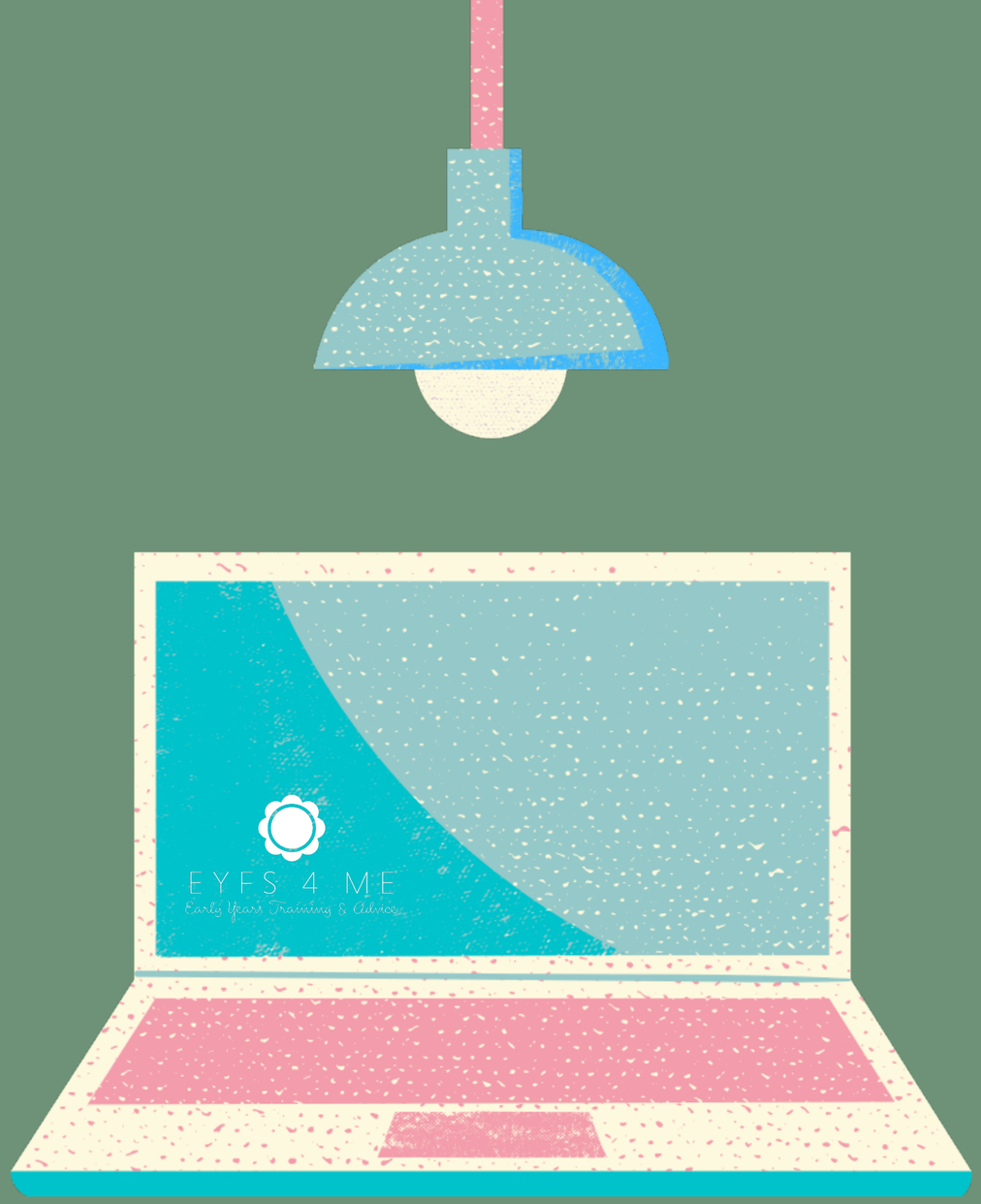


30-day CPD Challenge

#EYLibrary

Siegel, 2010) leadership, can be enhanced by [illegible] about how our brains work.

Parallels between leading and parenting

A Google search of the expression 'children do not come with instructions' resulted in 27,800,000 results. Nonetheless, our experiences of being a child and being parented teach us a lot about how, or how not, to parent. Similarly, our experiences of being led from early childhood onwards inform our attitudes about leading and being led (Ferguson et al., 2006). A fundamental parallel between leading and parenting resides in the fact that we humans are born into a family hierarchy, dependent upon our parents, and/or other more experienced and powerful others, for our survival and wellbeing. Subsequently, every group or organisation we join will tend to have a hierarchical structure, led and managed by more powerful others, upon whom we are dependent for continued membership and a sense of wellbeing. From birth we find ourselves in groups comprised of older, more experienced others, who are – or whom we feel to be – more able and powerful than we are. Early on, when all is well, parents and older siblings are concerned for our welfare, look after our physical and emotional needs, guide our behaviour and development, cherish and respect us as unique individuals and encourage and support our learning and responsible participation in the give and take of family and community life (Dunn et al., 1999). Effective school and workplace leaders behave similarly.

We can see that neuroscience research over the past two decades offers models and metaphors for thinking about how early years settings and other services can be effectively developed, led and sustained. For example, effective early years provision depends upon encouraging and supporting individuals and interpersonal relationships, with leaders respecting and trusting each and every individual and team, engendering trust among staff members and earning staff members' respect and trust. Leaders' regular presence and meetings with individuals and teams are essential in affirming, aligning and realigning values and aspirations, and planning, setting and reviewing goals and expectations across the organisation. Integration of functions, keeping channels of communication open and encouraging co-operation are key means of inspiring and sustaining effective services, whilst inspiring leadership and creativity in others, as well as managing day-to-day operations, tasks and challenges across the organisation.

Long-standing and more recent findings from studies of leadership and of parenting show strong parallels between the two sets of roles and functions. Psychologist Kurt Lewin and his colleagues (1939) identified three different styles of leadership: 1) *authoritarian/autocratic*, 2) *participative/democratic* and 3) *laissez faire/free reign*. These parallel Adlerian formulations (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976/1989; Dreikurs, 1971/1994; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964), and developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind's (1978, 1991) empirically based typology of parenting defines three distinct styles:

1 *Authoritative or participative/democratic* parents direct their children's activities in a "rational issue-oriented manner", encourage verbal give-and-take, discuss the reasoning behind their policies and solicit their children's perspective and exert firm control without attempting to over-restrict them (Diana Baumrind, 1978, p. 245).
2 *Authoritarian* or *autocratic* parents do not encourage verbal give-and-take, valuing obedience and punitive, forceful measures. They may be genuinely concerned or neglectful (ibid.).
3 *Permissive or laissez faire/free-reign* parents see themselves as an optional resource for their children, but not as active agents responsible for shaping or altering their children's on-going or future behaviour. Some may be very protective and loving, others self-involved and offering freedom in order to evade responsibility for their children's development (ibid.).

Research studies of the relative effectiveness of parenting and parent support programmes in the UK have shown that they were successful in bringing about shifts from authoritarian and permissive parenting to more authoritative, or democratic, parenting, e.g. increased understanding and sensitivity, along with more positive parent-child relationships and child behaviour (Anning & NESS, 2007; Chan & Koo, 2011; John, 2001). Large-scale studies of schools in Europe and North America have found that encouraging *mentalization*, that is, empathic, sensitive and more democratic leadership among teachers, with no alteration in curriculum, led to greatly improved attitudes, behaviour and achievement among pupils (Fonagy, Twemlow & Sacco, 2005a, 2005b).

Similarly, in the workplace, staff satisfaction, creativity and effectiveness have been found to depend upon authoritative/democratic leadership (Bennis, 1989, 1999; Eales-White, 1994; Hamlin & Sawyer, 2007; John, 2000). Human resources academicians Robert Hamlin and Jenny Sawyer's (2007) evidence-based UK study revealed that the most negative and ineffective form of leadership was the "'traditional management paradigm' of command, control, compliance and coercion which still predominates in many if not most of public and private organizations" (p. 12). In contrast, the most effective leadership was associated with the "'new management paradigm' of inclusion, participation, involvement, empowerment and openness" (ibid.).

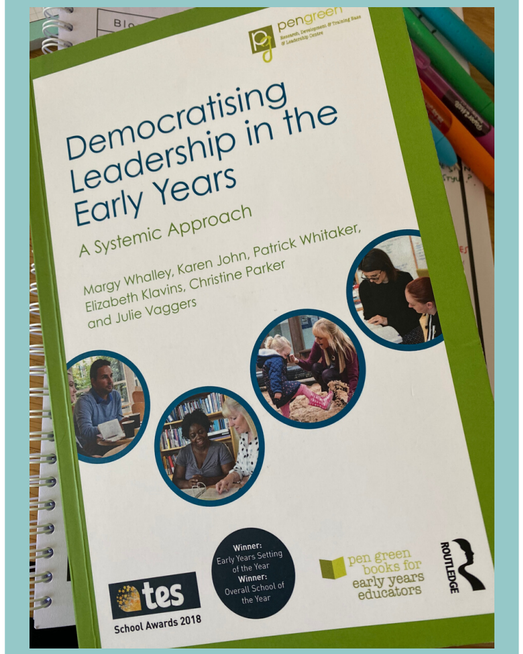
Sociology professor João Formosinho and psychology professor Júlia Oliveira-Formosinho from the University of Minho in Braga, Portugal completed an external evaluation of the NPQICL, the aim of which was to gauge the *impact* of the programme on participants' leadership practice. This impact evaluation followed a small sample of NPQICL Pilot participants and a somewhat larger sample of participants in the NPQICL Roll Out. In the report of their initial qualitative research, Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho (2005) used two terms to describe what participants valued particularly about the NPQICL course as a whole. These terms were *epistemological homology* and *pedagogical isomorphism* (ibid., pp. 42–43), which reflected participants' feelings of being valued, respected and encouraged *in the same way* that they were being encouraged to encourage their staff teams, and that staff members ideally were encouraged to encourage children and parents – and parents ideally were encouraged to encourage their children (John, 2007).

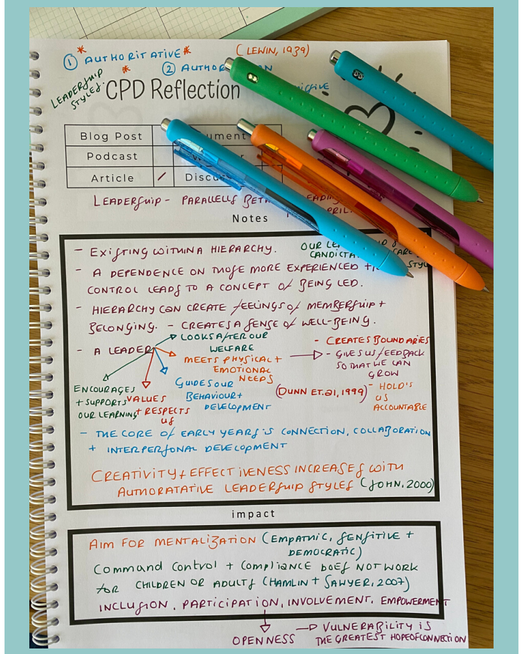
Box 2.3 summarises – and provides a preview – of the key dispositions required of leaders and parents in democratic societies (Ferguson, 2011; John, 2008b, 2012**a**, 2014).

Box 2.3 Key dispositions required of leaders and parents in democratic societies

1 ***Understanding*** *the purposes of their own and others'* ***feelings and behaviours***
2 ***Applying democratic principles*** of *authoritative* rather than *autocratic/authoritarian* or *permissive/laissez faire* structures
3 ***Sharing power*** and encouraging initiative, leadership and creativity in everyone
4 ***Containing and surviving potentially toxic emotions and strategies*** associated with constant change and uncertainty

These will be discussed in greater depth in subsequent sections of this chapter, but briefly, both leaders and parents need to: understand, and appreciate the purposes of, their own and others' feelings and behaviours; 2) *apply democratic principles* of *authoritative/democratic* rather than *autocratic/authoritarian* or *permissive/laissez-faire* structures, being leaders of leaders, inspiring, containing, encouraging and nurturing, rather than controlling, restraining, rewarding, threatening and blaming; 3) *share power* and encourage initiative, responsibility, leadership and creativity in everyone; and 4) *contain and survive potentially toxic emotions and strategies*, notably, anxiety, hostility, negative projections, envy and discouragement, which are associated with constant change, uncertainty, demands and pressure from above and below.





reflection questions

1. To what extent do you agree that leadership and parenting has similarities?

2. Which style of leadership have you experienced? What type of leader do you identify with?

3. Do you believe that leadership styles have an impact on caregiving styles?

Democratic dispositions of leaders

Margy Whalley, C. B. E., John, K., Whitaker, P., Klavins, E., Parker, C., & Vaggersis, J. Democratising Leadership in the Early Years.

Understanding the purposes of their own and other's feelings and behaviors

Applying democratic principles of authoritative rather than autocratic/ authoritarian or permissive structures

Sharing Power and Encouraging initiative, leadership and creativity for everyone

Containing and surviving potentially harmful emotions and strategies associated with constant change and uncertainty