the university campus. While owned and managed by the university, it has an advisory committee, which includes community representatives. It has operated for thirteen years. The centre caters for 58 children. The centre employs six full time staff, four part time staff and two relief staff. • *Qualifications:* Diploma of Teaching, Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Studies. • *Experience:* Thirty-eight years in early childhood education - Teacher (Community Kindergarten), Director (Community Kindergarten), Director (Community Child Care), Director (Child Care).
Jenny	Jenny is employed in a privately owned long-day care centre. The centre is one of four, owned by the same licensee. The centre has operated for 5 years. The centre caters for forty-five children. The centre employs seven full time staff and five relief staff. • *Qualifications:* Associate Diploma of Education (Early Childhood), studying Bachelor of Children's Services (Child Care). • *Experience:* Eleven years in early childhood education - Assistant (Child Care/After School Care), Relief Teacher Aid (Pre-School), Assistant Director (Child Care), Director (Child Care).

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Rachel	Rachel is employed in a community based child care centre affiliated with a larger organisation that provides child care services, as well as resource and support services for a range of childhood programs throughout Queensland. The primary purpose of the organisation is to provide training and inform early childhood practitioners and other professionals about latest trends and research in early childhood education. The centre that Rachel manages has been operational for 11 years. The centre caters for 65 children. The centre employs 13 full time staff and three relief staff.

- *Qualifications*: Diploma of Teaching, Diploma of Deaf Education, Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood).

- *Experience:* Twenty-five years in early childhood education - Assistant (Kindergarten), Teacher/Director (Child Care), Supply Teacher (Primary), Director (Child Care).

3.6 Procedure

There were three direct contacts with the participants. An initial visit to each of the eight child care centres was made to meet the directors and to review the processes of the study. The primary purpose of this visit was to build rapport with the director and to allow me to gain some familiarity with the centre context. During the course of the initial visit to the centres, understanding of the physical features and the ambience of the centre was developed. This enabled me to write a description of each director and the child care centre that complemented understanding of a director's perspectives obtained from the interview data (see Appendix C).

Subsequently, two interviews were conducted with each director, within a three-month period of the initial visit. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio taped. The length of the interview was, to some extent, flexible depending on the issues being discussed. After each interview was conducted and transcribed, the transcripts were given to the participants and their feedback was sought. Such

feedback assisted in drawing conclusions and identifying any misinterpretations of the findings (Bassey, 1999). The initial visit and the subsequent interviews with all directors, with the exception of one, were conducted within the child care centre in which the director was employed.

The social experience in the interview, while a conversational process, was characterised by a certain amount of control by me as the interviewer. In posing certain questions enabled me to determine this. The aim of the interviews was to build upon and explore the participants' responses from a general framework for the questions. These questions asked for descriptions of experiences as well as opinions, and from these responses further questions were asked, in a recursive process.

The first interview focused, through the social system model, on the various elements that both structure and influence the activities of the director on a regular basis. Particular attention was paid to the influence of the social and political climate on the role of the directors, such as decision-making; administrative tasks; the nature of relationships between the director, staff, children, families and community; centre culture; and strategies for evaluating the programs and specific outcomes. The second interview focussed on directors' perceptions of leadership, important qualities of a leader; challenges and rewards of leadership; prior preparation; professional needs of directors; and child care quality and advocacy. The interviews sought to gain understanding of directors' everyday experiences through prompting within the interviews for the directors to provide examples and stories of their experiences.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in all forms of research are important (Bassey, 1999; Creswell, 1994; Dane, 1990; Glesne, 1999; House, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Silverman, 2000). The researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants, as well as the confidentiality of the information. Ethics includes considerations of how to acquire and disseminate trustworthy information without causing harm to the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Researchers must be sensitive to cultural and political issues in interaction. It is vital for the researcher to inform the participants what the study is

about and secure explicit written cooperation as required from human subject participants in an effort to ensure that people cannot be manipulated (House, 1990). This was the case in this research where participants were given clear preliminary information about the study and asked to provide written consent to participation.

Bassey (1999) discussed research ethics as respect for democracy – where researchers are expected to have a certain amount of freedom subject to responsibilities imposed by the ethics of respect for truth, meaning being open and honest in all situations, and respect for persons. Respect for truth ensures researchers do not deceive themselves and others, participants have initial ownership of the data and are entitled to dignity and privacy.

The following safeguards, as described by Creswell (1994, 2003) and Glesne (1999), were applied in this study to protect the participants' rights. The research objective was clearly articulated verbally and in writing for the participants including how the data was to be used:

1. Written permission to proceed with the study as articulated was received from the participants;

2. An ethical clearance form was filed with the Queensland University of Technology, with the University Human Rights Ethics Committee;

3. Verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations and reports were made available to the participants for comment, and their feedback was sought;

4. The final decision regarding the participants' anonymity rested with the participants for comment. The participants had the final decision in censoring any information in the transcripts that may have jeopardized their anonymity; and

5. The participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Melton, Sieber, Stanley, and Stanley (1996) have articulated a range of important issues with respect to the ethical conduct in research. Their ideas guided this research

study. Ethically, the researcher must consider: (1) the perspectives of the research participants, that is, their expectations, concerns, and beliefs about the research, (2) communicating with participants about the research in terms they understand, and (3) respect for those privacies that are important to the participants.

3.8 Data analysis

Analysis is about making sense of the data gathered during the research process, in this case, the text from the interview transcripts. It is an interrogation process in which descriptions are generated, explanations developed, hypotheses posed, and links, within and across the narratives of the participants, are made (Glesne, 1999). In early and very influential work on qualitative data analysis, Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that theory existing within the text would be "discovered" without bringing to this process preconceived theoretical ideas. This is the basis of grounded theory in data analysis. However, Strauss, and Corbin (1990) recognised that a range of meanings is always possible in data analysis because the researcher brings to the process their own focus and perspectives.

The primary goal within the data analysis in this research is to create substantive categories that emerged in the participants' responses in focal areas. Themes were identified in the data for focal areas of the analysis. Essentially, these focal areas stemmed from the questions used in the interviews. For example, the question, "How do you define leadership?" generates a focal area of directors' definitions of leadership. The coding of the text into substantive categories was about grouping of ideas into thematic units (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). This was also completed with an agenda of not generating unmanageable numbers of categories. A process of reiteration was used. The transcripts were read as a whole and then reread a number of times as I sought to identify categories in the data, and draw out the evidence to substantiate these categories. The sequential processes in the data analysis encompassed familiarisation with the text of each interview, identifying categories of description, comparisons of categories across interviews, and the identification of exceptions when the common categories did not appear to fit the "general case".

After each interview, aside from the transcripts, written reflections on the interview process were recorded. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Glesne (1999), these reflections can prompt recall of the interview experience as the data is analysed in order to recall the context in which certain responses by the participants were made. The data analysis began early in this study and was an ongoing process across the total time span of the research. The participants' feedback on the transcripts also assisted in checking interpretations and drawing conclusions.

This study began with an understanding that the role of the child care director is complex and difficult. The role of the director can be filled with frustrations, unanticipated surprises, adjustments, and continual challenges. While bias may have shaped the way in which aspects of the data have been interpreted across the period of the analytic process it became obvious that my own perspectives were not always borne out by the data.

The research report identifies themes in the data with illustrative excerpts from the interview texts. The selected and illustrative excerpts from the interview data provide a lens through which reader can make interpretations.

3.9 Generalisability and validity of the research

Any research has limitations. These frequently relate to the scope of the research that is possible in any time frame and the resources available. Thus, this research is limited by the number of participants who were involved as well as the degree of engagement that was possible within the time frame of the study. There are also issues about generalisability of the findings, which were affected by the nature of the selection of the participants whose experiences, past and present, may not reflect those of the broader population of Australian child care directors. However, qualitative research is less focused on generalisation of findings but rather more focused on understanding the meaning of the phenomena as described by the research participants (Silverman, 2000). Large numbers of participants are not necessarily required, when it is understood that the goal of the research is to provide a foundation for future studies to validate the findings reported from this project.

An analysis of the validity of the findings is also important. Typically, qualitative researchers approach an analysis of the validity of the research in a different manner than quantitative researchers (Silverman, 2000). However, as Flick (1998) noted, it is vital to apply the classical criteria such as reliability and validity to any qualitative study. Creswell (2003) suggested that validity in qualitative research involves determining whether the findings are "accurate" from the standpoint of the researcher, participants and/or the reader.

Silverman (2000) proposed that a qualitative researcher should always find another case through which to test out a provisional hypothesis, inspecting and comparing all the data fragments that arise in a single case. Specifying validity in qualitative interviews also involves gaining participants' feedback and agreement with the contents of the statements after the interview (Flick, 1998). Flick cites Wolcott (1990) who identified a number of issues for ensuring the validity in qualitative research: (1) the researchers should listen as much as possible; (2) produce notes that are as exact as possible; (3) begin to write early; (4) allow participants to see the notes and reports; (5) produce a complete and candid report; (6) seek feedback on the findings and presentations from colleagues; (7) presentation of findings should be characterised by a balance in reporting different viewpoints; and (8) by accuracy in writing.

Reliability in qualitative research is about consistency of judgement among various viewers of the raw data (Boyatzis, 1998) and it is important that the researcher documents in significant detail the procedures for categorisation of the data and how those procedures were applied consistently (Flick, 1998). A widely used strategy for attaining reliability in qualitative research is through double coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This technique requires two people to analyse the raw data independently with each person making judgements and interpretations. Results can then be compared and findings discussed until agreement is reached (Boyatzis, 1998). This method was used in this study where the findings were analysed with an experienced researcher using the double coding method.

The ideas drawn from Boyatzis (1998), Creswell (2003), Flick (1998) and Silverman (2000) about validity and reliability were useful strategies when endorsing findings in this study as follows.

- *Peer review and debriefing*: In the conduct of the interviews and the construction of the interview schedule, extensive discussion with an experienced supervisor occurred.

- *Double coding:* My supervisor and I independently developed and then compared key concept maps from the responses to the questions in each interview transcript. We compared our categorisations and discussed interpretations until we arrived at general consensus about primary themes in the data. These processes helped to ensure verification and trustworthiness of the analytic processes.

- *Clarification of researcher bias:* Reflection upon the researcher's own subjectivity was important. My supervisor assisted in continual reflection of my prior experiences and helped monitor the processes of the data analysis. For example, I did have a bias with respect to the complexity of the directors' role. While this was borne out in the data, through discussions with my supervisor my perception that this is always a "negative" burden was not supported.

- *Member checking:* The transcripts were made available for the research participants for their feedback and comment to verify the accuracy of reporting and also to invite additional comment. Only in one case did a director provide additional comment on an interview.

- *Rich, thick description:* The final report has provided many illustrative excerpts from the interviews that allow the reader to enter the research context and to make their own interpretations of the data presented.

- *Multiple sites:* I chose to look at eight different sites, which increased the likelihood that there was trustworthiness in the common themes. This strategy is supported by Silverman (2000) who emphasised the importance of a

comparative method where researchers are encouraged to always attempt to look at another case to test out a provisional hypothesis.

Creswell (2003) emphasised that validity in qualitative research does not carry the same connotations as in quantitative research, so it is acknowledged that the findings may be subject to other interpretations. Nor is validity a companion to reliability, as in quantitative research. Rather reliability, in a limited way, is checked through consistent patterns or themes that are generated across respondents participating in the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that trustworthiness of findings is increased by ensuring that the data is auditable through checking that the interpretations are transferable, dependable and confirmable as follows:

1. Transferable – the data provided offers rich, thick description to enable the reader to see whether the findings can be transferred to a different setting (external validity);

2. Dependable – the data can be examined through an audit trail (reliability), for example, member checking; and

3. Confirmable – data analysis and data reduction processes are explained, that is, data reconstruction, including structuring of themes for example concept mapping.

Pulkkinen (2003) noted that trustworthiness of qualitative research could be strengthened by providing descriptive, interpretative and theoretical validity. First, descriptive validity refers to factual accuracy of the data. Second, interpretative validity refers to the degree that the participant's viewpoints, thoughts and intentions are accurately understood and reported. Third, theoretical validity is obtained when theoretical explanation developed from the research study fits the data and is, therefore, credible and defensible. By using the above strategies, the researcher develops an understanding of the findings through careful deliberation of possible causes and effects, and systematically eliminates hypotheses until the final conclusions are made. To achieve greater descriptive validity in this thesis, the data collection (member checking, multiple sites), reflectiveness of the researcher (identification of own bias, peer review and debriefing) and double coding

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(identifying patterns and themes with experienced researcher, rich thick description) were employed.

3.10 Summary of the chapter

This Chapter has presented an overview of the research processes. The design and procedure for the research was explained. A rationale for using interviews and the approach to interviewing was described. The role and perspective of the researcher was discussed. How participants were selected was outlined. Each participant was introduced. Important ethical considerations were presented. The final section in the Chapter discussed the approach to data analysis, and issues for the validity and reliability of the research findings.

The strength of a multiple case study approach is that the researcher may gain an understanding of the experiences of a number of individuals. The researcher brings to this study an understanding of being a director in child care which may be in harmony with the participants' experience, or not, but consequently is likely to facilitate a greater understanding of the phenomenon in question. Case studies advance understanding of individuals, and organisational, social and political phenomena.

In the next two Chapters, the findings of the research are presented and discussed. In the concluding Chapter the implications of the findings relating to the theoretical framework based on the social systems perspective and the specific research questions, including evaluation of the research design, are presented.

CHAPTER 4 MANAGING A CHILD CARE CENTRE IN A SOCIAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.0 Introduction

This is the first of two Chapters that presents the findings of this research. In this Chapter, external environmental issues affecting centre management are analysed. Management practices in child care centres are explored within a social and policy context. Working with families and the community and developing centre policies and philosophy are discussed. These are macro-level issues. The focus then shifts to the internal operations of the centres addressing the structures and the processes in how child care centres operate. Organisational and administrative tasks are identified, how routines are managed, as well as managing relationships. The nature of organisational culture is explored. Evaluation and outcomes are also explored. In each section, key themes are identified from the interview transcripts and extracts from the interviews are presented to illustrate those themes. The themes are 'working with families and the community', 'developing centre policies', 'developing centre philosophy', 'managing organisational and administrative tasks', managing daily routines', 'managing relationships', 'centre culture', 'evaluation' and 'desired outcomes'. Each of these themes are discussed using the Social Systems framework to analyse and categorise the data. Finally, the overall discussion of the data focuses on its relation to the broader literature on management issues in child care services. Primarily, the data analysed in this Chapter stems from the first interview conducted with the directors that focussed on the organisational elements of child care centres and the social systems and policy context in which centres operate (Jorde-Bloom, 1991b). This Chapter focuses on Research Objective 1 which explored the management issues and responsibilities that directors' face in their role. A revised Social Systems Model Figure, 4.1, is presented as derived from the data findings in this Chapter.

4.1 Managing in a social and policy context

Using the broad Social Systems Model (Figure 2.3), which was presented in Chapter 2, specific practices and beliefs that the directors held about their organisational roles, are explored. Conceptualising the work environment of child care centres within a Social Systems Model provided understanding about the impact of the external environment, structure of the centre, specific centre processes, working with people, culture of the centre and impact of outcomes that accounts for a variety of influences impacting on the day-to-day work of directors.

A social system is a set of interrelated and interdependent parts that includes a complex network of social relationships within and across various aspects of an organisation (Jorde-Bloom, 1991b). These relationships lead to a unique culture for any work place. Central to a systemic conceptualisation is the notion that changes within one part of the system will have an effect on other parts of the system. A systemic view of the operation of a child care centre enables the interrelationships between various aspects of daily and regular practices to be understood. Systemic components include the external environment and macro level policy, and how this impacts on the operation of the centre. Further, the structures, processes, and people within the centre collectively generate a unique centre culture that gives rise to specific and distinctive outcomes.

4.1.1 Working with families and the community

Because child care directors deal directly with families they are very aware of the issues that families with young children face. Directors in the interviews for this study were concerned about stressors on families. They also were concerned about the accountability and the status of child care; and funding issues, not least because the withdrawal of the operational subsidies to community-based child care centres in 1997 still remains an issue for debate. This significant shift had been a central policy component: for more than 25 years Australia's child care services had been organised within local communities while being supported by public funding.

Significant, but diverse themes, about the social and policy context of child care were evident in the directors' interviews as follows:

1. Child care centres are required to meet increasingly complex family needs (Samantha, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Cherry);

2. Child care services must be more accountable for quality outcomes (Marleen, Lisa, Cherry, Samantha, and Elizabeth);

3. Competition policy in the child care industry has had a significant impact (Samantha, Marleen, and Rachel).

Directors' role and responsibilities are becoming increasingly more complex. They are now required to support families in a multitude of ways. Also, accountability to both state and federal government has added to their workload. Increasing commercialisation has meant that directors need to be constantly vigilant in maintaining enrolments to ensure of their centre's viability.

Irene had mixed feelings about the current fee subsidy available to families (Childcare Benefit), noting, "For [some] parents it has made child care much more affordable, and for some centres it has made them scarcely viable". Jenny felt that changes to funding meant that "we had to become more aware of advertising ourselves. We became more inclined to make sure that everything was presented perfectly. We had to work very hard on advertising".

Samantha commented on the social and economic pressures on families and the need for child care staff to respond:

> I see more stressed families, more single mums, families struggling. ….
> Child care is not a choice anymore but a case of having to [place your
> child in care]. …. It has a lot to do with stress levels, economics and
> things that are going on around them. … People are starting to realise
> child care is not just a babysitting service. There is a lot more going on
> there and the importance of it.

To address the complexity of families' needs Samantha envisaged an expansion of child care staffing:

> I would like to envisage professionals like counselors and social workers

in child care centres for families. Directors are good listeners but aren't skilled enough to see someone in need of [professional] help.

Elizabeth was concerned about the availability of quality in child care centres, specifically looking at programs for infants and toddlers. Due to an increasing need for dual income families, the demand for child care for this age group was high and the waiting list long, causing additional stress for families for lack of placements:

> I can already see that parents with younger children are frustrated, really frustrated. There's just not enough care or quality care for infants and toddlers and the waiting lists are getting longer. We've got sixty babies on the waiting list. While women's opportunities to return to the labour force have increased, this is offset by the inability to get quality care. I feel dreadful for the parents. I don't think women have a choice in returning to the labour force with a little one, I don't think there is as much choice as people think.

Lisa also was concerned about the complexity of families' needs and increased economic pressures on families:

> I mean there are a lot more single mothers out there for a start, but the necessity also of married couples to have two incomes is still ever present.

Lisa also indicated that centres themselves should take more responsibility to ensure that they are providing a quality service within the community:

> In terms of the regulations, and the changes to Accreditation, I would hope, and it is yet to be seen, that it makes centres nationwide just more accountable. I really think that we have a responsibility to maintain standards and follow these regulations that are really more or less aiming towards higher standards of care and quality. I believe every centre should be toeing the line and becoming more accountable. (Lisa)

Cherry also spoke strongly about services needing to be accountable for their actions:

Policies and legislation are there to protect children, yet government departments are hesitant to act on issues that are clearly a breach of the regulations [that is, inadequate staff/child ratios]. ... They [government departments] were talking about … more spur of the moment type checks ... If you have nothing to hide it shouldn't really be a problem for you. It would be beneficial for those people who are doing the right thing and detrimental for those people who are not because it's not fair on children.

Cherry continued to accentuate the importance of child care and early education by commenting that "as long as the centres are providing quality learning and a nurturing environment for children, child care can be a really positive part of families' lives".

There was still a definite feeling that child care is an undervalued field, and that policies mean nothing if you cannot translate them into quality practice in the day to day operation of the centre. There is a need to have more opportunity for professional development for child care staff to ensure of high quality service. For example:

The salary that child care workers get tells you the status that child care is held in. It's the regulations and the [in-service] training that really bothers me because I think … you can have marvelous policies but how all that translates to the [quality of] services provided for the children and how staff interact with the children in the program, that is the measure of the success of those policies. Policies can look great, but mean nothing if they can't be translated to [quality] outcomes. (Marleen)

Samantha who works in a private centre saw the removal of the operational subsidy to community-based centres as having a positive impact. It had introduced competition to the sector but this was not necessarily a negative result. It had made community-based centres more aware of their financial accountability:

It made other directors aware that it is not just about child care anymore. It made me more diligent and aware, and if we [were] to be successful, we have to compete with other centres in the area. We had to take a good look at what we do ... becoming more competitive, made the group

leaders realise that this was more of a professional organisation and it made the owners realise that child care is different now to what it was. In fact it made us pull together as an organisation.

Rachel who worked in a community centre commented on the loss of the operational subsidy due to the many changes at the policy level. This has meant that existing staff have had to take on added responsibilities to ensure to remain viable in a competitive field:

It's forced us to make choices about services for children. You cannot lose $63,000 out of your budget and not feel the impact of that. It means [that] staff and you, have had to take on extra roles. As an organisation we have accepted that we would bear the cost of not doing away with the domestic roles. … And we have struggled to maintain a fee that is competitive.

It was evident in the directors' comments that they were aware of the complexity of the families' needs that child care centres alone were not able to address. There was a perceived need to provide other professional assistance to support families in their parenting role. Despite the increasing numbers of child care places there was a gap in the availability of child care for infants and toddlers. Providing quality child care is expensive when delivering services for infant and toddler groups, as the legislated staff/child ratio is higher than for older children. Consequently, staff costs are higher and centres are less willing to provide places for the youngest children.

Accountability and regular "spot checks" by regulatory authorities was deemed crucial by some directors to ensure quality practice. Concern was expressed about the status of the child care sector. There still exists a community and professional divide between child care and early education programs provided in preschools. There was recognition that child care services had changed considerably in recent years as services increasingly operated in a competitive environment, dependent on efficiency to remain viable.

4.1.2 Developing centre policies

One of the most influential elements of the external environment that impacts on child care centres is the nature of the ownership or the sponsorship of the centre. This influences centre policies and structures, and the role and the responsibilities of the director. The nature of the ownership and sponsorship may determine how directors go about their work and what they do.

In Table 4.1 the nature of the organisational structure and sponsorship of each centre in which the directors were employed is described. This was identified in Chapter 3 in Table 3.1, but is reintroduced in Table 4.1 for the convenience of the reader, to provide a background of the sponsoring organisation for investigating the directors' role and responsibilities. The centres in which the directors were employed represent the various sponsoring organisations that are present in the child care industry, including community-based organisations, privately owned single centres and a commercial child care chain.

Five directors noted that policy development in the centre was a collaborative process to ensure that a range of viewpoints were taken into account. However, directors also noted that the nature of the sponsoring organisation influenced policies because decisions might pass through several layers of management before gaining final approval.

Two significant themes in the directors' responses were:

1. Policy development is a collaborative process among different stakeholders (Marleen, Samantha, Jenny, Irene, and Lisa); and

2. The sponsoring organisation has an impact on policy development (Marleen, Elizabeth, Rachel, and Cherry).

Table 4.1

Sponsoring Organisations of the Child Care Centres

Director	Size, location and the nature of the sponsoring organisation in which the directors were employed
Irene	Licensed for 64 children; operates on a TAFE college campus; affiliated with a community-based organisation; director is accountable to a parent management committee. The centre employs 14 full time and five relief staff.
Samantha	Licensed for 56 children; is a part of a large privately-owned chain of long-day care centres; director is accountable to the management of the organisation. The centre employs seven full time staff.
Elizabeth	Licensed for 45 children; operated by a national community-based organisation; director is accountable to the organisation's management. The centre employs eight full time staff, and eight relief staff.
Lisa	Licensed for 75 children; privately owned centre, currently in the process of transferring to become a franchised centre of a national child care chain; director is accountable to the owner/manager. The centre employs 16 full time staff, and two relief staff.
Cherry	Licensed for 50 children; sponsored by a religious faith; operates on a school campus (primary and secondary school); director is accountable to the primary school principal. The centre employs 12 full time staff, and 18 relief staff selected from a pool of college students.
Marleen	Licensed for 58 children; operates on a university campus; sponsored by the university and has an advisory committee, which includes community representatives; director is accountable to the administration of the university. The centre employs six full time staff, four part time staff, and two relief staff.
Jenny	Licensed for 45 children; privately-owned centre; director is accountable to the owner. The centre employs seven full time staff and five relief staff.

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Rachel	Licensed for 65 children; a community based child care centre affiliated with a community-based organisation; director is accountable to a management committee. The centre employs 13 full time staff, and three relief staff.

The following four responses are illustrative of these themes.

Marleen is the director of the centre operated by a university. Marleen saw that, irrespective of university operating procedures, she was still able to influence policy through the centre's advisory committee, which included parents and staff:

> There are some university policies that impact on staff and impact on parents that are someone else's responsibility, things like equal opportunity, health and safety policies … where our staff get help and get courses paid for if they are studying. With the [policies] that are specific to the child care centre like our philosophy, they were developed in conjunction with the sponsors, staff and parents. We have a range of meetings about them [policies], about the things that we felt are important in terms of providing a service for the children.

Rachel is employed in a centre operated by a large community-based organisation. There are similarities in the way policies are developed and implemented in Rachel's place of work and the University based child care centre in which Marleen works. For example, both directors are involved in meetings with higher management regarding specific policies and practices that need to be developed and implemented within their child care centres.

> I sit on the policy group within the larger organisation. I represent long-day care on that group. We are currently looking at a number of policies and getting them through the final stages. It's my role as part of that committee to disseminate those sorts of policies that are to be reviewed. Parents are invited to give their views. The accreditation process has highlighted specific policies that we need. Some parents question the

process, but when you explain to them that, in essence, we are an institution and that there must be policies and procedures, they comment, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that".

In contrast, in a private centre the processes are different than within the community organisation and the university sponsored centre. There are less hierarchical organisational structures in which Jenny works:

> We looked at the old policy, what we had. We involved the staff, and looked at what areas needed changing. All staff had input. We asked interest from the parents, they put notes and suggestions in their pockets [mail boxes] regarding what they thought. Then the directors sat down and looked at what the staff and parents had said, then we sat down with the licensee and narrowed it down to a clause that included everything. So everybody had input. Sometimes when the policy is not so specific, if it's just a change of wording or an extra clause at the bottom, we just [make the change]. (Jenny)

In another private chain of child care centres, policies can be developed from bottom up, so that staff may be the instigators of change in policy:

> Generally at this centre…there were uniform policies. … I didn't want to have it set like 1, 2, 3… I felt that was too stringent so I wanted to change that [process]. I changed [one] policy to suit my centre. [The management] said no, in fact change it for all our centres. … I drafted the policy and passed it around to all directors for their [feedback]. (Samantha)

Centres embedded in larger organisations had more hierarchical processes in policy development and implementation. Consequently, several layers of management were involved. This was perceived as a source of support when dealing with government regulations and requirements. As policy development was considered time consuming, the directors in larger organisations felt better served through this support by other levels of management. On the other hand, directors operating in centres that were independently owned considered that they had more autonomy in

policy development, which enabled the directors to effect change at organisational level. The process of developing polices within the privately owned centres seemed of a shorter duration, which would have assisted in speedier implementation of specific policies.

4.1.3 Developing centre philosophy

The directors were articulate in expressing their strong views about their philosophy of practice, which they sought to implement in their centres. Each director noted that their centre implemented a child-centred philosophy in which children were seen as competent learners and able to take responsibility. Such child-centred philosophies required engagement of parents. The directors emphasised the importance of making connections with families. The key themes were:

1. A child-centred philosophy is important (Marleen, Irene, Samantha, Elizabeth, Jenny, Rachel, and Cherry);

2. The implementation of a child-centred philosophy requires significant engagement of parents and staff (Elizabeth, Marleen, Lisa, and Irene).

Marleen spoke at length about child-centeredness and the role of parents as the framework for developing the centre philosophy:

> With our philosophy, we developed that with the parents and the staff and our sponsors, and we probably looked at things that we wanted for the children, the things that we thought were important. And we put in their [parents'] issues, like being really conscious of children being individuals; being really conscious of working together with parents in a partnership; really conscious that play is probably the most important way of learning for children; and having long uninterrupted times for children to play.

It was deemed important to engage with parents and community and listen to what they wanted for their children:

> Listening to parents and listen to what is important to them [and] listen to

community. In our particular centre, there is a perception [that] we like our children to be confident, sociable, have good language skills, and express themselves. They are the values we have in developing the program [philosophy]. (Marleen)

Irene, who is the director of a TAFE affiliated child care centre, emphasised the needs of the child within the context of his/her family and that it is important to build and maintain effective relationships with the families:

My philosophy, my beliefs are very much child-centred; the child within the family, so this is practiced. In all the considerations and all the decisions we make, the child comes first, but the child is also considered within the context of his family. To enable us to do that, we have to know our families very well, connections are not only made, but also maintained.

Staff were seen as pivotal in the process of implementing a child-centred philosophy. They needed to be supported to ensure that children's and parental needs are met. Other areas were also identified. The importance of staying focussed on the centre goals rather than getting caught up in menial matters was emphasised:

And I work on a very simple premise, that if I keep my staff happy, the children will be happy, the parents will be happy and everything will work. So, a lot of energy goes into keeping staff happy, which is about communication and positive feedback. …. Ideas, values and goals, just keeping in mind why are we doing this, what it is for; not getting carried away with extraneous matter that doesn't necessarily benefit the child. (Irene)

School values were also identified as important. Cherry, who is affiliated with a school, spoke about Christianity and how religion provides a strong foundation toward provision of child-centred practice:

That Christian aspect, that's important … the education side of quality care and education is very central to how we do things and give

[children] lots of different hands on experiences … making sure the [activities] are stimulating and [provide] a creative environment … play is very important … that is the way children learn …

Within a privately owned centre, building children's confidence, trust and encouraging independence were noted as fundamental toward child-centred practice:

We have a philosophy in this centre that builds confidence. If children have trust in their own ability then that trust will help them trust the rest of the world. We encourage children to be independent and to use their words. We encourage them to feel they have the power to do something about a situation … We feel children are precious and their opinions should be listened to but we [do] provide them with guidance. Teaching [children] to take responsibility. (Jenny)

The underlying values that the directors presented were about collegial partnerships with families in providing a child-centred program, listening to families and recognising that they are the children's primary educators. This requires indepth knowledge of each family, open communication and primarily considering the child's needs first. Also, creating a child-focused environment where play is seen as central to children's development was deemed important. Providing opportunities for children to have a say in their activities and encouraging children to take responsibility for their actions assisted in giving children an opportunity to learn in a trusting environment.

4.2 Management within the centre

As noted in Chapter 2, managing a child care centre includes the functions of planning, organising, staffing, and controlling (Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997; Mukhi et al., 1988; Sebastian, 1990). Managers need to ensure that the operations of the organisation remain client focussed, efficient and effective (Morden, 1997a). Management functions have similarity across any organisation in business, education, the public sector or the private arena (Kwan, 1996). In the wider management literature, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) proposed that any business needs

to adopt an entrepreneurial orientation and consider a number of organisational factors as critical components in achieving optimal outcomes. In educational systems the escalating number of students, lack of consistent leadership style and increasing accountability to various levels of government have impacted on how these systems need to be managed (Kwan, 1996) in an effort to remain viable. Given the changes in Federal Government funding (Press & Hayes, 2000) and increasing commercialisation of child care centres, there is now a need to adapt a different perspective in managing centre based child care (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002).

In child care, management processes include managing the organisational and administrative tasks, including the routine for each day (Jorde Bloom et al., 1991b; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a). Managers need to be practical, analytical, and orderly while leaders require greater vision and creativity (Morden, 1997b). Managers use their authority to motivate people to take action through indirect or intangible means, while leaders apply influence rather than authority to gather people behind their vision or purpose they have articulated (Morden, 1997b).

The participants in this study felt that management responsibilities in the child care sector had increased due to increasing government accountability that required copious record keeping. Responsibilities for supervision of staff and students had also increased. Prioritising, delegation and forward planning were noted as important in assisting directors to complete their required tasks and manage their time.

4.2.1 Managing organisational and administrative tasks

The directors were asked about their administrative responsibilities and how they were managed. The directors emphasised that there were diverse and numerous responsibilities, which meant they were often time-poor. Two major themes were identified:

1. The director has numerous administrative responsibilities (Cherry, Lisa, Samantha, Elizabeth, and Marleen);

2. Extensive time is required to complete administrative tasks (Cherry, Samantha Irene, Elizabeth, and Marleen).

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Some directors felt that they had sufficient supports to manage efficiently and effectively. Jenny felt very lucky, because she had two administrative support staff who took care of the major financial and administrative duties.

> We are very lucky, we have two administrative ladies in the office so I have nothing to do with fees and wages, other than phone in [to the licensee] at the end of the week. Enrolments are usually taken care of by the ladies in the office. (Jenny)

However, Jenny does have some responsibility in taking care of petty cash and shopping for resources but emphasised that she has the support of her staff to take care of some of the daily tasks:

> I only get 1 ½ hours in the office on Fridays. … The rest of the time everything has to be slotted in between other duties. Taking care of petty cash, shopping, you know the things that we [staff] need. … I have very supportive staff, I was finding it very difficult to organise book club, so the licensee suggested that each room should have a specific responsibility, that is working very well, it's about delegation. (Jenny)

Rachel too had a competent administrative assistant who took care of office procedures on a daily basis:

> The administrative stuff, particularly around the fees and things like that, I have a very competent person out there [office] who just loves to work out how the computer works and what it does. … Having a competent person in that role has probably lessened my tasks a lot with reporting [to management].

However, there were still many staffing tasks to complete such as designing rosters, obtaining relief staff and ensuring of adequate staffing arrangements:

> Rosters, relief staff, having enough [staff] because of the economic pressures we have to do a lot of head counting [correct staff/child ratios], that is something I'd rather not do, but I have to do it. (Rachel)

The director's role was deemed diverse and, at times, it was difficult to determine what was achieved throughout the day:

> Sometimes, I sit down at the end of the day and think, "What have I done today"? ... I don't even know how to isolate the things that take up most of my time. There are actually a lot of little jobs that just add up. At the moment, we are preparing to be re-licensed, so I'm working through the re-license document for what needs to be done and making sure we follow up on all the paperwork. Last year we were full on involved in accreditation, so there was a lot of photocopying, a lot of reading and a lot of tallying. Those two areas take up a lot of your time as well as enrolments, which is a huge chunk of your time. As well as writing reports constantly for your different meetings or reports related to children with special needs. (Cherry)

Samantha, who works in a private centre, commented that becoming more professional in the field has meant that there is now increased accountability requirements consisting of additional administrative responsibility:

> In our centres we do everything ourselves, the parents' accounts, the wages, the newsletters. There's no head office that does part of your work for you. There's a lot more administrative duties now compared to when I first started. Becoming more professional requires us to do a lot more paper work.

With the exception of Samantha, the directors had some assistance in taking care of fees, budgeting, other financial accountability requirements (such as wages) and the Childcare Benefit. This allowed them more time to spend with the children and staff, the human resource functions of the service.

Another time consuming task reported by Cherry, Lisa and Elizabeth was student and staff supervision. For example, "We have a few [staff] on traineeships, I help them with their studies" (Lisa), and, "I really enjoy having students at this service and being a demonstration centre but they take a lot of time" (Elizabeth).

Elizabeth emphasised the importance of spending time with the staff, which results in good understanding of expected behaviour:

> This [spending time with staff] ultimately leads to harmony because the staff are aware of the program expectations and code of conduct. I am really diligent in doing staff reviews. While it seems very time consuming, you benefit because it develops the staff's understanding of policies. (Elizabeth)

Marleen commented that there isn't enough time in the day to do all the tasks required of the role. Working with the children is a full time job, and administrative duties always come second.

> This is where you become time poor ... working with the kids is really a full time job, I see myself as their group leader [first]. I'm responsible for them and part and parcel of those issues of quality is establishing that secondary attachment with the children. The important issues for me are the day to day, the kids, the staff, and the parents …. I see that as my major job that I do on a day to day basis, this office just gets done as [time allows]. (Marleen)

Re-licensing, accreditation and enrolments take up a major part of the directors' time. As the sector has evolved through the decades, directors' role and responsibilities have also changed, specifically through additional responsibility. Although staff reviews were viewed as time consuming, they were an important part of the directors' role in enhancing staff skills and ensuring they were aware of centre policies and procedures. However, one director (Marleen) made a strong statement, saying that she is the group leader first, implying that children have priority above administrative tasks.

4.2.2 Managing the daily routines

The directors were asked how they managed the routine of their day. Key issues identified were:

1. It is important to prioritise and be effective at time management (Cherry, Marleen, Irene, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Rachel);

2. Directors need to delegate and consult with staff (Jenny, Elizabeth, Lisa, Samantha, and Marleen); and

3. Forward planning is essential (Elizabeth, Marleen, Jenny, Irene, and Samantha).

Six directors commented on the importance of time management and prioritising tasks. Irene arrives at work early, around 7am to get some uninterrupted time to complete tasks:

> Managing to do what needs to be done is a matter of knowing the cycle of things. I have a list, always a current list, and prioritising the things that need to be done.

It was also important for Irene to share the daily tasks with staff to lessen her own burden:

> I do not tell people what to do [rather] I discuss with them what is possible for them to do, something extra … we take the opportunity to sort out who is going to do it … if there are times when I need more help [staff] are there [to assist] … that is a very cooperative [approach].

Cherry also keeps lists and plans ahead for the year, and emphasised having effective systems in place to enable her to plan for the future:

> Lists are really a key way that I do things, because that helps me to prioritise ... having a big yearly planner; document when staff or management meetings are coming up; having a system for doing that through the month, not just at the last minute. Trying to look ahead, being that little bit more organised.

Because Marleen is a group leader as well as a director, the job requires juggling a range of issues at the same time. While working, she is always thinking about a range of organisational issues and notes the importance of delegation and prioritising tasks:

> Over time, I suppose, I've developed an ability to carry a number of thoughts at one time. Usually I make a list when I come to kindy every morning. During the course of the day I just tick them off. It's great to see those ticks. It's a matter of operating on several different planes at the same time … It's a matter of working out priorities; having really supportive staff and being able to delegate things for staff … You would never be able to do everything yourself here.

Delegation was also important to Samantha. Delegating to others enabled Samantha to engage in other higher duty activities:

> I have a management plan. I do a lot of delegating. A very important thing that I put in place earlier in the piece was a chain of responsibility. It left no room for error, no room for confusion. The people were selected in order of responsibility, based on their ability and their qualifications. I felt it was important because it freed me up; it helped me get through my day easier. (Samantha)

Elizabeth talked about keeping a diary to remind her of specific tasks as well as having effective systems to enable her to plan for the year:

> I have a diary out the front ... I write meeting dates for the year, I have an agenda for the staff so they can directly write issues up for the next meeting: I have systems in place. I have procedures in place to make sure that staff meetings happen. I actually sit down with each chair (various committees) and plan a full calendar of events so we don't clash. We develop a plan of action for the year. It's a matter of prioritising, as much as possible.

As mentioned by several other directors, delegation was deemed important by Elizabeth, as was supportive administrative staff:

I will constantly delegate to my administrative staff while I work with the children … I have people that remind me ... that helps me keep on track.

Keeping a diary to share information between staff was seen as a useful strategy to plan and organise events:

We have two diaries, we have one in the office, which is a general diary. We will make note of the children who are away, the children who are coming, people who are visiting and any information we need to pass on to any of the staff, licensee and/or the office staff. We also have another book in the kitchen, which is our little personal notebook. I might write in there "When would you like to have a staff meeting?" All those sorts of things work really well. (Jenny)

Like the other directors, Jenny agreed that delegation was important, and commented how pivotal it was to ensure that staff have an opportunity to partake in centre activities:

Delegation is very important … I like to keep [my] finger on the pulse, but I also like to include everybody, as it is important for everyone to feel proud of the way the centre is running.

Directors talked about keeping lists of things to do on daily basis. This helped them to prioritise and delegate tasks. It was recognised that without delegation directors would not be able to complete all the tasks necessary of their role (Hayden, 1999). To assist in this process, one director had implemented a "chain of responsibility" which clarified staff roles and identified who was responsible for what task. Delegation in this view could be seen as 'skilling other staff' by giving them responsibility for tasks not usually considered as part of their role. However, this also adds pressure to staff's workload on top of their already demanding role and responsibilities. Other strategies that directors have implemented included setting up systems such as regular meetings, and developing an annual "plan of action" of upcoming events.

4.2.3 Managing relationships

Child care centres are built around interactions with, and between, children, families and staff. It takes skilful management, careful forethought and elaborate planning in identifying effective strategies for supporting positive interpersonal relations (Rodd, 1998). The participants' responses indicate that it is the leader's responsibility to create a climate that enhances interpersonal relationships through modelling self-disclosure, empathy and honesty. The manner in which the director interacts and communicates with others contributes to a positive interpersonal environment. The director needs to be accessible, approachable and encouraging of staff so that the mission of the child care centre, quality programs can be achieved.

The directors identified a number of strategies for building relationships between families and the centre, as well as how staff can be supported to ensure that the relationships with parents are strong. Key themes were:

1. Positive relationships with staff and families support the quality of practices in the centre (Irene, Jenny, Samantha, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Marleen);

2. The director is responsible for providing the leadership and the support to ensure that there are positive relationships and partnerships between families and the centre (Irene, Rachel, Lisa, and Cherry);

3. A range of different forms of communication between families and the centres can be used to exchange information about children (Cherry, Irene, Elizabeth, and Lisa).

A wide range of illustrative quotes are presented in this section because the directors interviewed evidently placed great importance on this aspect of their work and held strong opinions in relation to their practices.

Irene believed that, in order for good communication between home and centre to develop, the staff needed to be knowledgeable about the child:

We talk about the children, I talk about my own observations, and they

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[staff] give me their feedback … Sharing information [with parents] is not an issue with the experience and the knowledge that the staff have. They are diplomatic and they are in tune with the child.

Staff also have to be well supported and have access to adequate resources to enable them to meet the individual needs of the child/ren:

We have in-depth knowledge of our children. I make sure staff are well resourced. If they [staff] need something in their rooms, they have it. Making sure that staff have enough time - because that is sometimes what they need to do a bit of extra planning; or telephone a parent; or even just giving them privacy. (Irene)

Jenny emphasised the importance of getting to know individual families and supporting staff through regular discussions about specific children and/or the goals of the overall program:

I regularly talk to them [staff] about the children in their rooms. I know parents very well so I know how the children react to the centre. Being able to talk to the group leaders and assistants about issues, we have very good [interpersonal] relationships, especially with the special needs children in the centre. It's all about getting to know the families and children.

Rachel had implemented a home-visiting program, which she had found to be successful in establishing firm interpersonal relationships with families and the children. Rachel commented:

I think it is about the initial introduction to the room and staff and building those relationships and making those ties as strong as you can. We have done home visits and that was particularly successful. The girls have more confidence about going out now. It has been interesting, as parents have expressed some surprise. One parent said she thought it was hogwash, but can't believe the difference in her child since the home visit. It seems for very young children physical connection between mum

and us gives the child trust.

The importance of personal daily exchanges between the staff and families was noted, as well as using more comprehensive and formal means for communicating with families about their children:

> We encourage staff to always share little anecdotes of a child's day with parents. Just to share verbal information is really important - in an informal way. We do a collection of children's work over the year, which we like to give [to] parents at the end of the year, so they can see a progression in the art that shows developmental milestones. We also have interviews in the middle of the year, so it gives parents an opportunity to be informed about strengths and weaknesses and see if there is anything that they want to input or any comments that they would like to make. (Cherry)

Elizabeth also utilised various communication strategies, some formal, some informal in an effort to develop and maintain communication with families about their child:

> Programming books, the parents are actually invited to participate in that and provide ideas and that sort of thing. We have night time meetings for the exchange night, we have afternoon meetings available to parents to talk about their child individually; we have parent/staff exchanges too - we have afternoon teas out in the front garden and barbeques and picnic days.

Marleen emphasised the importance of verbal communication over written communication with families:

> [Verbal communication is] part and parcel of our philosophy … to develop those partnership types of relationships with parents. There are parents who just like the basics, there are parents who love to stop and chat and talk.

The importance of tailoring the communication processes to the family was essential in minimising an institutional type of feeling to the child care centre, as well as recognising that child care staff do not always know the answer to a family's concern:

> [We] try to adjust [our] ways and interact accordingly. We try to minimise institutional [type of service delivery] within the centre. We prefer to discuss issues with parents rather than put up notices. We try to make ourselves look more domestic than institutional so it doesn't create an imposing sort of institutional feel as I think that can be a big barrier in working with parents. We try hard not to set ourselves up as professionals who have all the answers to everything. (Marleen)

Elizabeth identified a range of communication strategies for ensuring continuity for the child between home and centre:

> I have parents email me and provide me with stories to put into the newsletter - so it's not just standard conversation. [Sharing of information] is a bit more dynamic. In the babies and toddlers [groups] they [staff] actually have a daily sheet, so the parents' fill in whether they [babies] had a good night's sleep. How they are when they have woken up, when was the last time of actually having a bottle and a meal? That way we can help work out their [babies and toddlers] routine for their day.

Other forms of communication strategies included regular newsletters, daily discussions and message books that families and staff could write in:

> We have this resource room that has information about meetings that have occurred in the industry, also we [write] a bi-monthly newsletter that goes out to families. On a daily basis [we communicate through] the interactions that occur, the greeting of parents, talking about their child, that sort of sharing of information is really important. We also have message books in the front office, and the staff have a cordless phone in the baby/toddler end and there are telephones in every room (Elizabeth).

Finally, as Marleen noted, when dealing with people there will always be ups and downs; it is the nature of the job:

> There are ups and downs because of the demanding nature of jobs that we have. I think there are times when people step on people's toes and things just don't go right and you might say things sometimes that you regret.

It was deemed important to have empathy and try to understand issues from other people's perspective:

> But I think one of the things about communication is always trying to see things from someone else's perspective and understand why they react and respond the way they do, and when I behave in a certain way it makes other people behave in a certain way. You are constantly aware of how you interact. (Marleen)

Directors commented on the importance of having in-depth knowledge of the children, which required giving staff ample time to communicate with families. Home visits were identified by one director (Rachel) as particularly useful for familiarising children with the staff before they commenced at the centre thus building trust between the young child and the staff. Individual portfolios of children's work as well as half yearly interviews with parents assisted some directors in sharing information between the centre and the child's home. Informal verbal exchanges, picnics and barbeques were popular methods of communication. Importantly, communication strategies needed to be individually tailored to a particular family, as families have different needs and expectations. Information technology has added a new dimension to sharing information, parents are now able to e-mail issues, ideas and concerns to the centre. On a personal level, one director emphasised the need to be aware of her own behaviour and how this may influence how others react in specific situations.

4.3 Centre culture

The directors were asked about the nature of the organisational culture in the centre and the strategies that they used to develop a positive and productive working environment. Two themes were evident:

1. The maintenance of a harmonious environment is essential (Rachel, Marleen, Elizabeth, Samantha, Lisa, Jenny, and Cherry); and

2. The centre must demonstrate high levels of competence and professionalism (Irene, Lisa, and Cherry).

Rachel commented on meeting the needs of the children as a priority and defined her centre as a collaborative fun place; staff get involved and talk about interesting issues with each other:

> Children come first and people use time and space to figure out what is important [practice] … It's positive, it's open, it's involved. People are talking about things that are interesting. I think it is collaborative, it's fun.

Marleen, Elizabeth, Samantha, Lisa, Jenny, and Cherry emphasised the importance of developing a supportive environment, emphasising that the centre must be a positive place of work where staff are happy and intrinsically motivated to work with young children. Jenny talked about her centre as being like a family; homely and comfortable, "This centre is like a family, homely, comfortable. We care for each other, support each other, look after each other" (Jenny).

Samantha compared her program with other centres in the chain of child care centres, in which her centre operates. She emphasised that staff enjoy and love their work, they spend time with the children to nurture their development:

> When I compare my child care centre with other child care centres in the company, one thing that I do see that is different, even though we all work under the same umbrella - I see my staff love the children, cuddle the children, laugh with the children. They [staff] are comfortable in their work and love their work.

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While Cherry noted the importance of a supportive environment and that it was important that staff show respect for each other, she also alluded to the Christian-based values which underlie the practices in her centre, "For us, when you have that Godly perspective, that puts everything else into perspective, so that really affects everything".

Several directors identified the importance of professional knowledge and competency. Irene, Lisa, and Cherry emphasised that it is important to introduce new knowledge to staff and encourage them to discuss issues and exchange information. Irene keeps staff informed about the latest research in the field through providing them with relevant journal articles:

> This [provision of resources] assists staff in keeping current on the latest issues regarding early childhood education and to plan their program accordingly. We subscribe to journals. I try to know what's in them [journals] even though I may not read them, so I can say, "Oh yes, I saw an article on that." (Irene)

Characteristics of a positive working environment included having staff that spend time with children, nurture children, have fun and show a "love" for their work. Professional knowledge, competency and keeping up with the latest research were seen as vital components of delivering a happy, harmonious environment.

4.4 Evaluation and Outcomes

4.4.1 Evaluation

The directors were asked about their approach to evaluation of their centres. They identified the importance of getting different perspectives by obtaining information from parents and staff and by using different processes for evaluation, such as meetings or questionnaires. Major themes in the directors' responses were:

1. Evaluation is an ongoing process which requires input from parents and staff (Elizabeth, Marleen, Irene, Samantha, and Cherry);

2. Staff appraisals and reviews are a pivotal aspect of evaluation (Lisa and Cherry).

Jenny commented that evaluation occurs naturally during staff meetings where organisational plans are reviewed and modified as needed.

> We usually [evaluate the program] during staff meetings … we think of our plan, how can we modify [current plan] what can we do to improve [processes].

Rachel conducts an annual evaluation through the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) with support from the larger organisation. Other issues are dealt with as they occur.

> We do an annual evaluation, generated both out of the accreditation [process] and [instigated through the sponsoring organisation]. We [send] out a questionnaire to parents …it is important for parents to tell us their concerns.

Marleen noted that evaluation is difficult. Also, it was important to let families know indepth information about the program on enrolment, to enable them to make informed decisions about future directions:

> Evaluation is always a difficult thing. We do have meetings for our parents where we invite discussion on the program. I think before you can do that parents have to be informed about your program, and so we put a lot of emphasis when they originally come to the centre in terms of letting them know what is involved in the program, why we do the things we do. This gives them a basis to make their own opinions and for them to assess whether we are doing it in an appropriate way for them.

Cherry has implemented a staff appraisal system where individual as well as group goals can be established:

> Just this year I've implemented a staff appraisal process. At the beginning of the year we isolated things that we really wanted to

establish, like starting off really well in terms of expectations of parents and children.

Formal surveys were also noted as an effective strategy to gain feedback from families:

Also, when you send out things like parent surveys, they are a part of your evaluation and having a look from parents' perspective's what they like about the centre and what they want to see improved. That's always very informative because there are always aspects that you can improve on. (Cherry)

The importance of written programs were seen as an ongoing evaluative process:

I try to have a look at the programs of the individual group leaders at least on a monthly basis. We are always talking about [programs] at staff meetings and in our review of our philosophy. (Lisa)

Lisa talked about the challenge of evaluation and commented that it was important to gain other people's input about the centre program for an unbiased viewpoint:

I think we need to be conscious too that we don't get stuck in a rut of evaluating programs in the same way all the time, and it's important to get other people's input. I've [encouraged] the [staff] to invite their colleagues [into the centre] to get feedback from [their peers]. We have been here a long time and you can [become] set in your [own way of doing things]. There's always the possibility that it could work a little bit better or be more appropriate if you just amended [the program] slightly. Encouraging the [staff] to keep an open mind, I think is our biggest [challenge] in our evaluation.

Although evaluation was considered as a vital part of providing an effective program, it was seen as difficult to do. Staff appraisals, parent surveys, reading over written program plans and peer feedback were some of the ways directors kept informed of what needed to change and where improvements could be made. Only one director

(Rachel) commented that the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) was used as a form of evaluation for ongoing program development.

4.4.2 Desired outcomes

The directors were asked to comment on the desired outcomes for their centre. They emphasised that having a good reputation within the community was a measure of the job that they were doing. The directors wanted their centres to be perceived in a certain way for particular qualities that reflected their philosophy and beliefs about their work. The development of a good reputation in the community resulted in intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the directors.

Key themes that the directors identified about the image they wanted to project in the community about their centre were:

1. Importance of a reputation for a high quality program (Rachel, Irene, Samantha, Lisa, Elizabeth, Cherry, Jenny, and Marleen);

2. Positive feedback from the community (Irene, Samantha, Elizabeth, Cherry, Jenny, and Marleen).

Elizabeth commented about the community's perception of the type of service provided, yet she emphasised the importance of not becoming too complacent:

> I think overall we are seen as a very high quality service and I would hope that our reputation is good. Because the actual association has been established for such a long time and the university and the TAFEs all give very good feedback, but I think you have to be aware you can't rest on that reputation, you have to prove that reputation.

The centre's perceived positive reputation could also be determined by the number of visitors that access the centre as well as through invitations to take part in various pilot programs:

> We have international visitors, we have students that come through,

we're involved in pilot programs for things, we are dealing with the media for media releases for different organisations, because we are seen to provide an environment that is appropriate for children. (Elizabeth)

Lisa also believed that her centre is seen to provide high quality service in the community:

I would hope that they see us as a centre that is aiming to achieve high standards of care and fostering learning in young children. We pride ourselves on the programs that we offer and the results that we achieve with individual children.

Further, she goes to great lengths to ensure that the community has equal access to her program:

I'd also like to think that they [community] see us as a place where we really try to cater towards families' individual needs in that we've got an open door, that we are willing to take basically anybody in and try to cater for their needs.

As a result of her open door policy, Lisa's centre is full to capacity:

I do get a lot of enrolments here at the centre based on feedback [from others who use the centre]. I always make a point of asking a parent on enrolment how they heard about us and it's never through the yellow pages. We've got a teeny weenie advertisement in there. It's always through word of mouth. (Lisa)

It was also mentioned that the positive feedback from the community affirms that the child care centre is thought of highly by the community. This is encouraging to staff who strive hard to provide a quality service:

This community perception encourages the staff to keep improving their practice … I think it is affirming for the staff as I always pass good reports back to the staff. I did a talk recently about our babies program and there were a lot of people who wanted to come and visit. They came

and had a look and they talked to staff and gave them positive feedback. I think not only me telling the staff, but other people telling them is very good for the staff. (Marleen)

The positive community perception encouraged Cherry and her staff to keep doing what they were doing, while recognising that they are not perfect. Cherry emphasises being open to new ideas and suggestions from others, she appreciates that there are always other ways of doing things better, always room to improve. She commented on a recent visit by a student from a TAFE college:

We had a student that came from TAFE the other day and she actually said we were labeled as the friendly centre at the college. Even parents feel they are really loved and accepted here. We are not perfect in every aspect, but we are real with people and we just try and do our best. We really care for people.

Lisa commented that it is inspiring to know that the centre staff have made a positive impact on the children and the families' lives:

It [positive feedback] inspires you to stay on track and when the going gets tough you try and think of the larger thing that you are a part of. It is lovely to know that you have made a difference and the parents tell you so, that it's been a wonderful experience so that when they move on from here you know that they are telling you how nice it's been to have been a part of the centre.

It was recognised that although directors believed that the community saw them as a high quality centre, it was necessary to "prove that reputation". Positive feedback encouraged staff to work hard to ensure to keep to that reputation. However, some directors also recognised that it was important not to be complacent and recognise that there was always room for improvement.

4.5 Discussion

A social systems framework was used to explore the directors' understanding of management. When managing within a child care centre, it is critical that the director considers the "whole" as well as all the "parts" of the system and recognises how all components are interrelated (Jorde Bloom, 1991b).

Table 4.2 presents a summary of the key themes identified from the directors' responses in the previous sections of this Chapter, about working with families and the community; developing centre policies and philosophy; managing organisational tasks, routines and relationships; centre culture; evaluation; and outcomes. These key themes are linked to the manner in which the components of the model proposed by Jorde Bloom et al., (1991b) have been operationalised for this study (see section 2.7). For example, section 4.1.1 explored what directors reported about working with families and the community, and this is repeated in the first section in Table 4.2 with key themes as derived from the directors' responses. The findings are then used to elaborate on the broad Social Systems Model presented in Chapter 2, as shown in Figure 4.1, with additional information as derived from the directors' responses to the interview questions in this Chapter. For example, the theme in the first section in Table 4.2 that identifies that 'Child care centres are required to meet increasingly complex family needs', is represented in the external component of the extended Social Systems Model in Figure 4.1. Further, this model will be progressively developed in the forthcoming Chapters as ideas are drawn from the directors' responses about their perceptions of leadership.

In the current social and policy context, the directors emphasised that, today centres are required to meet external influences such as increasingly complex family needs. Families are looking not only for child care, they are seeking a variety of professional supports to assist them in their parenting role. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, research conducted by Tennent et al. (2002) found that often families are not only looking for care and education for their children, they also seek a variety of other supports to assist them in family and social life. These supports may include connecting families to their neighbourhoods and communities for various personal support needs; assisting families to locate the local library, park or supermarket;

encouraging mothers to feel self-confident in seeking employment; and assisting mothers to play an active role when their children enter school (Bowes & Hayes, 1999).

Table 4.2

Key Themes from Directors' Responses

Area of analysis	Themes identified from the data
(External Influences)	
Working with families and the community	Child care centres are required to meet increasingly complex family needs;
	Child care services must be more accountable for quality outcomes;
	Competition policy in the child care industry has had significant impact.
(Process, Structure)	
Developing centre policies	Policy development is a collaborative process between different stakeholders;
	The sponsoring organisation has an impact on policy development.
(People)	
Developing centre philosophy	A child-centred philosophy is important;
	The implementation of child-centred philosophy requires significant engagement of parents and staff.

Table 4.2 (Continued)

(Process)

Managing organisational and administrative tasks	The director has numerous administrative responsibilities; Extensive time is required to complete administrative tasks.

(Process, Structure)

Managing daily routines	It is important to prioritise and be effective with time management; Directors need to delegate and consult with staff; Forward planning is essential.

(People)

Managing relationships	Positive relationships with staff supports the quality of practice in the centre; The director is responsible for providing leadership and the support to ensure that there are positive relations and partnerships between families and the centre; A range of different forms of communication between families and the centres can be used to exchange information about children.

(Culture)

Centre Culture	The maintenance of an harmonious environment is important; The centre must demonstrate high levels of competence and professionalism.

Table 4.2 (Continued)

(Process)	
Evaluation	Evaluation is an ongoing process which requires input from parents and staff;
	Staff appraisals and reviews are pivotal aspects of evaluation.
(Outcomes)	
Desired outcomes	Importance of a reputation for a high quality program;
	Positive feedback from the community.

In addition, the current economic pressures mean that more women are entering the workforce and need alternative care arrangements for their child/ren. Approximately 70% of women are in some kind of paid employment, either part- or full-time and account for approximately 43% of the paid workforce (Press & Hayes, 2000). Because of the increase in non-standard forms of employment such as self-employment, consultancy and shift work, child care centres need to accommodate non-standard hours of work (Press & Hayes, 2000). It was clear from the directors' comments that despite these challenges, providing family centred services and valuing families was a pivotal part of the role of the child care centre.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- Child care centres are required to meet increasingly complex family needs
- Child care centres must be more accountable for quality outcomes
- Competition policy in the child industry has had a significant impact

CULTURE

- The maintenance of harmonious environment is important
- The centre must demonstrate high levels of competence and professionalism

PROCESSES
- Policy development is a collaborative process
- Numerous administrative tasks take extensive time
- It is important to prioritise/delegate/consult
- Forward planning is necessary
- Evaluation is an ongoing process with input from parents and staff
- Staff appraisals are pivotal aspects of evaluation

PEOPLE
- Positive relationships with staff supports the quality of practice
- The director is responsible for providing leadership and support to staff and families
- A range of communication between families and the centre are necessary
- A child-centred philosophy is important and requires significant engagement of parents and staff

STRUCTURE
- The sponsoring organization has an influence on how centres are managed (single unit, large franchises, or community managed)
- Systems for annual planning (forward planning)

OUTCOMES

- Importance of a reputation for a high quality program; Positive feedback from the community.

THE CHILD CARE

CENTRE

Figure 4.1. **Social Systems Model with key responses from the directors.**

Directors reported that accountability requirements for the quality of child care programs had placed more stress on centres and required directors to maintain understanding of changing child care policies. The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) required centres to focus on a range of program and operational policy areas and compliance was tied to the access by centres to the Childcare Benefit to offset the level of fees paid by parents. This is a powerful incentive for centres to stay accredited because without access to Childcare Benefit, parents will go elsewhere to obtain child care. In 2003, in Queensland changes to state legislation has also placed extra demands on child care directors to be more accountable for quality outcomes.

Competition in the child care sector has added pressure for centre directors to undertake business planning and more effective financial management processes (Press & Hayes, 2000). Directors acknowledged that competition has increased due to greater privatisation of centre based child care. One director mentioned that this had made her centre more industrious in reviewing their practices and in taking a more competitive stance (Samantha). However, another director believed that this had caused added stress to her community based centre, which was struggling to maintain enrolments to remain viable (Rachel).

The structure of the sponsoring organisation influenced how polices were developed and implemented. Within the larger organisations policy development was seen as involving greater number of stakeholders and additional meetings, which in turn prolonged the implementation of the policies. The directors emphasised the importance of having a child-centred philosophy in their centres. It was noted by Irene: "the child comes first, but the child is also considered within the context of his family". A child-centred focus requires staff to be knowledgeable about child development and an appreciation of and respect for the needs of children, families and the community. Henderson-Kelly and Pamphilon (2000) also emphasised that quality care requires high levels of understanding of the needs of children and families.

Directors work in a multifaceted environment. They were responsible for overseeing the daily program, financial management, business planning, marketing, human

resource management, adherence to state and Commonwealth policies and procedures, and evaluation, as well as continual strategic planning to maintain a clear vision for the directions of the centre. The role of the director requires increased professionalism to a level that was not required a decade ago. One director (Samantha) noted, "becoming more professional requires a lot more paperwork". Directors emphasised the importance of delegation, forward planning and consulting with staff and families to enable them to prioritise in meeting organisational goals and objectives. Despite directors recognising the demands of multifarious administrative tasks, the focus of their work remained on the children, staff and families as central to their practice as pedagogical leaders.

Building positive, supportive relationships with staff and families is seen as an essential feature of quality practices by the directors and they saw this as an important part of their role. This emphasis is evident in the early childhood literature (Berger, 1995; Clyde, 1995; Hildebrand & Hearron, 1997; Rodd, 1997; Sumsion, 1999) that in order to provide a quality educational environment, parent involvement is a vital factor. Directors took time to get to know families to understand families' needs. Mutual respect rather than imbalances in knowledge and status build caring relationships and encouraged open communication channels (Fairholm, 1997; Sumsion, 1999). Effective relationships between the home and the centre are valuable only if they are characterised by mutual respect, two-way communication and sensitivity (Stonehouse, 2001). Even though many directors report that they have built effective communication channels with staff or between staff and families, there is always room for improvement (Rodd, 1998).

The values that underpin a feminine ethos of [management] and leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Loden, 1985; Ozga & Walker, 1995; Rogers, 1998) were evident in the way the directors went about their work. The directors in this study tended to distribute the management functions, characterised by the desire to empower rather than dominate, they were facilitative rather than authoritarian (Rogers, 1998). This study provided evidence that the style of management and leadership of the participating directors centred on co-operation, negotiation, and open, honest communication. The directors' responses indicated that they believed they had

created an environment that depicted collegiality, harmony and comradeship. Such a culture does not just happen. It evolves through time through shared beliefs, stories, and orientations that unite all members of the team (Jorde Bloom et al., 1991b; Kreitner, 1992; Poole, Davis, Reisman & Nelson, 2001). Morden (1997a) proposed that:

> Sensitive leaders [and managers] will attempt to establish a culture of pride, equality, a sense of belonging … among their employees such that these people believe that they are part of a worthwhile enterprise which has a valuable purpose. (p. 671)

Poole et al. (2001, p. 11) proposed that "leadership and culture" are "two sides of the same coin", and neither one can be explained fully without the other. The leader has the responsibility to understand, create and manage the organisational culture. It is dependent on shared values and draws its efficiency from consensus (Morden 1997b). Directors emphasised that sharing professional knowledge was important to creating the organisational culture.

The respondents reported that evaluation was an ongoing process that required a range of methods. Using different approaches such as self-assessments, staff appraisals, surveys, written program plans, reviewing centre philosophy, and peer evaluation assisted the directors in the evaluation process. Evaluation is important in order for the director to assess whether the organisation is achieving desired outcomes (Gevers, 1999; Jackson, 2001; Noble, 1999). Although directors recognised the value of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) and saw this as a major part of their role and responsibilities, only one director (Rachel) linked this process as a form of evaluation. Through participation in the accreditation process the directors engaged in rigorous evaluation but this was not recognised by all as a form of evaluation. This process requires further discussion in that accreditation of child care centres can be used as a built-in mechanism for continual improvement and an important evaluation measure on centre performance.

The directors reported being confident in the knowledge that their centres were seen by the community as providing a quality service. They know this through verbal and written feedback from families and local community agencies. Positive outcomes of a centre's practices can be assumed by the high demand for the service because of a good reputation in the community. However, it should be noted that when a centre is at full capacity it may not necessarily be about the centre reputation, it could be due to lack of available choices in the community. Centre effectiveness needs to be evaluated on relevant data that has been collected on the critical outcomes desired. Reputation and level of enrolments are just two forms of measuring outcomes.

4.6 Conclusion

This Chapter focussed on Research Objective 1, which identified management issues and responsibilities that directors faced in their role. The findings were reported using the broad Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) as a framework for categorising and analysing the data, that is, exploring the various components of the child care centers such as: the external environment, people, processes, structure, culture and outcomes and their impact on management in child care centres. This resulted in an elaborated Social Systems Model derived from the directors' responses in this Chapter (Figure 4.1).

Concerning the external environment, directors reported that the needs of families have become increasingly complex. The directors faced escalating accountability requirements for addressing government policy. Competition policy has made it necessary for the child care sector to adapt business principles in an effort to remain viable. Internal policy development is seen as a collaborative process, although the structure of the sponsoring organisation influenced how policies are developed and implemented.

It was important for the directors to build positive relationships, which could lead toward quality practice for children and families. The directors saw their role as providing effective leadership through a range of communication strategies. Directors proposed that to create a harmonious environment, child care staff need high levels of competence and professionalism. Child-centred philosophy provided

the framework for their core practice, administrative duties came second. To manage the complexity of their role, directors delegated to others, engaged in forward planning and saw evaluation as an ongoing process. Reputation of a high quality centre was deemed vital for intrinsic reward and provided motivation and self-satisfaction for the directors.

The next Chapter will focus on the leadership experiences of the child care directors and the development and practice of their leadership skills. Leadership issues were not critical matters in the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that guided this research but were a focus in this research project. Also, leadership issues arose out of the interviews conducted on management in child care centres in this Chapter. This research extends the Jorde Bloom model by adding the leadership dimension and explores how child care centre directors perceive their leadership role in the operation of their centres. The next Chapter will progressively explore the leadership focus within the Social Systems Model as presented in Figure, 4.1, with additional data as derived from the findings in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 DIRECTORS' CONCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLE

In this Chapter the analyses of data related to the directors' leadership roles in child care are presented. This Chapter is based on Research Objectives 2 and 3 as follows. Research Objective 2 related to how child care centre directors perceived their leadership role in the operation of their child care services. Research Objective 3 related to the perceptions of directors and the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community, in a context characterised by social, economic and policy change. The implications for understanding and supporting leadership in child care centres are also explored.

In the previous Chapter, the data analysed focussed on the organisational context of child care with an emphasis on the management role in the centre. Throughout the data in the previous Chapter there was a strong emphasis on how to work with staff and families in collegial ways, and the need to support staff. This emphasis is also apparent through the data presented in this Chapter. The directors' leadership was based on a strong relational position to their way of leading and managing in a child care centre.

This Chapter begins by identifying how directors defined leadership, and explores how directors view their leadership role in their child care centres. This is followed by a discussion on intra- and interpersonal qualities of a leader, including challenges and rewards of leadership, and what it means when stepping into a leadership role. Professional development needs of directors and leadership in terms of child care quality and advocacy are also discussed. The Chapter concludes by a discussion on key themes drawn from the directors' responses in this Chapter, and represents these themes in terms of the Social Systems Model (Figure 5.1). Note that the representation of the responses for this revised Social Systems Model of the previously revised Social Systems Model developed in Chapter 4 will be integrated into a final Social Systems Model in Chapter 6. This is described as an iterative

process. In each section of this Chapter, key themes are identified from the interview transcripts and illustrative extracts about those themes are presented.

5.1 Defining leadership

Individuals may be appointed to positional leadership roles but this does not necessarily make them leaders. Skilled managers may be leaders, if they are able to motivate and also deal with the many complex management issues that move an organisation toward its aims and goals (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993; Robbins & Mukerji, 1990; Sarros et al., 1996). The key function of the leader is to create an organisational vision, to influence others (Dubrin, 1995). Leadership is about the quality of the relationships that are developed with staff (Blank, 1997), while at the same time acting as a role model, mentor, and a teacher to others (Neuman, 2000). These features of leadership were apparent in the directors' responses when they were asked to define leadership. Having a vision was important but building relationships through team work was also a key issue. Strong themes in the data were:

1. The leader needs to have commitment and vision toward organisational goals (Rachel, Elizabeth, Jenny, and Lisa);

2. Leadership is about building a team culture and working effectively with others (Elizabeth, Lisa, Irene, Samantha, Lisa, Cherry, Jenny, and Marleen).

Jenny commented that leadership is about being visionary and the leader has the responsibility to steer a team toward organisational goals:

> [Leadership] is really about an organisation, and having vision for that organisation and the leader steers the team toward that ultimate goal … facilitating the team, I think that's what leadership is [about].

Rachel emphasised the importance of being able to set directions about where an organisation is going:

> I think it's about having a vision. … It's not management. … I think you

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have a sense of where you might be, where you are [at] and where you want to go and what it might look like.

Developing a team was important but also being able to set directions for that team was essential:

Leadership would have to be the ability to create a shared vision between a team of people, not a group of people, but a team where you create a sense of team and work towards goals together. A lot of people try and head toward a particular direction but they never get there because there's no sense of team. (Elizabeth)

Having knowledge of people and observing their own behaviour was seen as an important leadership quality. Respecting others and positive role modelling also depicts effective leadership character:

It's about generating a vision, real vision, not just knowing what you're trying to achieve, [but] knowing people and monitoring your own qualities and helping to bring out the best in other people. … I think it comes down to respect, you respect others and you receive respect in return. If you give as much as you can as a leader and you model and people know what you do, then they stand by you and respect what you are doing. (Elizabeth)

Lisa also discussed team work and vision that allows all the team members to work toward the same organisational goals:

It's really about an organisation, and having a vision for that organisation and the leader steers the team toward that ultimate goal ... Leadership is, really facilitating - the direction of what we are trying to achieve, and being accountable for where we are going.

A strong emphasis on being a role model was noted when defining leadership, yet it was important to allow for imperfection at times:

Okay, well, if I was going to be a perfect leader, I would want to be a

role model who showed positive behaviour, commitment, sense of humour, compassion, but to be human and not always perfect. (Irene)

Cherry saw leadership as guidance of others and mentioned the importance of serving and nurturing others to assist them to reach their full potential:

I think it's taking responsibility for guiding other people and that is a guidance role not a controlling role. I don't believe it's that [control] at all, but taking responsibility for guiding other people to be the best that they can be in their job and to encourage and nurture them in that. As a leader you are a servant as well, and so you are there to serve staff that you are responsible for, but you are also there to be a leader and a decision maker when it is right to do that.

The directors emphasised vision as a major principle in defining leadership. This is supported by leadership theory. For example, Morden (1997b) defined leadership as having the capacity to link the present with the future and having the capacity to translate this vision into practical tasks. By having a clear vision, leaders can transform their ideas into reality. It is about turning intention into action and energising people to achieve organisational goals (Manning & Robertson, 2002). Leaders with a clear vision of the future can empower others through their personal authority (Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996). These aspects were apparent in how the directors discussed their leadership role but they also focused on leadership in relation to others and a leader's responsibilities to engender respect, being a role model, and to guide and nurture others. These ideas clearly link to the description of leadership that guided this research (Chapter 2, section 2.6), which proposed that: A leader has the ability to communicate vision, influence others and is futures orientated. Leadership is not something concerned with just specific style and technique, but the quality of the relationships that the leader has with staff.

5.2 Leadership in a child care setting

5.2.1 Intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities

In defining leadership, the directors emphasised being visionary and building a team culture as important but they also identified specific intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities that they believed were necessary for directors to have in the leadership role.

1. Important intrapersonal qualities are compassion, resilience and stability (Jenny, Cherry, and Elizabeth);

2. Communication skills are important interpersonal qualities (Jenny, Rachel, Irene, Marlene, Samantha, and Lisa).

Irene mentioned trusting others and being trustworthy as important leadership qualities. Jenny noted many intrapersonal qualities that leaders need to have and the importance of listening to others. According to Jenny, leaders need to possess good people skills centred on compassion and understanding of people:

> Tolerance, patience, and empathy, because you are [there] to empathise with everyone's situation - staff, parents and children ... a certain stoicism, you have to soldier on regardless; sometimes you have to just accept that some things are just going to be, whether [or not] you would like to change a situation.

Similarly, Cherry noted that resilience is important and having an ability not to take issues personally, rather accept situations as they happen in a constructive manner:

> To be unoffendable ... to keep the right perspective on things and to try and take whatever comes your way and look at it positively.

It was deemed important to separate personal from work related issues and to remain focussed rather than react in a negative manner:

> I think a director must keep their personal life out of the working environment ... You have to work hard to stay even ... You've got to

make yourself completely stable, that means being supportive and not a hot and cold person, [because] you've got to be available to other people. (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth's comments indicate the importance of maintaining focus on the job rather than allowing personal issues to influence how the director may react in specific situations. The comments also imply the need for resilience by not over/reacting (or under/reacting) and to maintain a fair and transparent stance when dealing with other people. Meaning that it is important to listen to what staff are saying and take time to consider all viewpoints when resolving organisational issues.

As was also evident in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2), collaboration, team work and effective communication with others were essential leadership qualities. This theme is illustrated with quotes from Marleen, Samantha, and Lisa.

Marleen commented on the importance of listening to others:

I think listening is something … you really have to be attuned to, to listen to what people are saying, to listen to what your community is saying, to listen to what government is saying about child care, to listen to what your staff are saying about their work and conditions, listening to what children are saying, listening to what parents want and what parents are saying ... It's such a complex area and I think you have to be attuned to all those different areas to be effective.

Samantha also talked about the importance of listening to others:

Listening is probably more important than communicating because if you can't hear what a person is saying you can't fix, or begin to fix a problem.

Lisa saw herself as part of a team, rather than a leader per se. She also regarded the capacity to help others problem solve within a team environment important:

… and if they know that something is wrong that I'm not going to lose it. Instead I'll take a deep breath and say, "Okay, what is the problem? How

are we going to address this? Do you have solutions?" This makes them [staff] take ownership of the situation. This makes the centre a bit more of a team. It's not a team under a leader; it's the leader as part of a team. (Lisa)

Intrapersonal qualities in the form of tolerance, patience, empathy and stability were important as was the capacity to listen to others, really hear what others were saying; and have an ability to solve problems with a solution focus. This reflects Morden's (1997a) view that a flexible, participatory style of leadership is appropriate in the current contexts of leadership, rather than a structured, controlling style of leading and managing. Resilience in the face of multiple and competing demands is required and tolerance is required in many situations arising in the workplace (Khaleelee & Woolf, 1996). Khaleelee and Woolf noted, "the capacity to live with uncertainty is a consequence of resilient personality which develops from a sense of inner security" (p. 9). A leader needs to be a good listener, communicator and educator who has the capacity to involve others and make them feel that they have an important role to play in achieving the mission of the organisation (Sarros et al., 1996).

5.2.2 Challenges

Directors were asked about the major challenges, which they faced in their current role. One director, Lisa, noted that because of support from the centre owner and licensee, as well as supportive staff, she did not see herself in fact as facing major challenges. However, the other directors did see major challenges in their role. Key themes from these directors in relation to challenges in their role were:

1. Staff-related issues pose many problems (Jenny, Cherry, Irene, and Samantha);

2. Finding new ways to respond to the diverse needs of children and families (Rachel, Marleen, and Samantha); and

3. Being open to personal learning and change (Irene and Cherry).

Outside of those two themes, Elizabeth found that dealing with bureaucracy was the greatest challenge:

Dealing with bureaucracy, finding ways to manage the service independently … finding people that can help you, key speakers that will bring about stronger knowledge about a situation.

In regard to staff-related issues, Jenny indicated that this area has posed challenges such as getting them to consider the group rather than work in isolation, and building staff's confidence in their ability to do the work:

Bringing the staff together. We've had a lot of staff changes; we've had staff who were not happy with the people that they were working with. Some staff have been here a long time and felt that their opinions were more important [than other staff's]. It's difficult to explain to someone other ways of looking at things when they really don't want to know. So, the challenge was organising staff, convincing them to do a good job in different ways.

Further, Jenny felt it was important to "give them [staff] confidence, and [encourage staff to] listen to what others are saying, planning the routines so that everyone's needs are fulfilled so they [staff] are happy. I feel if staff are happy, everything else will just happen".

For Marleen, meeting the diverse needs of children and families was difficult.

The greatest challenges I suppose [is] just trying to establish services or centres that you know that are appropriate for children and appropriate for families, and I think that's just an on-going challenge. (Marleen)

On a more personal note, Irene and Cherry commented on their own developmental needs:

Forgiving myself has probably been a very important thing to develop, not to judge myself too harshly ... to accept that I can't always make people happy and sometimes I have to be firm and say, "No" …This was

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a very difficult thing for me to learn. (Irene)

Cherry found it hard to become stronger (emotionally), to be able to disengage from a situation and learn to utilise constructive criticism in her daily practice:

I guess to learn to be stronger in myself, because I'm a very softhearted person. That's not a bad thing in a lot of respects, but you also have to learn to be able to remove yourself from the situation and not take things personally ... to learn to take criticism from people and use it constructively. (Cherry)

As with the directors participating in this study, Hayden (1997a) reported that a large number of directors identified human resource functions as difficult for new directors. Since directors most often came directly from a teaching role they may not have had any other opportunities to prepare themselves to be managers and leaders of staff teams. Kearns (1996) proposed that difficulties arise due to lack of role clarity for the director as a supervisor. The director who comes from a teaching role shifts from working alongside staff as a colleague and then changes to a supervisor, which requires monitoring and evaluating staff performance. A director may desire collegiality with her staff but she (or he) is then challenged in also being a supervisor of performance. Rodd (1997) reported that directors found balancing the need to have good interpersonal relationships was not easy when they also had to manage conflicts and be assertive. However, despite the challenges there were also many rewards that motivated the directors to stay in the field.

5.2.3 Rewards

Directors were asked to identify the rewards of the position. The predominant themes were:

1. The capacity to deliver quality programs by working effectively with a staff team has significant rewards (Lisa, Elizabeth, Jenny, Irene, and Samantha);

1. A sense of personal achievement is a major reward (Marleen, Cherry, and Rachel).

The first theme is reflected in Lisa's comments who emphasised the need to exert great effort in providing a quality service:

> The development of the staff here and the degree to which our parents are happy with our service ... that all the effort that we put into serving our parents and of course, their children, you can tell you are appreciated. ... It's very rewarding to see how successful this centre has been.

Elizabeth felt rewarded knowing that the staff have harmonious relationships and that there is a sense of team work which results in positive outcomes for the children:

> If your staff work well, your centre works well ... know that when people are achieving their best, and they know their job well and we all like coming to work together, that's enjoyable. Child outcomes are lovely ... you always come back to the children ... you feel best when the child is transitioning to school and you think, we helped you to get there ... knowing that we've helped them to become such confident people.

Jenny also felt good knowing that the children, staff and parents were satisfied with the type of program that the centre offers:

> Knowing that the children are happy ... to see that the centre is running well ... to have parents comment, "I didn't realise how lucky I was to have a centre like yours to send my children to". I guess those are the rewards.

With respect to personal achievement and recognition, Marleen's and Cherry's responses are illustrative.

> Sometimes it's hard to think of what the rewards are ... but I think there's a certain amount of satisfaction in knowing that you are doing an effective job ... knowing that you can make changes ... developing new programs. (Marleen)

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And:

> I have been able to develop [my] leadership skills ... just being stretched
> in that leadership role and basically having to develop skills that I
> wouldn't have developed as a teacher in the classroom setting … having
> to relate to people to learn how different people think and to learn how
> different people perceive things. (Cherry)

Cherry went on to say that she gains satisfaction by working with the children, and
being able to support families in various ways:

> I really appreciate the days I'm in the room for programming, because it
> gives me contact with the children, and you are able to see what the staff
> are working with, and how different things affect them. ... I get a lot of
> satisfaction out of being able to do little things for families, even if it's
> just going that extra mile for them.

While challenges in directors' work were related to staff issues, seeing staff perform
effectively was also a rewarding aspect of the work for the directors. The rewards
mentioned were about knowing that families were satisfied, positive outcomes for
children, having autonomy to deliver creative programs, and opportunities to
enhance personal leadership skills was rewarding. Rodd (1997) also noted that the
directors in her study gained pleasure from their interactions with staff.

5.3 Becoming a child care director

5.3.1 Stepping into leadership

Being a director was not necessarily a position that many participants had set out to
achieve. There was a mix of views about how prepared the directors were to take on
a leadership role.

1. Three directors said that they felt quite prepared (Elizabeth, Samantha, and
   Rachel).

2. The other five directors considered that it had been a considerable challenge (Irene, Lisa, Cherry, Marleen, and Jenny).

Elizabeth had prior experience as a teacher/group leader in a child care centre and this had given her some preliminary grounding for the role. She first took on the director's role in a new child care centre. This entailed setting up new administrative systems and employing staff, as well as developing policies and procedures. However, she did admit to having to do very long hours to keep abreast of tasks:

> I did have the advantage that the centre was brand new. I knew what I was talking about. I knew how the centre was to function ... You have to be confident. I think I managed quite well. However, I did very long hours ... got home at 10pm at night.

Samantha also commented that she felt prepared because of her previous experience in child care as a group leader and assistant director, "I was raring to go but now when, I think back. I think I did an okay job, but I think that I would do a much better job now, but that's just with experience".

Rachel had been working in child care for many years, but had moved away from the field for a period of time. She came back to long-day care due to her passion for working with young children:

> When I came back into the field I felt that I wanted the opportunity to do this role. I wanted to come back to long-day care. I felt my heart belonged to long-day care, that there is so much more that can be offered to children. We just got some of it right. I've got passion by the bucketful.

Elizabeth, Samantha, and Rachel had felt prepared for the role. They had worked in different centres in which they had held various positions, such as being a graduate supervisor (NSW), an assistant director, or had years of experience as a teacher in a centre. These directors felt they broadly understood the nature of the role and responsibilities that they would have in the position. Research by Jorde Bloom (1997b) (Chapter 2, section 2.6) identified that directors go through career stages

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such as beginning director, competent director and master director. The findings here indicate that Elizabeth, Samantha and Rachel identified themselves as competent directors. However, Elizabeth also recognised that to manage effectively required long hours and Samantha commented that as she matured on the job she gained additional skills in leading and managing in her centre. This is reported by Jorde Bloom (1997b) as recurring cycles of the stages, where directors move from one role to another and revert backwards and forwards between the stages to engage in continual learning.

Lisa, Jenny, Irene, Cherry, and Marleen did not feel as prepared. Lisa, Jenny and Cherry had previous experience as assistant directors but they still felt unprepared for the position. Irene had had little contact with child care centres prior to taking up the position. She learnt on the job. Marleen had extensive experience as a child care director and felt that stepping into the role would be more difficult now than when she had started as a director. Marleen felt that "the director's role in the past was much simpler in regard to accountability procedures and regulations".

Lisa was appointed as a director after the incumbent director suddenly left but felt that she had some knowledge about the role having worked closely with the previous director:

> It happened very suddenly, the director left. I was probably in my comfort zone with my preschool group, which I loved dearly ... really under the circumstances, it was probably the best I could've been prepared and it was fortunate that I had worked closely with the original director.

Jenny hadn't realised how many issues she would have to deal with as a director and noted the lack of training for the role:

> Because of my past experiences I felt I could cope, but I had not considered having to make decisions about children's lives, parents' lives ... I didn't realise how many things I had to deal with ... there was no period of training, one day you're a group leader, the next a director.

Equally, Cherry was overwhelmed at first and questioned her ability to undertake the required role and responsibilities:

> What am I doing here? What have I let myself in for? It was basically like that. I was quite overwhelmed ... because our enrolments were low and I knew that it was the first thing that I had to look at. … I had no idea about marketing or how is it that you increase numbers, like [I was] just not prepared at all. ... It was basically I got the job and then you just learn as you go along. (Cherry)

According to Jorde Bloom's (1997b) career stages, comments from Irene, Lisa, Cherry, Marleen, and Jenny indicated that they saw themselves as beginning directors where they were not at all prepared for the kinds of issues that they encountered. No one out of the eight directors saw themselves as a master director (Jorde Bloom, 1997b) despite their longstanding tenure in working in the field.

This could be because for most of the directors, there hadn't been any prior training. Hard (2005) also found that knowledge of leadership was not developed during undergraduate education in early childhood. The participants in this study felt that it was learning about the role while doing the job. Some were more confident than others but all were challenged by the demands and the long hours required completing the daily tasks. Research (Jorde Bloom, 1997b; Rafanello & Jorde Bloom, 1997) supports these findings. Many directors are promoted to their positions because others have seen their leadership potential. Hayden (1997b) found that less than 45% of directors had studied in management or administration; and less than 50% of the respondents had any in-service training related to management. Also Hayden (1997a) reported that 41% of directors had worked in the field for less than two years before taking on the role of a director. Hayden's findings indicate that the demand for experienced directors is greater than the supply and thus many directors have "fallen into their position" (p. 53) with limited experience or knowledge about the role and responsibilities.

5.3.2 Learning leadership

The directors were asked how they believed that individuals could develop their leadership skills to be a director. They placed emphasis on two aspects for learning leadership:

1. Education and training programs are important (Samantha, Irene, Jenny, Rachel, and Marleen); and

2. Learning with, and through others, in mentoring relationships and through networking with peers is valuable (Samantha, Marleen, Cherry, Elizabeth, and Lisa).

Samantha's ideas contributed to both key themes. She referred to her personal family experiences that contributed to her capacity to relate to others in democratic ways:

> I think it's about training, your own training at university, but [also] someone to learn from, because you can't always learn from a text. … I don't think there could be anyone who could just learn to be democratic, just from their studies ... unless they had been raised in a democratic family. ... If you had been raised in a family of democratic thinkers who were always doing the fair and the right thing, and the moral thing, you'd have those skills. I guess it's important to me now in everything that I do. … Everything has to be spoken about, decisions can't be made just by me.

Irene discussed study and emphasised the importance of feeling secure in one's own knowledge:

> Study ... that obviously has had a large impact on developing my skills. ... The more secure one feels in one's knowledge, the more you can pass that on to others.

Marleen emphasised the importance of having a mentor to learn skills for effective leadership. Networking was noted as effective in engaging a mentor:

I think of my first president [of a management committee] … and she was a really good mentor to me in terms of helping me to think outside the box a little bit, and you know that was really good, and I've come across different people at different times that have been mentors. Being able to find a mentor is a good thing. I think networking probably helps with that.

Similarly, Cherry also saw the importance of having a mentor, someone experienced to learn from:

I think a really good thing is to have a type of mentoring system ... to know someone who is really good at their job and seek out that person, to have time with that person ... that would definitely take you further and [encourage] you to study, just to extend yourself.

Elizabeth noted that "leadership does not happen in isolation, it happens with a team of people". Similarly, Lisa emphasised that when problem solving, she saw herself as part of the team, where decisions were made in collaboration, rather than being a leader of the team taking an authoritative stance.

Training and study were deemed effective ways of gaining new knowledge. Mentoring also assisted other directors to develop new perspectives. This is supported by theory on mentoring that indicates that the mentoring process enables both parties in the relationship to disengage from the intensity of the day-to-day work, and reflect on their practice issues (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; Scandura et al., 1996). Mentoring is a form of coaching (Sarros et al., 1996). This was the case with Marleen whose mentor assisted her in taking a wider perspective when exploring issues.

5.3.3 Professional development needs of directors

Participants in this study identified important skill areas in which professional training was required. Key themes in the area of professional development were:

1. A stronger focus on skills in business management was needed (Lisa, Rachel, Elizabeth, and Irene);

2. Programs for the development of communication skills for leadership roles are important (Samantha, Lisa, and Cherry); and

3. A professional pathway for directors is needed (Marleen, Jenny, and Irene).

It was emphasised that directors need a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities and require more training in managing a small business, including human resources. The challenge is to provide training that would be relevant to specific communities:

> Foremost, directors need to be aware what their purpose for being there is. … They also need to learn to operate a small business, and how to manage people, the human functions of an organisation. The tasks basically that a director may encounter day to day, are different from centre to centre. I think it's going to be very difficult to come up with an orientation process for directors while their roles are diverse from place to place. (Lisa)

Cherry noted that early childhood university studies prepared educators to be early childhood teachers, but not an administrator responsible for financial accountability:

> As a person who studies early childhood you train to be a teacher, you do not train to be an administrator .... All those aspects of managing fees and budgets .... There is nothing that I did at the university that would have helped me to take on the role of director, apart from being able to oversee an educational program.

In contrast, Samantha commented that management tasks can be learned on the job, it is the human functions for leadership and management that are needed:

> I would like to see a big emphasis on leadership and different styles, doing self-assessments, working through personal stuff with reflections

on how you lead …. If you want children and staff to learn to be assertive how can they learn if their director is not assertive and a good leader.

With respect to the professional pathway for becoming a director, Marleen noted that directors need some foundational experience behind them before they take on the role:

People who make the best directors are the ones that work themselves through the ranks, people that continually add to their qualifications, as they are moving up the career ladder … People who make the best directors are people who have come through the system and added to their qualifications as they [move up the career ladder]. As they increase their qualifications they add new knowledge to what they have.

Increasing complexity of families' needs requires the director to have maturity as well as professional experience in being able to address their needs:

Child care is a very complex field, with many social issues impacting on practice. You have to have a certain maturity to be a director because you are dealing with families and sometimes-volatile situations and communities. It has to be … professional knowledge and experience. (Marleen)

Jenny would like to see a director apprenticeship supported by an experienced director:

A person aspiring to become a director should start an apprenticeship under an experienced director. They need to see the pitfalls that can happen in the role. There are many issues that you face as a director that you are not prepared for. More honesty about the position, let people know what the role entails.

Also, Jenny commented on the lack of resources to assist those aspiring to become directors in child care centres: "There are no director guidelines, no handbooks. Even as an assistant director you don't really get to learn about the director's role … This

should be the training period for their future role as director".

Most directors wanted more opportunities for training in business and financial management or for human resource management while commenting that on-the-job training was important. Only one director (Samantha) expressed that management tasks could be learned on the job. Experience as an assistant director would enable greater understanding of the role. Hayden (1997a), Jorde Bloom and Sheerer (1992a) and Rodd (1997) also identified management training as an important component in the preparation for the role of directors because few directors in child care centres have had such professional training prior to taking up their role (Hayden, 1997a, b; Jorde Bloom, 1992a; Mitchell, 1997; Seplocha, 1998). Also, research shows (Jorde Bloom, 1997b) that directors go through career stages, and training should be tailored according to these stages of career development. Despite the ongoing identification of this need for leadership training as a critical variable in program quality (Bowman, 1997; Caruso, 1991; Hayden, 1997b; Jorde Bloom, 1999; 1995; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a, b; Jorde Bloom & Rafanello (1995) this issue has still not been fully addressed in early childhood education training programs.

5.4 Leadership and child care quality

Leadership has to be understood within the context in which it is to be practiced. Child care services and their quality remain an important social policy issue. Directors have an important role in ensuring the quality of the child care programs and their definitions and visions about quality care centred on meeting the needs of children. They spoke with idealism and passion about their leadership role. The key theme was the child-centredness of the programs, with a strong focus on a pedagogical dimension to their leadership.

1. Quality care is about meeting the needs of the children (Jenny, Irene, Samantha, Lisa, Cherry, Marleen, Elizabeth, and Rachel).

Jenny's viewpoint is reflective of the overall feeling of what quality child care is about:

Quality child care should consist of an environment in which children are

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encouraged to develop and grow at their own speed, where they feel comfortable and at home; like a feeling of continuity of what happens at home; where a child feels totally safe and familiar; and where they [children] can meet challenges at their own level. (Jenny)

Irene defined quality child care as a collaborative process with the child care centre and the child's home: "[It] ... is care that meets the needs of individual children and considers them in their family context. ... as a shared responsibility with parents".

Samantha also talked about the importance of putting children's needs first and having staff that enjoy their work, and have a genuine love for the work that they do with young children: "… the child comes first no matter what. Quality [is about] skilled staff that love working with children and love the people they work with".

Samantha's comment indicates the importance of child-centered practice. To achieve quality practice, staff need to have appropriate skills, training and experience, good people skills, as well as a strong commitment to working with young children.

Lisa agreed that it is important to meet the needs of the children as well as consider the needs of the wider community:

I would say meeting the needs of all those using that particular service, striving to meet the needs of all the participants within that particular service. I think that's the key. … It means you really can't go wrong if you are meeting the needs of the children. And, hopefully, the needs of an individual child are going to be compatible with the needs of the parents of [the child].

Lisa emphasised the importance of considering the child within the context of the family. The service provided care and education for the child, but equally important was ensuring that families were satisfied that their particular needs were being met through the provision of appropriate services.

Strong emphasis was placed on love for the children and families, while providing an educational program and valuing children for who they are:

Obviously in loving children and loving their families there comes that caring aspect and that nurturing aspect because you treat them as your own. An important element is also the education that they are learning through their experiences here as well, that they are learning that they are valued. Quality child care in a nutshell is helping children to reach their full potential, and doing that in the best way you know how based on your early childhood philosophy, based on your convictions on what is good practice. (Cherry)

Marleen emphasised the relational aspects with children and families but stressed that this can only come through ensuring that staff are skilled and committed in the work that they do with young children.

I think the bottom line has to be the relationships that you develop with children and families - working partnerships. In terms of quality, that is the bottom line. You have to have programs that are attuned to children, as well as staff who understand where children are at developmentally. Allowing children to be in control of their lives and not having someone determine for them what they are going to do every day.

Marleen further commented that staff need to be recognised for the valuable work that they engage in with young children, and be compensated accordingly through appropriate wages, "You have to have highly qualified, committed staff who are paid well for what they do, who are free to develop good sound relationships with the kids".

These directors presented a picture of quality child care as a supportive environment, where children are comfortable, safe, challenged and provided with developmentally appropriate activities. The directors emphasised that quality child care is about valuing children, allowing them to be in control and ensuring that children come first. The quality of child care programs is influenced strongly by the leadership role that the director has in relation to staff (Blank, 1997; Bowman, 1997; Crompton, 1997; Culkin, 2000; Espinosa, 1997). In the United States Seplocha (1998) found that effective early childhood leaders are experienced and knowledgeable in child

development and early childhood education leaders play a vital role in creating quality through their passion.

5.5 Advocacy for child care

The directors were asked if they considered themselves advocates for child care in the wider community as a part of their leadership role. Two themes were evident.

1. Two directors saw themselves as advocates for the field (Marleen and Lisa).

2. The other six directors felt that they were not skilled enough to advocate on behalf of the child care sector (Irene, Samantha, Elizabeth, Cherry, Jenny, and Rachel).

Marleen saw herself as a strong advocate. However, she noted that it is hard to make a difference, hard to make oneself heard:

> I was just thrown in the deep end and it all happened because of industrial matters; when early childhood teachers were kicked out [of the teaching union] and became part of the Miscellaneous Workers Union. We protested strongly and we picketed and I have never ever done that in my life ... I was the representative. At the same time the new regulations were being developed so we knew we didn't have a hope in hell of doing anything without the union. I am a quiet little voice that sometimes raises issues that I feel are important. I don't think we have the same ability to change agendas as maybe we once had.

Marleen also commented that it is still hard to achieve community acceptance of the role of child care. There are challenges in maintaining momentum when you feel that the issues that are raised do not get listened to:

> Issues around acceptance of child care, what people really feel about child care, why governments don't value it sufficiently to have more funding ... in terms of advocacy, you just get tired and think "I can't do this anymore" ... Sometimes its hard to maintain focus ... It is getting harder and harder to fight battles, you don't have the same supports that

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might have been there in terms of ministers, government priorities, they change constantly. It's hard to be effective when you don't have the supports. You can just chip away and say little things but it doesn't necessarily get heard. [This is] a big challenge.

Lisa noted that through her daily work and through the provision of a high quality service in the community she hopes that she is an advocate for the sector, "I quite often feel as if I'm an advocate for the quality centres out there".

However, she also felt that child care is still an undervalued profession in the wider community:

> I think there are a lot of people out there in the community whether they are in child care or not, that have an opinion of child care that's really not acknowledging the work of centres like ourselves. I do appreciate that we are in a position where we have a high occupancy [rate] and we've got the funds to re-inject into our centre, and [the management] invests [opportunity for professional development] in our staff. I think we have that occupancy for a reason too, because we've prioritised high quality practice. I'd like to hope that I am an advocate for quality child care. (Lisa)

The other directors felt that they lacked the skills or confidence to be an advocate for child care. Elizabeth agreed with Marleen that it is difficult to get heard in the wider community:

> I don't advocate at all because your work doesn't get heard at that level. You've got to be somebody who's articulate and has experience and can demonstrate with clear examples exactly what children's services are going through. (Elizabeth)

Cherry also commented that to be an advocate you need to be very articulate. She felt that she was not able to fill an advocacy role:

> I'm terrible in that respect. I'm not a very vocal person like that; I don't

think I do very well in that area at all [then]. That's something that I find too intimidating, you would have to be able to express yourself very well verbally and I don't feel that I can.

Two directors who perceived themselves as advocates, still felt that they were not heard at the macro or policy level. Directors reported that there was limited support due to constantly changing government polices [including legislation], which makes advocacy all the more difficult. Meaning, that it was hard to keep abreast of current trends and issues at the macro level due to their already demanding workload. Other reasons for not advocating on behalf of young children included the notion that to be an advocate required the person to be confident and skilled for such a role. Similar findings were identified by Clyde (1995) and Rodd (1997) who noted that directors did not feel that they had a part in the professionalisation of the field outside of their own child care centre. Directors in those studies indicated that they saw their role as working with parents, managing the centre and supervising staff. Advocating for stronger recognition of the need for quality child care was not a part of their role. Lunn and Bishop (2002) indicated that nursery teachers had difficulty in defining themselves as leaders in the broader field; rather they saw themselves as teachers first and foremost.

5.6 Discussion

This Chapter identified how directors defined leadership and described important intra- and interpersonal qualities of leaders as reported by the child care centre directors. The participants reflected on the challenges, rewards and preparedness for becoming a director. Developing leadership skills and the professional development needs of directors was addressed. Also, this Chapter has explored quality child care and child care advocacy.

Summaries of the key findings identified in the sections of this Chapter are presented in Table 5.1. For example, when directors were asked to define leadership the key themes were about leader commitment and vision toward organisational goals; as well, leadership was defined as building a team culture and working effectively with others. The key themes in Table 5.1 add to the body of knowledge already derived

from the directors' responses in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2) that explored the influence of the external environment, specific processes, people, structure, culture and outcomes of centre performance. The findings in Table 5.1 are further represented in Figure, 5.1 which incorporates a revised Systems Model using key themes from this Chapter (Table 5.1). As in Table 4.2 (section 4.5) these key themes are linked to the manner in which the components of the model proposed by Jorde Bloom et al., (1991b) have been operationalised for this study (see section 2.7).

In defining leadership, the directors emphasised the leader's commitment and vision to lead a strong team culture. This definition reflects findings from a study conducted by Hard (2005) where early childhood professionals highlighted the need for a non-hierarchical, team-based leadership approach in early childhood education. This form of leading has been described as a process where the leader has an "ability to create a vision that others can believe in and adopt as their own" (Morden, 1997b, p. 668). Further, "leading uniquely involves those processes associated with vision developing, goal setting and direction giving" (Klagge, 1996, p. 39).

Table 5.1

Summary of Key Responses in the Data

Areas of analysis	Key Themes
(Culture ,People)	
Defining leadership	The leader needs to have commitment and vision toward organisational goals
	Leadership is about building a team culture and working effectively with others
(People)	
Intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities	Important personality qualities are compassion, resilience and stability
	Communication skills are important interpersonal qualities

Table 5.1 (Continued)

(People, Process, Culture)	
Challenges	Staff-related issues pose many problems
	Finding new ways to respond to the diverse needs of children and families
	Being open to personal learning and change
(Outcomes)	
Rewards	The capacity to deliver quality programs by working effectively with staff has significant rewards
	The sense of personal achievement is a major reward
(Process)	
Stepping into leadership	Three directors felt quite prepared for the role
	Five directors considered that it had been a considerable challenge
(Structure, Processes)	
	Education and training programs are important
Learning leadership	Learning with and through others, in mentoring relationships and through networking with peers is valuable
(Process)	
Professional development needs of directors	A stronger focus on skills in business management was needed
	Programs for the development of communication skills for leadership roles are important
	A professional pathway for directors is needed

Table 5.1 (Continued)

(Outcomes)

Leadership and child care quality	Quality care is about meeting the needs of children

(External Environment)

Advocacy for child care	Two directors saw themselves as advocates for the field
	Six directors felt that they were not skilled enough to advocate on behalf of the child care sector

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The eight directors, all women, provide a sense of a strongly relational model of leadership. Such a relational model of leadership is about support of and engagement with staff through collaboration and co-operation. "Leadership is equally a task of building harmonious, collaborative teams" (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000, p. 102). These ideas are consistent with research on feminine leadership characteristics (for instance, see Rogers, 1988; Rosener, 1990).

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- Two directors saw themselves as advocates in the broader field
- Six directors reported that they were not skilled enough to advocate on behalf of the child care sector

CULTURE

- The leader needs to have commitment and vision toward organisational goals
- Being open to personal learning and change

PROCESSES
- Finding new ways to respond to the diverse needs of children and families
- Professional pathway for directors is needed
- Learning with and through others, in mentoring relationships and through networking with peers is valuable
- Challenges of becoming a director (stepping into leadership)
- A stronger focus on business management was needed
- Programs for the development of communication skills are important

PEOPLE
- Leadership is about building a team culture and working effectively with others
- Important intrapersonal qualities are compassion, resilience and stability
- Staff related issues pose many problems
- Communication skills are important interpersonal qualities

Director as a Leader

STRUCTURE
- Education and training programs are important

OUTCOMES
- The capacity to deliver quality programs by working effectively with staff has significant rewards
- Sense of personal achievement is a major reward
- Quality care is about meeting the needs of children

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Figure 5.1. **Social Systems Model with key responses from the directors.**

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All eight directors acknowledged the value of working in teams. Leadership was described as monitoring their own personal qualities in order to help others to achieve their best. Shared decision-making, collaboration, respect for others and negotiating issues were defined as effective leadership qualities. Ozga and Walker (1995) affirm that, generally, women leaders present with a leadership style that is less hierarchical and more democratic. Such theorising identifies that women do not emphasise self-interest in being a leader. Leadership is much more outward directed. Leadership is exercised through giving encouragement and showing appreciation of the efforts of those with whom the leader is working (Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon, 2000; Limerick & Cranston, 1998; Lunn & Bishop, 2002; Ozga & Walker, 1995). Limerick and Cranston (1998) propose that these seemingly feminine leadership qualities are not gendered. These authors indicate that "en/gendered" leadership can be practised by both, males and females and that more attention needs to focus on an en/gendered form of leadership [which] "is leadership, that carefully and consciously takes account of the gendered nature of the values and social contexts within which we are practicing leadership" (pp. 40-41). The debate should be not about male versus female styles of leadership, but rather the focus should be on the social and values systems to identify the nature of the leadership required in different organisational contexts. En/gendered leadership has relevance when leadership is not considered to be about power relationships (Limerick & Cranston, 1998). The responsibilities of leaders (male or female) are to distribute leadership functions, empowering and encouraging autonomy of staff. Leadership is about moving forward as a group, where all members are encouraged to take an active role in leadership (Applebaum et al., 1999).

Important intrapersonal qualities that the directors mentioned were compassion, resilience and stability, while important interpersonal qualities were listening, team-building, and open communication. Descriptions of leadership share a number of characteristics such as intuition, conceptual ability and most importantly, resilience (Khaleelee & Woolfe, 1996). Leadership, in these directors' views, was seen as an interpersonal process. The quality of interactions between staff members and the directors were key aspects of their leadership role. Leadership has been described as a process of encouraging and inspiring members to give their best to achieve desired

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organisational goals through obtaining willing cooperation rather than grudging submission (Morden, 1997a). These data also verify findings from the previous Chapter 4, Table 4.2, where directors emphasised the importance of interpersonal relationships.

The leadership model that emerges from this data is relational, requiring a valuing of others, high levels of two-way communication to engage others, and a promotion of shared responsibility and teamwork. Research shows that leadership requires front "running behaviours", "mapping new pathways" and "has roots in human diversity" (Klagge, 1996, p. 39). Primarily, directors of child care centres are women who appear to exercise a facilitative rather than an authoritarian style. The espoused values are about caring and nurturing in the context of working with young children and families. This does not imply that males should not be leaders and managers in child care settings. It is instead identifying that the specific feminine characteristics of an "en/gendered" form of leadership may be relevant in providing successful leadership in child care centres. The field of early childhood is seen as a feminised one and female workers mostly dominate this field. Thus, characteristics of leadership that are more people orientated may be more successful in this field than a strongly task-oriented approach.

Directors felt the need to be resilient, stable and assertive to be successful. However, the relational aspects of the role also brought the rewards, as well as the sense that the job was valuable in helping to make a difference in the lives of the children and families. This gave them a sense of accomplishment. Similarly, people and their achievements featured highly in an earlier study by Rodd (1997). This strong engagement with others to provide child care services also provided the challenges to the directors in managing and supervising staff and dealing with staff-focussed conflicts. Similar findings are noted in research conducted by Rodd (1997) who reported that directors "appeared to find aspects of interpersonal relationships to be most difficult part of their job [such as] working with parents, handling staff confrontation, and staff discipline procedures" (p. 45). Also, Jorde Bloom (1992b) and Hayden (1997a) found that staffing issues and dealing with people posed a challenge for the directors.

Stepping into leadership posed a number of issues for the directors. Most were appointed to their positions with little training for the position and thus found the position challenging, despite some directors having had prior experience as assistant directors. There is other evidence (Hayden, 1997a, b; Jorde Bloom, 1992a; Mitchell, 1997; Seplocha, 1998) to support these directors' comments that preparation for the director's role is usually inadequate. Directors had to learn while engaged in the job, which poses its own challenges, although research indicates that effective leadership requires `hands-on experience' or `on-the-job training' (Kapsalakis et al., 2000). Educational courses, in-service training and mentoring were seen as ways to enhance skill development. "Training and mentoring for directors should focus on the technical and rudimentary aspects of the job to develop administrative competence" (Jorde Bloom, 1997b, p. 37).

The directors indicated that they needed skills in business, financial and human resource management. As noted in Chapter 1, section 1.3, there has been few opportunities available for child care directors to pursue formal leadership and management training. A previous study by Hayden (1997a) reported that "child care administration has not been recognised as a skill area separate from teaching, [and] as such, has not been allotted sufficient credentialising, recognition or rewards" (p. 59). Rodd (1997) also noted that lack of opportunity for training in leadership and management has posed a major obstacle for those aspiring for leadership positions.

In the United States, higher degrees are viewed as professional gatekeeping, inordinately embellishing educational requirements and increasing the cost of child care in an increasingly market competitive field (Bowman, 1997; Jorde Bloom, 1992b). This is an important issue as higher levels of training have been found to provide higher level of care and education in child care centres. Strategies for skill development mentioned by the directors in this study were about developing a professional pathway so that directors can work through the ranks and add to their qualifications along the way; and the period of being an assistant director was recognised as a training period for directorship.

In meeting their responsibilities for providing quality child care, the directors held that providing a supportive, safe, developmentally appropriate, yet challenging

environment was important. These ideas are supported in research where quality child care was reported as providing a responsive, developmentally appropriate environment, which supplements the child's home and provides parents' with a sense of security that their children are safe and well stimulated (DeBord, 1996). The directors emphasised that staff need to be qualified, skilled and experienced in being able to address children's and families' needs. The importance of trained staff was also noted by Vandell and Wolfe (2003) who discuss the delivery of quality child care:

> Formal education and specialised training also are related to quality of care. Caregivers who have more formal qualifications … and more specialised training pertaining to children … offer care that is more stimulating, warm, and supportive. (p. 5)

Centres that are rated as high quality have teachers with more specialised training and education in early childhood (Boschee & Jacobs, 1997). Emphasis was on relationships, valuing and responding to the needs of children was the central tenet of these directors' practices.

The majority of the directors did not see themselves as advocates in the broader field of child care services. This reflects findings of Clyde (1995), Lunn and Bishop (2002) and Rodd (1997) where directors did not appear to have a belief that they had a broader role in advocacy other than within their own child care centres. Directors in this study did not perceive their role to include professionalising the broader field; rather they saw their role as being centre-specific. They saw themselves as pedagogical leaders in their centre rather than community leaders, as noted by Lunn and Bishop (2002) in their study of nursery teachers. The directors' emphases were on the visible "pedagogical structure" of their work in providing child-centred and individualised programs to children in the centres. The majority of the directors did not feel skilled or confident enough to advocate on a broader scale, other than for their own child care centres. Two directors mentioned that it is difficult to get their voices heard on the political arena.

This Chapter provides insight into understanding how some directors in particular settings, view leadership and the current issues for these directors in their work. The data indicates that it is the human functions of an organisation that are both challenging and rewarding and the relational aspects that are important in both leadership and management of the centre. As earlier proposed, Figure 5.1 draws key ideas from identified themes in this Chapter (Table 5.1) and develops this figure in a similar way to which Figure 4.1 was developed (section 4.5). Not all themes noted in sections of this Chapter are presented in Figure 5.1. For example, in section 5.3.1, directors talked about their preparedness for taking on the role of director. Three directors said that they felt quite prepared, whereas five directors considered that it had been a considerable challenge to take on the role of directorship. Further discussion of these ideas will be explored in later Chapters. Rather, the ideas that are representative of the major key themes in this Chapter are provided. Also, some themes overlap and could be represented in several components of the system, for instance, 'learning with and through others, in mentoring relationships and through networking with peers is deemed valuable' fits within the people component as well as within the processes component of the Social Systems Model presented here. The structure component identifies education and training as an important organisational function. This is an important issue that should be included within the larger organisational structure, to ensure that all staff are provided with opportunity to further develop and, in some cases, enhance their skills and knowledge in a given area.

Figure 5.1 also shows the director being situated at the core of the child care centre, with arrows pointing outward in all directions. This indicates that it is the centre director who is in an influential position to shape and mould organisational goals and objectives and lead others toward the organisational vision, and how the director needs to consider a range of issues together in a systems approach.

The data from Figure 5.1, as well as the data shown in Figure 4.1 will be integrated in Chapter six of this thesis.

5.7 Conclusion

The data shows that the directors have clear ideas about the nature of effective leadership. Most directors viewed themselves as 'part of a team' in their approach to leadership. Their concepts of themselves as leaders more strongly related to themselves as teachers rather than as supervisors and/or managers. This pedagogical emphasis was evident when directors focussed on the importance of a child-centred philosophy for their centres. Directors in child care centres do not see themselves just as administrators. The directors focussed more on the importance of positive outcomes for children, staff and families rather than on specific organisational outcomes. This concept of pedagogical leadership is useful as a model for understanding the roles and responsibilities of child care directors. However, in order to achieve organisational goals and objectives, the directors acknowledged that they require a range of business skills and competencies.

According to the directors' responses leadership entails building collaborative, harmonious teams in which team members share values, leaders empower and build others' skills through role modelling and mentoring. This is supported by research that indicates that effective leadership entails getting things done with and through other people (Morden, 1997a).

The next Chapter reviews the research aims and objectives posed in this study, linking key data, and explores the implications of the findings for understanding management and leadership in child care centres as derived from the directors' responses in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 6 THE FINAL REVISED SOCIAL SYSTEMS MODEL

In this Chapter, the findings of the data Chapters 4 and 5 are integrated. The Chapter begins by identifying what the directors said about their management practices in their centres from a Social Systems Model. A further revised Social Systems Model, Figure 6.1 integrates and extends the previous findings. Management within the social and policy context is discussed. Leadership issues are explored and a framework for developing leadership skills is presented. Child care centres are viewed within social, economic and policy change and a business model for viewing child care centres is introduced. Figure 6.4 provides a final revised Social Systems Model as derived from the directors' responses in the data Chapters. A summary of the broad findings is presented.

The findings are discussed with a focus on the aim of the research which was presented in Chapter 1. The aim of the research was to investigate leadership and management in child care in social, legislative and economic context.

6.1 Management in a Social Systems Model

In Figure 6.1, the Social Systems Model that originally guided this research (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) is presented with integration of key ideas presented in Chapter 4, Figure 4.1, and Chapter 5, Figure 5.1, which these directors identified as relevant to their work.

Key ideas acknowledged in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1) were about child care centres needing to meet increasingly complex family needs in a complex, competitive environment while maintaining high quality service delivery. Directors reported that they experienced increasingly high accountability requirements. This includes accountability to State and Commonwealth Government Departments to retain their eligibility for Childcare Benefit (fee subsidy) and Quality Improvement and Accreditation System. Policy development and administrative responsibilities were

seen as extensive, requiring effective time management strategies, such as prioritising, delegating and consulting with others. Building positive relationships between staff and families was deemed vital in meeting organisational goals and objectives. It was important for the directors to provide a harmonious environment and this required skilled and experienced staff and provision of ongoing professional development opportunities. Continual evaluation with staff and families ensured that all stakeholders had a say in what happens at the centre. Positive feedback from the community was seen as an effective tool to measure how the child care centres were viewed by the families and the wider community using the service.

Key ideas presented in Chapter 5, Figure 5.1 were about having commitment and being visionary to achieve organisational goals. Emphasis was on building a strong team and working effectively with others. Personality qualities, such as compassion, resilience and stability were deemed important. Effective communication skills were reported as necessary leadership qualities. Directors commented that staff related issues posed a challenge, as well as finding new, innovative ways to respond to diverse needs of families and children. Another challenge was to ensure that directors remained open to personal learning and change. There were also many rewards to their work with young children and families, such as the capacity to develop new quality programs, provided a sense of personal achievement for the directors. Three directors reported that they were prepared as leaders before they took on the role of director; the other five directors stated that it had been a considerable challenge. Education, training and mentoring programs were deemed important for future preparation for directorship. Directors reported that future training programs should encompass more courses in business management as well as further development of communication skills. Also, training should include a director apprenticeship, that is, where the assistant director shadows the director for a twelve-month period to better prepare for the role. Directors emphasised that quality care was about meeting the needs of individual children. Two directors mentioned that they saw themselves as advocates for the broader field, whereas six directors felt that they were not skilled or articulate enough to advocate on a larger scale.

The work of the child care director can be understood by a focus on external environment, culture, people, structure, processes and outcomes as impacting on management. As earlier reported by Jorde Bloom (1991b) the findings in this study re-enforce the notion that directors are required to take a broader view of their child care centres, rather than deal with incidents in a piecemeal fashion with a limited view of their centres.

In the presented model, the director is situated at the core of the organisation, indicating that the director is in an influential position in providing direction and leadership toward the centre goals and aims. This reflects earlier findings by Jorde Bloom (for example, 1991a, b, 1992b, 1997a) where the director is seen as a critical component of program quality. The directors in this study recognised that they have a role in taking responsibility for providing a supportive, nurturing, professional environment where each child and staff member can reach their full potential. The directors emphasised the importance of a relational model of leadership with open, honest communication between all members. Further, the director is seen as the facilitator, a role model, shaping the environment for staff, who in turn provide a critical link to children and families to ensure of high quality service within the community. This is reflected by placing the director in the centre of the child care centre as shown in Figure 6.1, also indicates the systems perspective where there is a need to consider all the components of the system collectively.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT – CHILD CARE IN THE SOCIAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

- Increasingly complex family needs;
- Increasing accountability for quality outcomes;
- Competition policy has a significant impact on child care centres;
- Directors do not see themselves as advocates in the broader field.

CENTRE CULTURE

- Maintenance of a harmonious environment is important;
- High levels of competence and professionalism;
- Commitment and vision toward organisational goals;
- Open to personal learning and change.

PROCESSES

- Collaborative policy development;
- Numerous administrative responsibilities;
- Prioritise, delegate, consult, forward planning;
- Ongoing evaluation with staff and parents;
- Staff appraisals are an effective evaluation tool;
- Finding new ways to respond to families' needs;
- Professional pathway;
- Mentoring/networking schemes;
- Stronger focus on business management;
- Need programs for communication.

PEOPLE

- Positive relationships;
- Director is responsible for providing leadership and support;
- A range of communication strategies;
- A child-centred philosophy;
- Team culture;
- Important intrapersonal qualities – compassion, resilience, stability;
- Staff pose a challenge;
- Communication skills are important interpersonal qualities.

Director as a Leader and Manager

STRUCTURE

- A sponsoring organisation has an influence on how a centre is managed;
- Systems for annual planning (forward planning);
- Education and training programs are an important organisational function.

OUTCOMES

- Reputation of a high quality program;
- Working effectively with staff is rewarding;
- Positive feedback is rewarding;
- Sense of personal achievement is a reward;
- Quality is meeting the needs of children.

THE CHILD CARE CENTRE

Figure 6.1. **An integrated Social Systems Model indicating the key issues for the directors as managers and leaders.**

6.2 Management within the social and policy context

In the presented model (Figure 6.1), key ideas presented in Chapter 4 indicate that the exchanges between the external environment and the child care centre are distinguished as a two way process. This was not clearly identified in the broad Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that guided this research. Although the directors reported not having a voice on the political agenda, nevertheless, they felt that this was an important issue for them as across the last three decades early childhood programs in Australia have dealt with significant changes in the social, political and economic environment that have impacted on the operation of their services (Brennan 1994, 1997; Leppert, 2000; Press & Hayes, 2000). Thus, it is important that directors are actively supported to assist them in having their voices heard at the macro level.

As noted in Chapter 2, section 2.1.1 the development of child care services was a response to social and economic pressures on families as women increasingly returned to the workforce because of social, philosophical or economic reasons (Bowes & Hayes, 1999; Brennan, 1994; Weeks & Wilson, 1997). Government responded to these social trends in order to make child care accessible and affordable to families. Maintaining opportunities for women with young children to stay in the labour force had become a national economic priority (Economic Planning Advisory Commission, 1996). Various funding policies have been implemented, and changes made to those policies by successive governments, as governments have sought to ensure an adequate number of child care places are available to families and that the fees parents pay for their child care are affordable (Brennan, 1994; Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, 1998). State governments hold responsibilities to ensure adequate and appropriate regulation of services. Recently, through the development of the accreditation system for children's services (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993, 2001) the Commonwealth Government has taken responsibility for raising the levels of quality in services that go beyond the base regulatory standards mandated by state governments. These issues have had a significant impact on child care service delivery in increasing centres' accountability to various government departments, consequently escalating stressors for the

directors who reported on their extensive administrative responsibilities and the complexity of their role, such as: the need to market their centre due to reduced funding (Cherry), lack of quality services for infants and toddlers (Elizabeth), constant changes to policy (Irene), increased paper-work (Samantha), and associated additional responsibilities caused through increased child care fees and low wages (Marleen).

As with the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b), the model presented here indicates that all components of the system are interrelated and interact with each other. What happens within one component of the system will have an impact on other components of the system. This is clearly demonstrated when considering the external environment within the social and policy context and how changes in government funding and changes in the political climate have impacted on child care centres. Rather than child care consisting of single unit early education centres, there are now increasingly large chains of child care centres with several levels of management to oversee the structural components of centre management. This influences the directors' role and responsibilities, and has forced them to rethink how child care centres are currently viewed. This also implies that it is time to shift thinking toward a more business orientation in the operation of child care centres, and consider how this may impact on quality outcomes in an increasingly competitive field.

6.3 Leadership – A further synthesis

Key ideas drawn from Chapter 5 indicate that leadership for these directors stems from a strong idealistic core as reported in the following sections.

The directors discussed the need to have a shared vision with staff about what was to be achieved through their leadership. Directors emphasised that an important goal was a commitment to meeting the needs of children. For the directors, there were challenges to be met in their leadership role but there were also rewards. They valued the recognition, that they received from the families and the community, and they derived satisfaction through developing an effective staff team.

Valuing children and meeting the needs of children was accorded the highest priority. This is a pedagogical dimension of the directors' leadership. It stemmed from their training and knowledge base in early childhood education and teaching experience. Thus, directors come to the role with this background with a focus on pedagogy as a priority, and do not see their role as that of an administrator (Clyde, 1995; Lunn & Bishop, 2002; Rodd, 1997). Good pedagogy was essential. They wanted to lead a team of skilled staff who were committed to their work with children.

The directors wished to provide high levels of support to staff. In this view, the leader is able to tap into the thoughts of others, give voice to their feelings and allow them to feel less anxious as a vision is created (Khaleelee & Woolfe, 1996). This is a relational style of leadership through which the directors focussed on engagement and support of staff to achieve their vision for the centre. Thus, leadership should not be restricted to one individual, rather becomes a shared experience where all workers become more empowered and confident (McCrimmon, 1995). Leadership is therefore having an ability to inspire and encourage individuals to achieve their best toward organisational goals (Morden, 1997a). Having a "hands-on" role in the work of the centre was a key issue. The directors did not want a hierarchical organisational structure. A sense of egalitarianism and shared engagement in the centres' work was the basis for developing "a team". Through participation in the regular routines, the directors wanted to model good practices to staff and lead by example. Being fully engaged in the day-to-day work also had a monitoring function. Directors became conversant with the practices and programs of the staff members. Through this engagement they also got to know the children, which enabled them to provide advice to the staff about children's programming. That is, through the process of "managing by wondering around" (Morden, 1997b, p. 668), the directors' had high involvement in the daily routines that served a number of purposes, but also added to their work demands.

In general, the directors saw that their leadership role did not extend beyond the centre to advocacy for quality child care services in the community. With the exception of two directors (Marleen and Lisa), other participants felt that they were

not skilled or verbally articulate enough to advocate on behalf of young children and families. Earlier research by Clyde (1995) and Rodd (1997) reported similar findings.

Advocacy for quality child care is also about achieving better pay and conditions for staff as this provides a base for the delivery of quality programs (Whitebook, 1999). While these directors recognised that the conditions and status of child care were poor in relation to other early childhood services they did not see this as something that they could change or advocate for. Advocacy by staff in child care for their industrial rights and the status of child care services are important issues to be addressed. Leaders in the child care field, such as directors, may need to be more active in this arena in their support for the quality of staffing through better pay and conditions and greater recognition of child care as early education.

Directors emphasised the importance of having vision to move the organisation forward in meeting specific goals and objectives. This requires working with, and through, other people to achieve organisational goals (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000; Morden, 1997a; Siegrist, 1999). In this framework, all people have a clear picture of the future where thoughts are transferred into reality and intention into action to meet set plans and goals (Manning & Robertson, 2002). Directors reported that they understood the importance of developing a team culture with emphasis on effective working relationships with others.

Professional development was identified by the directors as needed in areas of business management, as well as postgraduate courses in leadership studies. Research shows that due to the increase in the number of services, early childhood trained teachers are accepting director positions soon after graduation (Hayden, 1997b). The need for more effective leadership and management training to prepare early childhood teachers for the role of director is clear because the sector is rapidly expanding. Professional development and training should also require studies about working within communities and with other professionals in order to be responsive to local needs (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; Tennent et al., 2002).

The emphasis on building relationships between the director and staff depicted a strong relational model of leadership. The relational qualities that the directors

emphasised were having resilience, compassion and stability; being a good listener; and being a good communicator at various levels, as well as being tolerant, patient and empathetic. Rogers (1988) and Limerick and Cranston (1998) reported that women leaders place priority on maintaining positive relationships with others, sharing information and valuing their colleagues. Several directors noted that their role was to be a part of the staff team. The findings also suggest how feminine characteristics of leadership, such as people-orientated focus, are important as the directors sought to develop nurturing and caring environments for children but also for staff through the manner in which they emphasised collegiality and support. As noted in Chapter 5, section 5.6, this does not suggest that males would not also emulate this style as child care directors but that the values that originally attracted the directors to work in this field with young children are also the values that influence how they work with adults. Limerick and Cranston (1998, p. 217) identify this form of leadership as an "en/gendered" conceptualisation of leadership, which can be practiced by both males and females.

As earlier noted, to achieve the relevant skills and knowledge, directors emphasised the need for formal courses of study in business, leadership and management and a range of different opportunities for professional development. They identified the importance of a professional pathway that had multiple dimensions including specific education courses, mentoring opportunities, and systems for networking between directors.

6.4 Framework for developing leadership skills in child care centres

Figure 6.2 provides a framework for understanding leadership drawn from the data in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1), and Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1). Relational and pedagogical aspects of leadership were key dimensions for the child care director. This theme is consistently noted by the directors' responses throughout the data Chapters. The directors discussed the importance of a shared vision with staff in order to move the organisation forward.

Relational and pedagogical leadership in child care
Relational
- A shared vision with staff to move the organisation forward (Table 5.1);
- Capacities to build a team culture and work effectively with others (Table 5.1);
- Communication skills for facilitation and negotiation (Table 5.1);

Pedagogical
- Leadership skills to implement a philosophy of child-centred practice (Table 4.2);
- Theoretical and professional knowledge of the early childhood field (Table 4.2);
- Provision of support for the professional development of staff (Table 4.2).

Leadership qualities - intrapersonal and interpersonal
- Resilience, compassion and stability (Table 5.1);
- Communication skills – listening and leading (Table 5.1);
- Capacities to build meaningful relationships with others (Table 5.1).

Developing leadership skills - A professional pathway
- Formal courses of study in business, leadership and management (Table 5.1);
- Mentoring schemes (Table 5.1);
- Networking schemes in the wider community (Table 5.1);
- Professional Pathway for director apprenticeship (Table 5.1).

Figure 6.2. **A leadership framework identified by the directors.**

They noted the importance of building a team culture (Jorde Bloom et al., 1991a; Kreitner, 1992; Pool et al., 2001; Rodd, 1994) but also having the skills required to be an effective facilitator and negotiator in working with staff. Directors recognised the importance of effective leadership skills to enable them to nurture others. The importance of professional and theoretical knowledge was emphasised. At the core of their practice lies a child-centred philosophy where children's needs are considered first and foremost.

Building meaningful relationships was the basis for leadership when directors identified the nature of the interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities required for the role. The model emphasises resilience, compassion and stability as important intrapersonal qualities. Effective communication (Gardner & Terry, 1996; Rodd, 1998) and listening skills were emphasised to assist in building meaningful relationships with others.

The framework presented here identifies several forms of training and education that would enhance directors' skills and knowledge about relational, pedagogical (Lunn & Bishop, 2002) and leadership qualities. The framework emphasises the provision of a pathway for those aspiring toward leadership positions. This pathway would consist of streams such as provision of formal courses of study in business and management in university courses, opportunity for mentoring schemes (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; Larkin, 1999; Scandura et al., 1996) and opportunity to network within the wider community. Importantly, a director apprenticeship for a twelve-month period would assist interested applicants for directorship to learn about the role before accepting the position. This could mean that an assistant director would shadow an experienced director for a twelve-month period to learn about the requirements of the role to be better informed before taking on the position of a director.

The framework presented here provides a useful foundation for researchers, policy makers, university course developers, and practitioners alike when looking at directorship in early care and education. The framework identifies specific skills and knowledge required for those aspiring toward directorship positions and proposes a

pathway of how to develop and enhance these skills. Formal and informal courses can then be developed and implemented reflective of the identified criteria.

The framework emphasises leadership with a strong focus on child-centred philosophy (Lunn & Bishop, 2002). This philosophy entails a pedagogical dimension as core practice in service delivery. Within this dimension children are seen as individuals with unique needs; children are provided with long uninterrupted periods to learn through play. The aim is to ensure that children have an opportunity to develop into confident and sociable people with a good mastery of language to prepare them for later learning. In the presented framework, directors see themselves as teachers first and foremost, while recognising the changing nature of their roles and the importance of skilled professional knowledge in business management and administration.

6.5 Child care centres in social, legislative and economic context

In this study, directors were concerned that child care centres are increasingly required to respond to diverse and complex family needs (for example, Samantha, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Cherry). While societal understanding of the purpose of child care centres remains focussed on care for children while parents are engaged in work or study (Tennent et al., 2002), directors in this study saw that their services have a broader role in helping families in their parenting role. They noted that child care centres are well placed within the community to fulfil this role. While directors are sensitive to these additional responsibilities and believe that they are in a key position to assist families seeking a variety of supports (Corter, 2001), one director (Samantha) reported that directors alone cannot meet the complexity of families' needs; rather engagement of other professionals (such as counsellors and social workers) in child care centres may address this need.

Child care is a highly regulated system. The directors recognised the increased demands placed upon them by various government accountability processes in maintaining their centre's eligibility for the Childcare Benefit and engagement in the QIAS accreditation system (for example, Marleen, Lisa, Cherry, Samantha, and Elizabeth). Centres are also required to meet the state regulations for the operation of

child care centres. Leaders in educational settings, including child care centres, are increasingly required to take account of these external environmental influences in their practices (Foskett & Lumby, 2003; Fraser, 2000), while at the same time they are required to make complex decisions about facilities management, budgeting, and staffing (Cranston, 2000; Hayden, 1997b). The child care director's role requires teaching expertise to lead staff in quality practice but also many other responsibilities in order to be an effective administrator, and to meet the regulatory and accountability requirements by government.

6.6 Child care centres within a business-oriented environment

Evidence from the directors in this study was that their role was changing through the nature of the business environment in which centres increasingly operated (for example, Samantha, Marleen, and Rachel). Competition policy in the child care industry has had a significant impact. There has been a considerable shift away from community based non-profit system in the delivery of long-day care service to the commercialisation of the industry in a market driven system (Brennan, 1999, 1997; Press & Hayes, 2000; Murdoch, 2004; Press, 1999). Whether employed in the community-based sector or in the commercial sector, the directors recognised the need to acknowledge this shift and respond to it (for example, Cherry, Samantha, Lisa, Elizabeth, Marleen and Rachel).

Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) proposed a model for analysing the business performance of child care centres as noted in Chapter 2, Figure 2.2. Their model, based on the work of Lumpkin and Dess (1996), focuses on the external environmental factors that can affect child care centres. The model reflects many of the issues, which these directors identified in respect to how centres now need to operate in a time of turmoil within the social and political climate. While the directors did not specifically identify the need for an entrepreneurial orientation this was implicit in how they discussed their work. They presented needing to be proactive in being accountable, and maintaining the reputation and quality of their centre. This model complements the original Social Systems Model proposed by Jorde-Bloom (1991b). It extends that model by emphasising that child care centres operate in a dynamic business environment. The shift to a business culture was

apparent in this study as directors discussed the importance of maintaining enrolments (Cherry), responding to reduced funding (Rachel) and the importance of marketing their centre in a competitive environment (Jenny, Samantha).

The model proposed by Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002, p. 25) is modified in Figure 6.3 to include issues raised by the directors in this study in specific sections in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2, section 4.5), Chapter 5 (Table 5.1, section 5.6) and Chapter 6 (Figure 6.2, section 6.4) that pertain to a business model of service delivery in child care centres and recognises important characteristics of leadership that promote an entrepreneurial orientation to service delivery. For instance, the category "Environmental factors" that identifies "Dynamism" (level of continual change) in Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) model is represented here as "Competition policy has had a significant impact" and "Finding new ways to respond to the diverse needs of children and families", demonstrating a correlation of ideas.

Figure 6.3 provides a Business Model for looking at child care centres in the current social and political climate. The Business Model presented extends the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that guided this research, emphasising that directors of child care centres are required to have an entrepreneurial orientation in their management and leadership of their centres. As noted in Figure 6.2, directors require theoretical and professional knowledge of the early childhood field as well as a good understanding of business and management. This includes awareness of funding options, operational costs and responsiveness to the needs of the local community. Also, directors need to be visionary in their planning, while also maintaining very high standards in their service delivery as well as having a commitment to continual improvement of their centres. This requires strong engagement with the sponsoring organisation and the parents using the service. To address complex macro and policy issues, directors require a broad view of their service and its operation in a complex and competitive industry, which also has to be value-driven in its care and educational focus in implementing a philosophy of child-centred practice.

The model presented here, shows the director from an entrepreneurial orientation in their leadership and management role to enable them to develop and implement innovative programs to meet increasingly complex family needs.

Environmental Factors
- Competition policy has had a significant impact (Table 4.2)
- Finding new ways to respond to the diverse needs of children and families (Table 5.1)

Entrepreneurial Orientation
- Child care centres are required to meet increasingly complex family needs (Table 4.2)
- The leader needs to have commitment and vision toward organisational goals (Table 5.1)

Director of a child care centre
- Relational and pedagogical leadership (Figure 6.2)
- Leadership qualities - intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities (Figure 6.2)
- Developing leadership skills – a professional pathway (Figure 6.2)
- A strong focus on business management is needed (Table 5.1)

Centre Performance
- Child care services must be more accountable for quality outcomes (Table 4.2)
- Quality care is about providing a child-centred philosophy of practice (Table 5.1)

Organisational Factors
- The sponsoring organisation has an impact on policy development (Table 4.2)
- Implementation of child-centred philosophy requires significant engagement of parents (Table 4.2)
- Evaluation is ongoing process which requires input from parents (Table 4.2)

Figure 6.3. **Business Model of service delivery in child care centres (adapted from Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002).**

Not only do directors need to provide quality care and educational programs for young children and families, they also are required to address wider issues faced by families while ensuring to maintain sustainability by providing quality service within

the community. Directors emphasised the need to provide relational and pedagogical leadership and have strong intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities for effective communication. To develop these skills directors reported that there is a need to instigate a professional pathway to provide them with an opportunity to learn and in some cases, enhance their leadership and business management skills.

The model proposes that given the increasing growth of the private sector (Murdoch, 2004) and the funding constraints in the commercial and community sectors (Press, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000) a different view of child care is needed. In the presented model here, the arrows within indicate the required skills and knowledge of the director to enable [the director] to adopt a business orientation to service delivery, providing a framework to represent this business focus. Further, child care centres need to fulfil their educational and care functions at a high level of quality while operating in a competitive business environment.

The model presented here differs from the Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) model in that the director is clearly situated at the core of the organisation and is in an influential position to interact with all the components of the centre. Further, this model outlines specific skills and knowledge required, and recognises the importance of a professional pathway to enable the director to provide effective leadership and management in a child care centre. Whereas the Bergin-Seers and Breen model broadly outlines a number of organisational and environmental factors that may influence performance in an organisation, there is limited mention how these factors reflect on the skills, role and responsibilities of the manager (or director). The arrows within the model presented here show that all the components of the organisation interlink and that leading and managing is a cyclic process with continual movement from one component to another for effective monitoring and evaluation of service delivery.

However, corporatisation of child care services is a concern for many child care staff. There needs to be an effective analysis of the effects of commercialisation on the quality aspects of service delivery, so that the care for children is not compromised in a competitive environment in which costs have to be carefully managed. Consultations with the more entrepreneurial centre directors may offer a good

starting point for such a review (Bergin-Seers & Breen, 2002). As Fraser (2000) noted, the professional early education sector must also develop stronger links with the business community in order to advocate for early childhood services that enhance the social capital of the community. The next section integrates key themes from Chapter 4, (Table 4.2, section 4.5) and Chapter 5, (Table 5.1, section 5.6) and introduces an extended version of the Social Systems Model that integrates the leadership and business manager frameworks into the final extended model (Figure 6.4).

6.7 The final extended Social Systems Model

This section addresses Research Objective 4 (Chapter 1, section 1.4.1) which was to: Develop a model which integrates management responsibilities and leadership qualities to provide quality child care service. Figure 6.4 presents the final amended version of the Social Systems Model as derived from the directors' responses in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2), and Chapter 5 (Table 5.1). The model presented here integrates these findings and provides an additional framework for leadership as presented in Figure 6.2 (section 6.4) in this Chapter. Figure 6.2 shows that directors as leaders are required to have specific relational, pedagogical, intra- and interpersonal qualities when providing leadership in child care centres. This is represented in the centre of Figure 6.4, where the director is seen as the leader and manager of the child care centre. To gain these skills, the directors emphasised a need for a professional pathway in early childhood education and care.
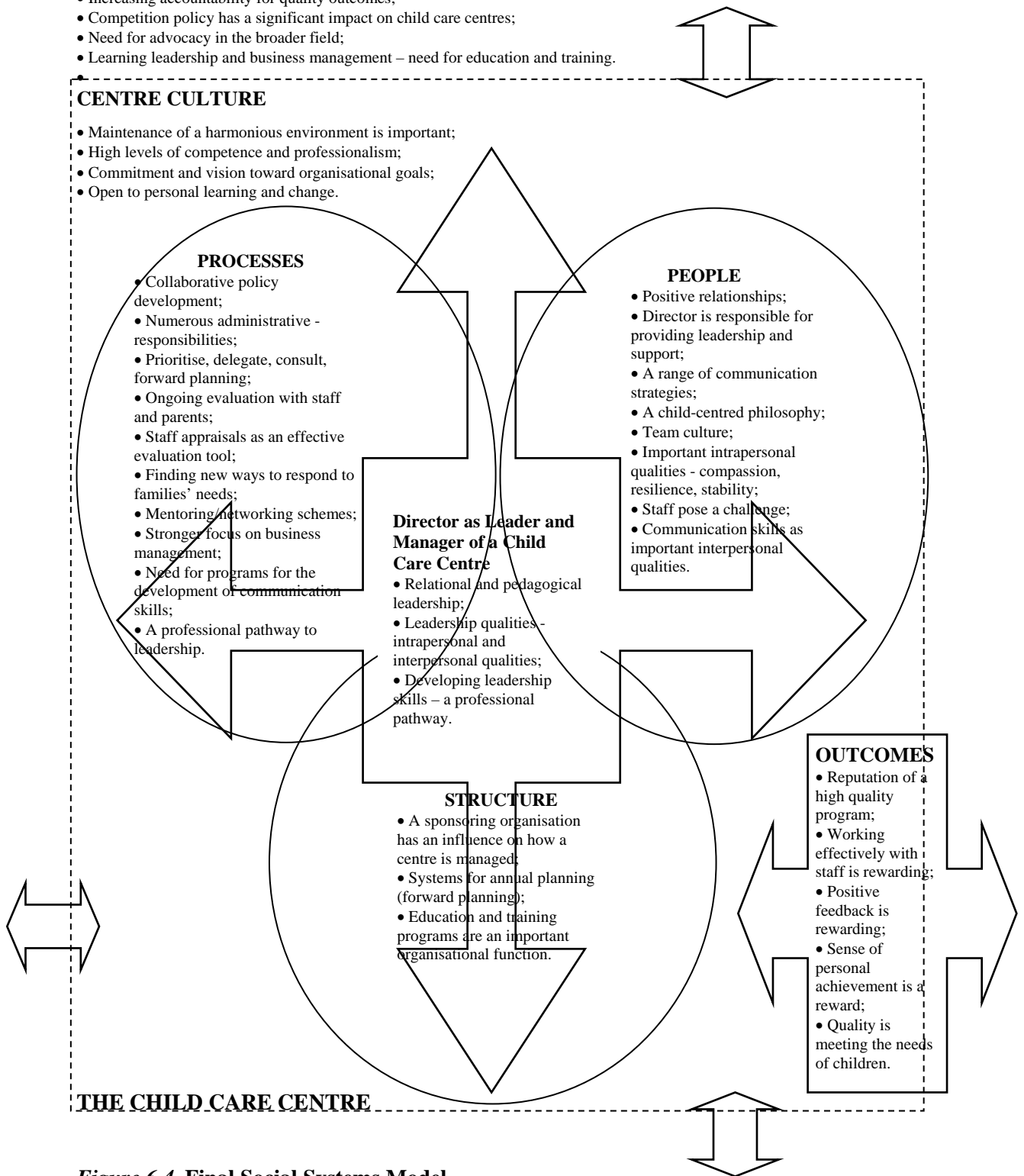
Further, Figure 6.4 introduces the idea that child care centres are required now to view their services from a business model of service delivery as presented in Figure 6.3 (section 6.6) in this Chapter. The business model framework is added to the leadership framework and provides the overall framework for directors as leaders and managers as shown in Figure 6.4. The director in the extended Social Systems Model presented here continues to be situated at the core of the organisation, emanating outwards as shown by the arrows, leading and managing in a competitive environment.

The director is symbolically situated within the core of the child care centre, emphasising that the director is in a key position to lead the way toward organisational goals and objectives, inclusive of the macro community. The findings in this study indicate that directors in child care centres are now required to be competent business managers; effective manager of service delivery; take an entrepreneurial orientation to quality service delivery; provide professional leadership to staff; and have effective interpersonal skills.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT   -CHILD CARE IN THE SOCIAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

-CHILD CARE IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- Increasingly complex family needs;
- Increasing accountability for quality outcomes;
- Competition policy has a significant impact on child care centres;
- Need for advocacy in the broader field;
- Learning leadership and business management – need for education and training.

CENTRE CULTURE

- Maintenance of a harmonious environment is important;
- High levels of competence and professionalism;
- Commitment and vision toward organisational goals;
- Open to personal learning and change.

PROCESSES
- Collaborative policy development;
- Numerous administrative - responsibilities;
- Prioritise, delegate, consult, forward planning;
- Ongoing evaluation with staff and parents;
- Staff appraisals as an effective evaluation tool;
- Finding new ways to respond to families' needs;
- Mentoring/networking schemes;
- Stronger focus on business management;
- Need for programs for the development of communication skills;
- A professional pathway to leadership.

PEOPLE
- Positive relationships;
- Director is responsible for providing leadership and support;
- A range of communication strategies;
- A child-centred philosophy;
- Team culture;
- Important intrapersonal qualities - compassion, resilience, stability;
- Staff pose a challenge;
- Communication skills as important interpersonal qualities.

Director as Leader and Manager of a Child Care Centre
- Relational and pedagogical leadership;
- Leadership qualities - intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities;
- Developing leadership skills – a professional pathway.

STRUCTURE
- A sponsoring organisation has an influence on how a centre is managed;
- Systems for annual planning (forward planning);
- Education and training programs are an important organisational function.

OUTCOMES
- Reputation of a high quality program;
- Working effectively with staff is rewarding;
- Positive feedback is rewarding;
- Sense of personal achievement is a reward;
- Quality is meeting the needs of children.

THE CHILD CARE CENTRE

Figure 6.4. **Final Social Systems Model.**

As in the broad Social Systems Model (Chapter 2, Figure 2.3), the arrows in Figure 6.4 reinforce that all the components of the system are interrelated and integrated, that what happens within one component of the system will have a flow on effect right throughout the internal and external components of the organisation. Also, the arrows in Figure 6.4 indicate that the information flow between the internal and external environment is a two-way process. This was not so evident in the broad Social Systems Model in Figure 2.3. Further, Figure 6.4 differs from the broad Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) in other ways. The model presented here has an additional focus on characteristic of directors as leaders and managers in their centres, and provides a profile of an early childhood director. This builds on the Jorde Bloom (1991b) Social Systems Model which emphasised change strategies, promoting the idea of leaders as change agents, to improve child care centres' organisational effectiveness.

Further, Figure 6.4 introduces the importance of viewing leadership in child care centres from a business model of service delivery. There is limited research in the field that mentions business orientation to child care service delivery. However, given the changes in Federal Government funding since 1997, as well as the increasing growth of the private sector, there is a need to take a wider view on macro factors and consider how they impact on the operation of child care centres, specifically on leadership and management roles and responsibilities. Although the Jorde Bloom model (1991b) identifies the importance of developing and expanding contacts within the external environment, there is no mention of entrepreneurial orientation to leading and managing child care centres within a business environment. This is a new finding stemming from the participants' responses, adding a new dimension to the social systems framework when viewing leadership and management in child care centres.

Also, the amended model here describes all the components of the system from in-depth analyses of the directors' responses providing a firm foundation for future research in the field. Thus, the model provides understanding of the daily life of a director in centre based-child care and outlines the specific skills and knowledge required for this role. Whereas the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b)

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provides a broad outline of what may be expected within each component of the system drawn from literature on organisational theory, rather than from the directors' perspectives. The final model in this section provides an elaborated view of the issues raised by the directors and integrates these issues into a framework that represents the scope of the leadership role of the director. This framework provides direction for intervention in professional development to enhance the leadership role of the director.

6.8 Summary of the chapter

The findings from this research indicate that the organisational life and culture of the child care centre is dynamic. As a system, the child care centre exists as a specific physical entity in which there are complex sets of social and work relationships between staff members who differ by age, sometimes by gender and cultural background, as well as by their orientation to their work by the nature of their training, work motivation and morale. Relationships between these individuals will differ in the level of shared trust and openness. The social dynamics in any child care centre have unique properties. No two directors will behave in the same way and their individual personalities, expectations and beliefs about their role will influence the nature of relationships with staff and also relationships between staff (Jorde Bloom, 1995; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b; Khaleelee & Woolfe, 1996).

The culture of an organisation describes the basic assumptions and prevailing norms that emerge to unite the members of a group (Kreitner, 1992; Schien, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1994). Without exception, these directors emphasised the importance of a centre culture that supported harmonious relationships between staff and a culture that valued child-centred practice. Professionalism was also important (for example, Irene, Lisa, and Cherry). These latter directors wished to promote a strong sense of a learning organisation by providing new information to staff about effective practice and by encouraging the exchange of new ideas between staff. This is an important and significant role for child care directors to support the professional development of staff.

Directors in this study emphasised the importance of communication with staff. Open communication was a critical aspect of their management style as a means to achieve their organisational goals. The directors also aimed to ensure the quality of the interpersonal relationships between staff members, children and families. They had a key role in relationship building between staff and families to developing a sense of community within the centre. They identified a range of different ways in which staff engaged with families. For example, emphasising the importance of staff getting to know individual families (for example, Jenny); assisting staff to schedule regular discussions with families (for example, Irene); emphasising the importance of personal daily exchanges between the staff and families (for example, Cherry, Elizabeth); and adapting the communication style and form to the family's needs and preferences (for example, Marleen).

Directors reported on the need for more training for skill development prior to taking up the position. They voiced the need for more courses in business management and the implementation of a professional pathway to better prepare those aspiring toward leadership positions. Their underlying annotations reflected the need to move towards an entrepreneurial orientation to leading and managing in child care centres.

Managing is about processes, about how things actually get done. The processes bind all the components of the system together (Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992a). The importance of effective time management was emphasised by all directors. Forward planning and prioritising were other key issues. The directors reported that they had numerous administrative responsibilities, which required high levels of organisation. The directors emphasised the importance of delegation. They saw the benefits of delegation as two-fold. Staff who were keen to advance in their own career learned new skills and the directors were able to share their work-load. Forward planning was also essential to the directors as meetings and events needed to be planned well in advance on yearly calendars.

The directors had a variety of different perspectives for staff appraisal and evaluation. Evaluation was seen by most directors as an ongoing process requiring involvement from various stakeholders, including parents and the staff. Although

directors recognised the importance and value of the national QIAS accreditation system, only one director (Rachel) mentioned this process as a form of evaluation.

At an organisational level, valued outcomes were the reputation that the child care centre held in the community, maintaining the financial viability of the centre, and the efficiency of the daily operations. The reputation of the centre was considered a salient measure of the quality of their own work as the director (for example, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Marleen). A good reputation in the community brought personal rewards because it provided a sense of personal achievement. At the staff level, valued outcomes were staff job satisfaction and low staff turnover.

The nature of the roles and responsibilities of the child care director is, in part, determined by the nature of the sponsoring organisation. The data indicates that the wider organisation that owns or governs the centre has a direct impact on the manner in which policies and practices are developed, for which the child care director must take responsibility. Similar findings have been earlier noted by Larkin (1999) who proposed that comparison of directors who worked in schools which are funded primarily through tuition fees and those which operate under the auspices of a larger institution (such as a university, a corporation, or a religious group) showed that they are quite different. For instance, in tuition-based schools the director guides the decision making process, and works largely with the board of directors (that is, the parents), the position being comparable to a chief executive; whereas within larger organisations the director is seen as a skilled negotiator lobbying to obtain resources for the early childhood program, the position being one of middle management with competing priorities.

Directors rarely have complete autonomy in their role. Many child care centres throughout Australia operate under the auspices of larger community-based organisations, religious organisations or, increasingly, corporate entities. Minimal attention in the child care literature has been given to the influence of the larger organisation on practices and policies within centres. The organisational auspices under which a child care centre operates may be construed as a support to the director if there is agreement in values and philosophy between the sponsoring organisation and the director. Support may be given to the director in the operation of

the centre or the sponsoring organisation may constrain the actions of directors by reducing their autonomy in decision-making. This area will need further investigation in future research.

One of the criteria by which the directors were selected for this study was that they had been the director in their current centre for at least two years. Thus, it might be expected that there would be a level of compatibility in values and philosophy between the sponsoring agency and the director because she had chosen to remain in that work place. Many of the directors had been employed at their centre for lengthy periods. No director expressed dissatisfaction with the sponsoring organisation. The directors indicated this satisfaction in their references to commonality in religious values (for example, Cherry), support from the larger organisation (for example, Irene, Elizabeth, Rachel), compatibility with the owner in private centres, and management of the commercial organisation (for example, Samantha, Lisa, Jenny). Marleen noted the freedom afforded in decision-making when a university was the sponsoring organisation.

From the manner in which the directors discussed their management responsibilities it was clear that the sponsoring organisation was an important influence on the nature of their role. More attention to the influence of the wider organisation under which a centre may operate is an important issue for future research. This is especially relevant as more corporate players enter the child care industry (see Murdoch, 2004) increasing competition in the sector. The *Child Care Census* (2001) in Queensland showed that half of the 1,280 licensed child care services who responded to the Census were privately owned. There are now more commercial child care chains as well as franchised services than five years ago (see also Laszlo, 2003; Murdoch, 2004; Press & Hayes, 2000; Jokovich, 2002; Manne, 2002a, b), indicating the importance of continuing research on what impact this growth may have on the provision of quality child care and education in Australia.

The directors reported on the impact of the external environment, specifically noting the increasing complexity of families' needs and the best way to address these needs. One director (Samantha) suggested the engagement of outside professionals like social workers or counsellors to support child care centres in addressing wider social

issues. The findings suggest that directors are aware of centres needing to take more responsibility for accountability to ensure quality outcomes for young children and families.

The next Chapter provides a summary and conclusions of this research beginning with identifying how this study met the specific aim and objectives of this study. Review of the research method is presented and suggestions for future research are also made.

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This Chapter provides a summary and conclusion to this thesis. First, the specific aim and objectives of this study are reviewed to identify how these were met. Review of the research method is presented. Findings, implications of the study and limitations of this research are outlined. Suggestions for future research are provided.

7.1 Review of the aim and objectives

The aim of this research was to investigate leadership and management in child care centres in social, legislative and economic context. The specific research objectives were:

(1)   To identify the management issues and responsibilities that directors face in their role.

(2)   To explore how child care centre directors perceive their leadership role in the operation of child care services.

(3)   To examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community, in social, legislative and economic context.

(4)   To develop a model which integrates management responsibilities and leadership qualities to provide quality child care service.

These objectives are each discussed below.

The first objective was to identify the management roles and responsibilities that directors face in their role. The findings in Chapter 4 (Table, 4.2, section 4.5) outline clearly what directors said about their management practices in their child care centres. For instance, some key themes were about 'Working with families and the community', 'Developing centre policies' and 'Developing centre philosophy'. Also, when discussing 'Managing organisational and administrative tasks', directors reported on their numerous administrative tasks, and time management. Further,

when directors discussed 'Managing daily routines', key themes were about prioritising, delegating and forward planning.

The second objective explored how child care centre directors perceived their leadership role in the operation of child care services. Data drawn from Chapter 5 (Table 5.1, section 5.6) was able to address this objective. For example, some key themes were about identifying a 'Definition of leadership' from the directors' perspectives; recognising the importance of 'Interpersonal and intrapersonal' qualities to enable directors to become effective leaders; but also noting the many 'Challenges' and 'Rewards' of being a leader in their centres. Directors further reported on the need for more 'Professional development' with a strong focus on business management.

The third objective was to examine the perceptions of directors about the provision of quality child care services and the role of child care in the community, in social, legislative and economic context. Key themes from Chapters 4 (Table 4.2) and 5 (Table 5.1) addressed this objective. For example, in Chapter 4, directors reported that 'Child care services must become more accountable for quality outcomes' and through providing a 'Child-centred philosophy' leads toward quality practice. Also, 'Managing relationships' was deemed important in that directors emphasised that positive relationships with staff supports the quality of practice in the centre. Other themes relating to quality practice were about creating 'A harmonious environment' and employing staff with 'High levels of competence and professionalism'. In Chapter 5, key themes about quality practice were about having 'The capacity to deliver quality programs by working effectively with staff', and 'Quality care is about meeting the needs of children'. Directors also reported on the changing social, economic and policy climate by commenting on the 'Competition policy' and its effect on the operation of their centres, and noting the 'Increasingly complex family needs' (Chapter 4) which challenges the directors in being able to address the various family issues.

The fourth objective was to develop a model that integrates management responsibilities and leadership qualities to provide quality child care service. This objective was met through integrating data from Chapters 4 (Table 4.2) and 5 (Table

5.1) in Chapter 6, and presenting the final extended Social System Model in Figure 6.4. Importantly, the original Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) has been extended with additional components relating to characteristics of directors as leaders and managers in Australian context, and by providing a business orientation when viewing child care centres in today's competitive market.

7.2 Review of the research method

This research employed a qualitative approach and a multi-case study methodology to compile a comprehensive picture of the nature of the role of child care directors. Case studies are useful when broad complex questions are addressed and when the perspectives and experiences of a range of individuals are sought. Multi-case exploration was useful in this research to allow the researcher to understand the breadth of directors' experiences. The research participants were experienced and well qualified directors.

This study collected data through interviews. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used in this study. The interview questions were developed in line with the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b), which provided the framework for this study. It has been argued that qualitative interviews are a practical tool when exploring social, political and economic changes in the world of work and people's lives (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The open-ended questions allowed the directors to respond in diverse ways and allowed opportunities to give illustrative examples of their ideas and experiences. Probing and crosschecking in the interview ensured that the researcher had a clear understanding of the intended meaning of the participants' responses. Although the interview guide was semi-structured, the researcher used the questions flexibly to ensure that the participants were able to take directions in their responses that were most pertinent to their experiences. In the interviews, some of the directors were much more articulate than others in expanding on their ideas about their role and responsibilities, and providing examples of their experiences. In the analyses, this was a consideration to ensure that the broad range of ideas were represented but also that the views of all the participants were evident. The data analysis involved a

thematic approach to categorisation of responses in the various focus areas that were explored in the study. The findings from the data were analysed according to emerging patterns and themes and validated by crosschecking across participants.

There are a number of criteria that can be adopted to address the issue of reliability and validity in case studies (Yin, 1994). These criteria were taken into account in the conduct of the study and in the analysis of the data. These considerations included interview questions that were carefully prepared to address the research questions. The researcher listened carefully to the responses provided by the participants to negate being trapped by the researcher's own preconceptions and expectations. As well, prior work experience of the researcher as a child care director also enabled the researcher to have a clear understanding of the issues being explored and hence to focus on relevant events in order the make the volume of data collected more manageable. The researcher continually sought to be reflective and manage biases and subjectivity in the analysis of the data, as well as being conscious of the need to carefully document the data. In retrospect, reflecting back on the methodology, the findings may have been strengthened by following the interviews with observational data. This may have provided the researcher with an additional opportunity to validate about what the directors had said about their leadership and management role and responsibilities were indeed physically demonstrated in their daily activities.

7.3 Findings

This study reported the perspectives of eight directors in Australian child care centres about the nature of leadership and management within centre-based child care programs, from a Social Systems Model perspective. Drawn from the directors' responses, the broad Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that guided this research has been extended; consequently a new redesigned final Social Systems Model has been presented in Chapter 6 (Figure 6.4).

This revised model is different to Jorde Bloom's model in several ways. First, the revised model has the director clearly positioned at the core of the child care centre, the emphasis being on the director's ability to influence and oversee organisational functioning both at internal and external level. Second, added to this are clearly

identified characteristics of the director as a leader and manager, drawn from the participants' responses. Third, the components of the system such as the culture, processes, people, structure and outcomes are also more profoundly defined from data drawn from the directors' viewpoints, with clearly identified processes, roles and responsibilities. Fourth, the external environment has additional components that recognises the importance of the business environment and its impact on the director's role in maintaining the centre's viability through marketing their centre in a competitive environment. As well, the external environment includes findings relating to increased accountability of centre directors, for state and federal government departments; the need for support for directors to enable them to partake in advocacy; and recognises the increasingly complex family needs and the necessity to address how best to support these families in their parenting role. This elaborated and extended model provides a new perspective on the director's role and responsibilities and articulates specific characteristics of directors that influence how the child care centres are lead and managed.

The findings indicate that the directors have a strong pedagogical focus in their work and strong relational qualities in their approach to leadership. They require finely honed management and administration skills. Directors appeared to be flexible and resourceful in their management. The essential focus in their daily practice was to create and maintain a high-quality program through open lines of communication and participatory management with staff. A sense of care and responsibility for staff was most evident in the data. The directors recognised the importance of being skilled in business management. This has not been previously reported in the literature in the field. They mainly learned the skills necessary for their role 'on the job'.

A strong professionalism was evident in the manner in which these directors went about their work. They had a diverse range of administrative responsibilities but remained focussed that the core to their work was providing quality care to children and working to inculcate in staff a shared set of values about child-centred practice with a strong focus on a pedagogical dimension to their leadership. Professional training for directors in the expanding field of child care is important and this can be informed in its directions by the accounts provided by the directors in this research.

Increasing formal preparation of directors will ultimately lead to expectations for higher pay, thus increasing the cost of child care. However, this is an important issue in raising awareness of the professional nature of the work that the directors are engaged in (Larkin, 1999). The findings from this study provide a stepping stone for understanding leadership in early care and education that can inform training and future research in this field. Further, this study enabled the researcher to present a profile of directors' work that can inform other researchers, policy makers, higher education institutions and practitioners.

7.4 Implications

In the current context of the delivery of child care services in a market driven climate, the language of business and organisational theory has entered the lexicon of the early childhood field (Press, 1999). This does not necessarily sit comfortably with the manner in which services to children and families have usually been discussed in the early childhood education literature. It may be viewed as problematic because it focuses on outcomes of child care as business enterprise rather than needs of individual children and families (Press, 1999). However, when this discourse is acknowledged, it may then be a starting point for greater focus on what quality child care is within a competitive business climate in the delivery of services. For example, literature that focuses on continual improvement within business organisations identifies "customer orientation" as a way to achieve customer satisfaction (Mehra, Hoffman, & Sirias, 2001, p. 866). Focussing on children and families as clients or customers requires the organisation to identify customer needs (Mehra et al., 2001; Waldman, 1994) and for services to work on continuous improvement processes, as spelt out by the current Accreditation processes. It was unclear in this study whether directors thought of parents and children as clients, nor was this question asked. This area will require further investigation. The compatibility of the market-driven processes evident in current child care policy directions of government (Press, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000) with continual improvement processes to enhance outcomes for children and families is important.

Thus, the findings of this research indicate that directors of child care centres need to have training and experience in business management to enhance their competencies for management of centres. Growth in child care franchises is significantly changing and truly developing a "child care industry" (see Murdoch, 2004). Parents should have a choice of quality child care services and both, the commercial and the not-for-profit sector are equally important.

A 'one size fits all' model of leadership is outmoded in today's changing social, political and economic climate of child care service delivery (Robert et al., 1998). Families in specific communities have varying needs and early childhood programs should reflect the needs of the local community. Leadership models within child care centres should encompass the micro and macro influences on the operation of centres. In Queensland the Child Care and Family Support Hubs are a community driven response, and a macro development to service provision that is likely to benefit all community members (Tennent et al., 2002). Early childhood centres provide an opportune place to support families in a variety of ways through integrating support services to address the underlying social and policy factors that affect young children and their families (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Corter, 2001).

7.5 Limitations

The directors worked in a particular geographical context and were relatively experienced in the role. Any one study can add only to the body of knowledge accruing in a specific focus area and provide confirmation or not of previous research findings. In the findings from this study there was a level of commonality to that found in previous research but also new knowledge was gained because of the depth of exploration in the focus interviews and the additional perspectives highlighted. The research was conducted within a particular time frame that identified the changing nature of the directors' role in a time of social, policy and economic change. The research findings need to be interpreted with an understanding of the background of these particular directors and the limitations in generalising the findings to all directors. They were all women, which is typical for the population of child care directors.

Also, a comprehensive understanding of leadership and management in child care services would draw on multiple perspectives. In this study only the viewpoints of the directors were explored. The study did not seek the viewpoints of staff, families and/or other organisational members; rather the focus was on directors only. Although such research would then be exploring different research questions than those addressed in this study that specifically focussed on directors' own understandings and experiences.

The Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) that provided the framework for this study was limited when exploring characteristics of directors in their leadership role. The Social Systems Model has been mainly used to gain an understanding of the directors' training and professional development needs (Jorde Bloom, 1997b; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992b), rather than focus on specific characteristics of leadership. The researcher's additional questions that centred on the directors' leadership experiences provided the framework for analysing this aspect of the directors' character. Further, the initial Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) did not allow for a strong focus on viewing child care centres from a business perspective. An additional model proposed by Bergin-Seers and Breen (2002) was used as a supplementary framework to address the issues raised about business orientation to child care service delivery.

7.6 Further research

Future research using the Social Systems Model should include a stronger focus on business orientation in the operations of child care centres to gain a deeper understanding how this impacts on a broader scale on the directors' role and responsibilities. In this study, the Social Systems Model (Jorde Bloom, 1991b) has been extended to include additional components in leadership and business orientation to service delivery (Figure 6.4) that will provide a framework for future research in this area.

This research was of a relative short duration using a single method of data collection. Future research could employ a longitudinal study, using an ethnographic methodology in which directors were shadowed over a period of time to gain a more

in-depth understanding of their role that included the directors' own perceptions as well as the viewpoints of staff, management and families.

Due to the increasing complexity of families' needs, future research should explore the effective delivery of integrated services; both in the private and community sector, and its impact on the operation of child care centres. For instance, as noted in Chapter 1 (section 1.2) Tennent et al. (2002) found that parents are now looking for various types of personal supports to assist them in their family role, rather than just care and education for their child(ren). This notion was also voiced by one director (Samantha) in Chapter 4 (section 4.1.1) who reported that directors are not skilled enough to offer multifaceted types of supports to families such as counselling, and that child care centres should be employing these 'other professionals' in their child care centres to enable the centre to address the convolution of families' needs.

Continued research on practice should assess how directors are currently being prepared and the appropriateness of the legislative requirements for the position of a director. Practitioners aspiring toward leadership positions need opportunities to understand and learn more about the role and responsibilities of the director, especially the challenges that would enable them to be better prepared for the role. Consideration needs to be given to increasing accountability in child care service delivery. Some directors are responsible for a group of children, as well as accountable for the overall management of the centre. Often, the director is also the workplace supervisor for students on traineeships, inclusive of their own staff. The findings suggest that there is a need to review just what the base qualifications of a director should be. Should the director of a long-day care centre have early childhood teaching qualifications as currently legislated or, would a person with postgraduate studies in business management skills take on the role of directorship? If we adopt the latter view, how would the child development and education component of early childhood education be managed? Should child care centres be managed by a person with sound business management skills, while the care and education component of the centre would be overseen by an experienced and skilled person in early childhood education? How would this be managed in large corporate organisations? How would these two roles integrate to ensure of clear and open communication between

the workers and families? Should postgraduate courses offer a double degree, specifically designed for the early childhood sector encompassing both business management, leadership and a teaching qualification?

Further, there is limited research in the field regarding the director's role for advocacy for child care. Hard (2001) noted that advocacy in the child care sector has not received the attention that it deserves which could be attributed to a lack of understanding of the term by practitioners who work in the field. Hard went on to say that advocacy requires high levels of self-confidence and an ability to be assertive. In the study reported here (section 5.5) most of the directors did not perceive themselves to be articulate or confident enough to enable them to advocate outside of their own child care centres. Lack of advocacy in this field contributes to a "weak power base" on the political agenda in order to influence and affect change within the broader sector (Hard, 2001, p. 178). More opportunity for advocacy would make the child care field more visible within the wider educational community (Fraser, 2000) and consequently increasing opportunities for much needed funding. Two questions should be raised: First, "How to better support directors to assist them in taking part in the wider social and political arena"? Second, "How to support directors to link with other community and government agencies in an effort to keep abreast of current trends and issues in the social and political field"? These are complex issues as directors reported being already overburdened in their day-to-day management of their centres. However, without membership of the larger macro and policy system, a director is subject to isolation (Larkin, 1999). It is important that directors know that they are not alone in this often stressful work for caring and educating young children, as well as meeting the needs of the families and community at large.

This research has provided a comprehensive picture of the work of child care directors in the current social, legislative and economic context of child care services. The data provides a rich understanding of how directors view their work. The research opens up many questions for future research in this current context of service delivery. It is a time when the funding and affordability, availability and quality of child care remain significant social and political issues. Evident from this

research is the dedication, commitment and ideals that drive the work of those employed in these early childhood education and care services to provide quality care to children and their families.

Appendix A

Guided Questions for Interview 1

Contemporary experiences as a child care director

Processes

What are some of the tasks that you do to enhance the quality of this program for the children, their families and the staff?

- Is there a process you use to help staff and families reach a decision about setting goals and future planning?

- What are some of the ways you practice your philosophy and beliefs about young children and their families in your daily routine/activities?

- How do you develop and maintain interpersonal relationships/open communication with staff/families/children?

- What processes do you have for evaluating the centre program?

- How do you go about completing tasks at this centre, for example delegating, empowering, directive or a combination of these?

People

Tell me about the interpersonal relationships at this centre.

- How do you assist staff in meeting the individual needs of children and their families?

- What are some of the ways you give and/or encourage your staff to give information about a child's growth and development to a family?

- How would you describe your relationship with your staff, families, and your superior?

- Are you satisfied with your relationship with the staff, families, superior? Would you change anything?

Tell me about your own needs.

- What are your specific needs in regard to leading and managing a quality program?

- What are your needs in regard to further professional training?

- How do you ensure your needs/expectations are being met?

Culture

Tell me about the organisational climate at this centre

- What ideas, values and/or goals do you think are important in reaching and maintaining a high quality childcare program?

- How do you share/implement your ideas/values/goals at this centre? [with staff/families/children]

- How would you describe the organisational climate at this centre? What makes this so?

Outcomes

What do you do to ensure quality outcomes for the children, their families and the staff?

- What perception does the community have of this childcare centre? How do you know this?

- What impact does this perception have on your method of leading and managing this centre?

External

What is the nature of your contact with outside agencies (for example government departments/community agencies/ families)? [supportive/non-supportive]

- What community resources outside of this centre have you found useful in supporting your work?

- Do you feel there are problems in accessing services/supports outside of this agency? Why do you think this is so?

- How have the changes in the policies and funding from the Commonwealth Government affected your centre and your work as a director in the last few years?

- How do you envision the future of childcare policy? [current proposed changes in legislation/accreditation/employment opportunities for example more women in labor workforce/ funding changes].

Guided Questions for Interview 2

Experiences as a child care director

Centre Code:_____

1. Tell me about yourself and your experience in the child care field.

- Why did you choose working with young children as a career and specifically work within the child care sector?

- Why did you decide to become a director?

- How have you developed your skills as a director in child care?

- What have been important learning experiences that you have had, that were particularly useful for your professional development as a director?

- How do you go about finding out important information that can help you in your role as a director?

- What are the supports and rewards of being a director?

2. I would like to ask you about leadership within the child care field.

- What leadership qualities do you think it is important for directors to have?

- Have you had leadership experiences in other areas of your life (at school, sport or community organisations)?

- How do you define leadership?

- What qualities have you noticed in others (in the child care field and in other organisations) that you think made them effective leaders?

- How do you think individuals can develop their leadership skills?

- When you took on the role of the director, did you feel adequately prepared for the leadership role?

- What have been the greatest challenges to you as the director (and leader) of a child care centre?

3. What are the range of your roles and responsibilities as a director? (includes structure questions)

- Tell me about policy development at this centre, roles and responsibilities (parents and staff)?

- What are the organisational and administrative tasks that take up most of your time?

- Tell me about the strategies you have used to manage the routine of your day.

- What tasks give you the greatest satisfaction in your role?

- What are the most unsatisfactory tasks and aspects of your role?

General Questions

Given what you have said about your experiences before and given what you have said about your work now, how do you understand the following: (what sense does it make to you)

- How do you define quality child care?

- Do you see yourself as being an advocate in the broader field of early childhood education? If so, what do/will you do?

- Are there any changes that you would consider necessary to prepare directors for the leadership role in early childhood education?

- Where do you see yourself going in the future?

Probe Questions

- Can you give me an example of that - a recent experience

- Could you give me a more detailed description of what happened?

- What did you do about it?

- Tell me more about that?

- Why do you think it happened?

- Do you have any further examples of this?

Appendix B

Initial Letter to the Directors

Date

Director

Dear

I am currently studying for the Doctor of Education at QUT. My research is focused on leadership and management in centre-based child care in Queensland. I am interested in this area because I have previously been a director in a child care centre. I am hoping that the findings from my research will inform practitioners and policy makers on current leadership and management concerns and issues. The research is a small but important study in which I wish to involve eight directors and I hope that you will agree to participate.

Participation in the project will involve:

- An initial visit familiarisation visit to the centre;

- Two focussed interviews, each of which would last approximately one hour.

The two interview sessions will be scheduled for your convenience and would be conducted with an interval of about two to three weeks between interviews. The interviews will be audio-taped. After each interview I would send a written summary of the interview on which you would be able to comment. I would also like to gather some centre documentation, for example, about the history of the centre, current policy documents, newsletters and associated material. This will enable me to understand the context in which the centre operates and the related management and leadership issues.

You will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and an ethical consent form which is requirement for all QUT research. These forms are attached. The report of the study will use pseudonyms for the directors' and centre names so that identification will be protected. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you would be able to withdraw from this study at any time.

I will telephone you within the next week to ascertain if you are willing to confirm your participation and to answer any questions that you might have. If you agree to participate, I will also confirm a time for the initial visit.

Your contribution to this study would be greatly appreciated. A short report of the findings will be sent to you at the conclusion of the project. The research will be useful in informing practitioners and policy makers about current leadership issues in the early childhood field.

Yours sincerely

Hanna Nupponen
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Leadership in Child Care Services: Contextual Factors and their Impact on Practice

Consent Form

If you are willing to participate in this research project, I ask you to sign this consent form and return it to me.

In signing this form you indicate that:

1. The nature of this research has been described and your involvement in the project has been explained;

2. Understand that confidentiality will be maintained and no identifying information about you will be released;

3. Understand that you may withdraw from this study at any time, without comment or penalty; and

4. Understand that your participation in this study is voluntary.

Director's name _____

Director's signature _____

Date _____

Researcher Hanna Nupponen
Centre for Applied Studies in Early Childhood
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If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary of QUT University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3864 2902

Leadership in Child Care Services: Contextual Factors and their Impact on Practice

Director Questionnaire

The information supplied in this questionnaire will enable a description of all participants in the research to be developed.

1. What post-secondary school educational qualifications do you hold? Please indicate the year in which each qualification was completed.

2. Are you presently engaged in further study? If so, what is the qualification and when do you expect to complete it?

3. Describe your work history in early childhood services, including this position. List the nature of the service; the position held (for example, group leader, director); and the period of employment.

4. On average, how many hours do you work per week?

5. Do you belong to any early childhood professional organisations? If so, please describe:

6. What have been the greatest influences in your life to encourage you to take on a leadership position in child care?

Researcher

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Leadership in Child Care Services: Contextual Factors and their Impact on Practice

Overview of Topics for Interviews

The aim of this research is to examine the director's leadership and management practices in social, legislative and economic context. The nature of roles and responsibilities in being a director of a child care centre and the factors that are important to providing effective leadership will be explored. Issues in the development and delivery of quality programs will be discussed.

While a range of specific questions will be asked in the interviews, the following topic areas provide an indication of the interview foci.

- Developing community relationships - effective strategies;

- Community resources that support the centre;

- Issues in accessing services and supports for the operation of the centre;

- Operation of child care centres in social, legislative and economic context;

- Future of child care services - policy and legislative changes and their impact;

- Experiences as a leader and as a child care director;

- Defining leadership and leadership qualities which are important for directors;

- Nature of director's roles and responsibilities;

- Challenges in being a director;

- Most satisfactory and least satisfactory aspects of the director's role;

- Nature of preparation and professional development for directors;

- Features of quality child care;

- Developing a productive and positive organisational climate in centres;

- Processes for policy development;

- Processes for decision-making and future planning;

- Processes to support the staff to develop their programs;

- Nature of processes to monitor program quality;

- Developing a supportive interpersonal climate for staff, children and families;

- Means for ensuring good communication with staff and families;

- Issues in delegating tasks and encouraging staff involvement.

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Appendix C

Introduction to the Directors

Irene

Irene holds several qualifications: Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Community Welfare, Certificate IV Workplace Trainer and Bachelor of Education. Irene's past experiences include Preschool Teacher for several years (overseas and within Australia), Family Day Care Coordinator for eight years, Director for community based Lifeline Family Support for one year and Family Day Care Resource Officer, Access and Equity for two years. Irene works forty hours per week as a non-contact director, three of these hours per week is spent with the children. An administrative assistant is employed for twenty-five hours per week to assist Irene in office duties. Irene's role includes providing training sessions for the local high-school students who are studying early childhood education. Irene comments that "various circumstances" throughout her career have influenced her to take on leadership positions in child care.

On entering the child care centre, the visitor notes a foyer filled with information for parents. Posters and pamphlets are freely available. Upcoming events are displayed on the large notice board. The second storey has an observation deck for parents and students. Different countries are represented through colourful artefacts hung from wooden rafters. A quiet hum is heard, coming from the rooms that the children play in. Walking through the rooms a visitor notes colourful pictures painted by the children that are displayed decoratively. The rooms are large with high ceilings and plenty of space and challenging activity centres. Infants were sleeping or cuddled by the caregivers. Toddlers were busy playing, trying on clothes or role playing, sweeping the floor. Older children were engaged in group story time and others were dancing with scarves. The children and staff were busy. The outdoor area was large with different textured surfaces for children to explore in. Equipment was bright and challenging. There was plenty of room to race around in groups, and cosy corners for quiet play. Large trees and shade cloths provided protection from the still hot autumn sun.

Samantha

Samantha has been in the child care field for the past nine years. Her qualifications include: Associate Diploma of Early Childhood, Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood, Graduate Diploma in Education and Masters in Educational Counselling. Samantha has worked in child care throughout her working life. She commenced her career as a Group Leader in 1992, and later moved on to an Assistant Director's Position. Since1995 to 2000 Samantha has worked as a director in child care, in various locations. Samantha has been in her present position approximately three years. In 2001 Samantha's position was identified as Director/Manager, as her duties include counselling and offering support to other staff members and families within the organisation. Samantha works a 40 hour week. The organisation subscribes to Queensland Professional Child Care Centre's Association (QPCCCA) to keep

abreast of current trends and issues in the child care field. When asked what have been the greatest influences in her life to encourage Samantha to take on a leadership position in child care, her comment was:

> "A previous director who trained me when I was her assistant director gave me inspiration...and positive feedback from previous employers".

On entering the premises the visitor notes Samantha greeting parents and listening to their concerns. Staff are busy assisting children in putting away their belongings. Some children are already hard at play, digging deep tunnels in the sandpit, sliding down a brightly coloured slide or riding bikes around the yard. A large sun-shade over the swing set offers shade from the early morning sun which is already quite warm. Pamphlets and notices are available for staff and parents. Children's paintings decorate the foyer walls. The children's play rooms are neatly set, with inviting activity centres. Freshly made paints and large sheets of paper are on the easels. Home corner has colourful clothes, depicting various cultures around the world. Laminated picture posters in the bathrooms remind children how to wash their hands. Bright curtains in each room give the centre a home like look. Large, soft cushions in the book corner invite children to come and read from the selection of books on display.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth holds two degrees, Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood and Bachelor of Education: Administrative Leadership. Her future goal is to undertake further studies in law. Elizabeth commenced her career in early childhood as a relief assistant in 1991 while studying for her first degree. Her position as a director in child care began in 1994 and she has worked in various locations throughout NSW and Queensland. Elizabeth has been in her present position for about four and a half years. Elizabeth works a full week: four mornings a week she works in administration, leaving her with sixteen hours of non-contact time, depending on extra curricular activities. She also participates in various committees to keep abreast of changes in the child care field and in the past she has represented the organisation at Australian Early Childhood Association meetings.

The visitor enters the building through a walkway surrounded by bushy foliage. Several large, century old trees provide a sheltered feel to the front entrance. The foyer is colourful, posters and pamphlets are displayed along one wall. A book display invites parents and children to browse and maybe even purchase a book or two. Open doors into the play rooms show children and staff hard at play. A young mother is cuddling her baby before leaving for the day's business. The nursery is large, babies are crawling and exploring, staff are busy assisting them in their play. Laughter can be heard from the older groups. Children greet each other, running outdoors to the swing area or to ride bikes where staff await for them. Staff and parents offer each other friendly greetings and exchange information about the child. Bags are placed in individual lockers. Children and staff are preparing for the busy day ahead.

Lisa

Lisa currently holds an Associate Diploma of Education (Child Care) and is studying Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood). Lisa began working in the child care industry while she was still going to College, in 1994. Her career started as a floating assistant/relief group leader. Six months later saw Lisa in a group leader/assistant director position and in January 1999 she was promoted to the position of director due to the current director taking a leave of absence. Lisa works a full week and seldom takes holidays, although she admits that for her own sanity she forces herself to have a week off if things are getting on top of her. The centre belongs to Queensland Child Care Centres Professional Association (QPCCCA) Inc. to enable management and staff to keep abreast of current issues and trends in the early childhood field. Lisa inherited her position as a director of this child care centre. She feels perhaps the ambition of becoming a director may have been in the back of her mind, however at the time of her appointment she was enjoying being a preschool teacher. The position of director was offered to her on an interim basis, she accepted and almost three years on is still at the same child care centre.

The building is big, and from the outside resembles rather a stately home than a child care centre. However, the large spacious car park is a hint that this is no ordinary home. Inside, the walls are painted a soft yellow with colour-coordinated curtains. Green and yellow colours surround the foyer and office, kitchen and after school care area. Smell of freshly made toast permeates the centre. The foyer has all staff qualifications on display demonstrating some high achievements. The rooms are neat and equipment looks well looked after. Outdoor area is divided into sections to accommodate younger and older children's needs. Staff are in uniform, casual yet adding a professional feel to the child care centre. The centre also has a swimming pool and offers extra curricula activities such as drama, music, gymnastics and Kinda dance.

Cherry

Cherry holds a Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood degree. Her previous experiences include preschool teacher/assistant director in long-day care for two years, early childhood primary teacher for three years, and her current position as a non-contact director of community based child care for the past three years. Cherry works a 40 hour week with a rostered day off every few months. An administrative assistant is employed part time to take care of major office duties. Cherry found it difficult to pinpoint why she decided to become a director in child care. Eventually she commented:

> ..."encouragement from colleagues - people recognising that you have the potential for the position".

The centre is situated amidst school grounds, surrounded by large Australian native trees and tall leafy palm trees, providing natural shade for the occupants. A visitor enters the centre through paved walkways, with colourful, fragrant flowerbeds and shrubs.Childproof high gates provide a safe, secure environment for the children and staff. The foyer is welcoming with 'hello' posters in different languages, displayed in

bright colours. Pamphlets and other relevant information are available for staff and families. Staff photos and their qualifications are displayed for newcomers. Laminated picture posters on hallway walls depict varying cultures in traditional dress around the world. A large photo album is displayed in the foyer, showing children and staff engaged in various activities, representative of the Principles in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Handbook. On entering the rooms the visitor is greeted by warm, friendly smiles by the staff. The walls are decorated with children's artwork, with some artistically hung with string from the ceiling. Children were engaged in various activities, the younger groups having morning tea, older children busy in the outdoor play area. The cook was busy in the kitchen. According to the director, the outdoor area is the highlight of the centre. Large trees, some with swings hung from them, others bent due to age provide a shady play area for the children and staff. Hilly grounds with different textures provide a challenging, exciting area to play games in. Several forts and cubby houses allow children to engage in pretend play. Large sunken sandpits, surrounded by solid, smooth round rocks are inviting to dig in. A blanket in a quiet shady area provides a place for solitary play.

Marleen

Marleen has a Diploma from Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College and a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Studies. Marleen has been either a teacher, a director or a teacher/director in child care since 1964 working in community based organisations. Marleen works a full shift through the week, about 42 hours. The organisation is a member of the Australian Early Childhood Association which keeps them abreast of current trends and issues in the field. When asked what were Marleen's greatest influences to encourage her to take on a leadership position in the child care field her reply was:

> The move from work in community kindergartens to the child care sector brought the realisation that children in child care were extremely disadvantaged compared with the more traditional and acceptable areas of early childhood. The same principles did not apply. Treatment of children (and) staff was inhumane.

The response would imply that the reason Marleen works in child care as a leader is to ensure that young children were given the best possible start in life; to ensure of social justice and equity for all staff; to strive to achieve quality outcomes for the children and their families; and to advocate on behalf of young children.

The centre is surrounded by tall Australian native gum trees. The younger age group has their own outdoor area. The program is indoor/outdoor, meaning that throughout the day children choose where they want to play, either inside or outside. Children are seen playing in the sandpit, assisting staff sweep the sand back where it belongs. A bridge separates part of the yard into two sections. A vegetable garden is in full bloom at the centre of the outdoor area. The toddler patio has a large tractor tyre, surrounded by big soft cushions for toddlers to climb in. The infants room is decorated with bright pieces of material hung from the ceiling. Large cardboard boxes offer the infants a good hiding place, yet in full vicinity of the staff. Older

children are engaged in various activities, quietly reading books or in more boisterous activities outdoors, such as going through the obstacle course or playing in the fort area. Periodically a child will come up to the director to have their sore knee looked at, wanting their shoelaces done up, or just to say hello.

Jenny

Jenny has an Associate Diploma of Child Care and is currently studying Bachelor of Children's Services (Child Care). Jenny has been working in the early childhood field for the past decade at a school and various child care centres in Queensland. She has worked as a relief teacher aid and a preschool teacher aid within a school system, and in long-day care as an assistant, a group leader, an after school care coordinator, an assistant director and her current position as director of centre based child care. The challenge of "making a difference" and improving her own knowledge has further prompted Jenny to seek a leadership position in child care.

The first visit to the centre was scheduled on a late autumn afternoon. Children and staff were making preparations to go home. Parents were randomly arriving, greeting the director and soon after waving goodbye. A tour of the centre showed children's artwork displayed along the walls and some were hung with string from the ceiling. The young toddler group had colourful teddy bears sitting in a hammock hung with hooks from the ceiling. The older groups had been busy sketching their own profiles on large butcher's paper and coloured their portraits with bright crayons. A staff member was reading a story to a small group of children. A toddler greeted the director with a hug around her legs as we walked through the rooms. The outdoor yard was large, filled with green luscious grass. On the other side of the yard was the sister centre. After school care children were playing outdoors, some swinging, others just quietly relaxing after a busy school day.

Rachel

Rachel currently holds several degrees: Diploma of Teaching, Diploma of Deaf Education and Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies. Rachel has previously worked in a number of child care centres in New Zealand, Sydney and in Queensland. Rachel has also taught in the public school system. She currently works a full week, approximately 40 hours. Rachel has access to further professional development through the larger organisation. Rachel has always had a passion for working with young children and working toward high quality practice in early education. Over the years as the numbers of long-day care centres increased Rachel found that she was in a position that gave her an opportunity to further advocate toward high quality practice in the field, and to this day she feels that she is in a "drivers" seat allowing her to address issues of quality at the "coal face". Rachel enjoys her work, she commented:

> I enjoy what I do and I like coming to the centre each day. I think that is a bonus in today's society. I especially enjoy the team of women I work with and as I am now older I enjoy very much the relationship that I have with the children.

Rachel welcomes the visitor with a smile, opening the door and gesturing to come in. The door opens into a foyer filled with posters, pamphlets and large indoor plants. To the left, double doors lead into a staff room with comfortable couches. Rachel invites the visitor to come along on a tour of the centre. She leads the way into a central courtyard of the building. Colourful bikes, trucks and large balls are scattered around the yard. The sandpit is filled with buckets and spades, swings and climbing equipment are set up to offer children challenge and a fun place to play in. Large trees and shade cloth, strategically placed over the play area protect the children from the harsh Australian sun. The children are having a rest. Young babies are sleeping, older children are quietly resting or reading books on their beds. Staff are quietly walking around or giving the children a backrub A calmness blankets the child care centre.

The following Table C.1 is a summary of each of the directors as presented above.

Table C.1

Name	Type of centre	Qualifications	Experience in centre	Approximate years of experience in the field
Irene	Community	Diploma of Teaching; Bachelor of Community Welfare; Certificate of IV Trainer Bachelor of Education	6 years	23 years
Samantha	Private	AssDipEd(ece); Bachelor of Teaching(ece); Grad Dip In Education; Masters in Educational Counselling	5 years	6 years

Table C.1 (Continued)

Elizabeth	Community	Bachelor of Teaching(ece); Bachelor of Administrative Leadership	3 years	11 years
Lisa	Private	AssDipEd(ece); Bachelor of Education (completion, July 02)	5 years	7 years
Cherry	Community	Bachelor of Teaching(ece)	3 years	5 years
Marleen	Community	Diploma Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College; Graduate Diploma Child and Family Studies	14 years	38 years
Jenny	Private	AssDipEd(ece); Bachelor of Children's Services (current studies)	11 years	11 years
Rachel	Community	Diploma of Teaching (NZ); Diploma of Deaf Education; Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies	6 years	25 years

Appendix D

Interview schedule

Table D.1.

Participant	Month of Initial Visit	Interview No 1	Interview No 2
Irene	1st week of February 2000	1st week of March 2000	3rd week of March 2000
Samantha	1st week of February 2000	1st week of March 2000	3rd week of March 2000
Elizabeth	2nd week of February 2000	1st week of March 2000	3rd week of March 2000
Lisa	2nd week of February 2000	1st week of April 2000	3rd week of April 2000
Cherry	3rd week of February 2000	1st week of April 2000	3rd week of April 2000
Marleen	3rd week of February 2000	1st week of April 2000	3rd week of April 2000
Jenny	4th week of February 2000	1st week of May 2000	3rd week of May 2000
Rachel	4th week of February 2000	1st week of May 2000	3rd week of May 2000

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