

An Integrated Service in Action

Kaye Colmer and Lynne Rutherford

Gowrie
South Australia

History

1940 – 2010

- Dependent on different government ministers/departments and impact of funding arrangements
- Involvement of doctors, dietician, social workers and teachers
- Programs for children, children with additional needs/rights, parent education, teaching students
- Training programs for educators and concentrated professional learning for staff

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Integration vs Co-location

- Co-location is where different disciplines are available on the same site, but don't work together under a common philosophy and policies
- Integration is where there are shared policies principles and philosophy and different disciplines work together to improve outcomes for children and families in a co-ordinated way.

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Integration is multilayered & multidimensional

According to Press, Sumsion & Wong, (2010) the achievement of full service integration requires action at the levels of:

- Government policy;
- Governance;
- Leadership;
- Organisation culture & ethos; and
- Front line professional practice and team work.

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Gowrie philosophy...

In 1997 we recognised that for young children care and education were inseparable. We sought to establish a structure that would support sound pedagogical practices together with a sophisticated understanding that wellbeing is achieved through emotional availability of the adults.

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Leadership at the Gowrie

- Leadership was recognised as being central to successful integration.
- This was understood as whole of service leadership and leadership that is distributed throughout the team.
- We set up a management structure to distribute leadership throughout the organisation.
- We established a leadership development program for managers and teamleaders.

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Leadership is concerned with creating the conditions in which all members of the organisation can give of their best in a climate of commitment and challenge. Leadership helps an organisation to work well

(Whitaker 1993)

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'Distributed', 'participative', 'facilitative' or 'collaborative' models of leadership call for a shift away from the traditional vision of leader as one key individual towards a more collective vision, one where the responsibility for leadership rests within various formal and informal leaders

(Siraj-Blatchford & Manni 2006, p. 20)

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Margy Whalley (2006) calls for shared leadership to be enacted through a 'leaderful' team.

Leadership Structure

At Gowrie and through TtLG, systems have been established to support ways of working together

- Governance/Leadership
- Structure - roles & responsibilities
- Development & alignment of vision
- Policies and shared philosophy
- Commitment (EB)
- Resources

Tensions continue.....

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Differing Professional and Theoretical Backgrounds

Barriers/challenges

- Theoretical beliefs
- Professional discipline
- Qualifications
- Attitudes
- Work culture
- Focus - child or parent
- Funding
- Access to records
- *Culture of reflective practice*
- *Professional inquiry*
- *Systems & expectations for collaboration of the disciplines*
- *Professional learning*
- *Joint PD*
- *Dialogue*

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Implications for services

What can others learn from our journey?

Leadership and working toward integration has positive benefits for children, families and staff:

- A more involved staff team
- Learning from each other
- Exploring new ideas and willingness to accept change
- Shared purpose, goals and focus
- Upskilling of staff
- Improved professional identity of educators

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References

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