
Leadership And Management In Early Childhood Education

The primary purpose of this essay is to demonstrate depth and breadth of knowledge in a range of leadership, management, and team working theories in early childhood education and care including working with families and critically analysing and reflecting on own role as a teaching assistant in a professional context.

Leadership style, management, and team working in early childhood education and care including working with families play a critical role in promoting the holistic development of children.

Rodd (1998) claims that the consensus view seems to be that leadership, teamwork, and management in early years is not understood completely due to the fact it is a complex concept (Rodd, 1998) with several different leadership styles and theories. For the purpose of this essay, the focus will be autocratic leadership including the great man theory compared to bureaucratic, democratic and Dewey's theory, Charismatic and the transformation theory

Autocratic and bureaucratic leadership are two common styles among many. The key differences are; autocratic sees the leaders making all the decisions with a high level of control, however, bureaucratic sees leaders following rules and are compliant to authorities' roles.

The phrase 'Great Leaders are born, not made' comes from the traditional, the great man theory of leadership. It was thought in the 19th century that the great man was articulated no longer an ethical prescription for how to act, however, as an alternative as an analytic description of the elemental forces that lead people to seek heroes (Spector, 2016) and at the time it was thought only men had the primary quality of leadership, however, the early year's settings are prominently female practitioners, some may argue a new leadership theory is needed.

Bass and Riggio (2006) cited in Dudovskiy (2013) believed self-expression, self-evaluation, and self-consistency are the key features of the great man theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006 in Dudovskiy, 2013). These features see leaders demonstrating a natural ability to lead the team and rise to the challenge because they rise to the roles of authority and power.

An autocratic leadership style would be associated with the great man theory because it "is a directive style of leadership" and "the autocratic leader has superior knowledge and expertise" (Therapeutic Recreation, 2004) some would say that these leaders have the right personality and qualities to be effective leaders. Flynn (2017) defines autocratic leadership as "a type of leadership style in which domineering leaders give followers little or no control of the environment" (Flynn, 2017) equally bureaucratic leadership "is a system of government of business run by a complex set of rules and ways of doing things" (Caffrey, 2018). Formal policies yet necessities are required to assure uniformity, therefore practitioners understand exactly what is expected from them (Mulder, 2017) and more opportunities become available for personal development.

Those in autocratic leadership roles are often seen as being bossy because they ask for little

help or input from team members whilst making the decisions, therefore, are “characterised as domineering” (Flynn, 2017) which can be problematic since the team has no say in decision-making; it can reason resentment within the team. If the members feel detached from the process, the willingness to perform will deteriorate (Anastasia, 2016) whereas bureaucratic leaders find it difficult to change and flexibility is often the problem, and both styles having negative implications.

An advantage to this is, autocratic leaders can make decisions quickly and ensure deadlines are not missed. Although the autocratic style is good for the military, manufacturing, and construction organisations, and the same can be said about bureaucratic leadership, both styles can also be hugely beneficial within educational settings, particularly when inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children because of a need “to follow rules rigorously and ensure that their staff also follow procedures precisely” (Amanckukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015).

The effect of autocratic leadership on children could see adverse effects including lack of confidence and fear of team members being critical of them. As a result, an autocratic leadership style can mean parents find it difficult to communicate with leaders and often feel disconnected from the setting. This style is not effective when parents and inter-agencies need to contribute to decision-making about the child, to ensure children’s learning and development are met enabling early intervention to secure the foundation stage principles.

If the great man theory were to be used in settings it would see successful leaders taking control of a situation and leading the team into success. This would be reflected in an outstanding judgement through an Ofsted inspection.

Although autocratic leadership is appropriate and suited to some environments, it is not suited when members want to share ideas, contribute their opinions and participate in decision making.