

Enabling 'Successful Knowledge Transfer' in Early Childhood Settings – A Meta Strategic Leadership Approach

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Abstract

The increase in knowledge access and professional development (PD) uptake by early childhood educators amplifies the need for innovative strategies to support successful knowledge transfer (SKT) in Early childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings. SKT refers to the effective application of key learnings from PD events into practice. Existing literature highlights various factors affecting the successful implementation of PD learnings after the event with some pointing to the lack of fit for purpose leadership as one of the barriers. A study was conducted among educators in excellent rated centres in Australia to identify how they successfully implemented PD learnings following PD attendance. Data was collected using open ended interviews, informal observations and document analysis methods. The findings revealed that meta strategic leadership was a key enabler of SKT. This article discusses how meta-strategic leadership enables SKT within early childhood settings and the implications for practice.

Keywords

implementation, implementation support, knowledge transfer, leadership, meta strategic leadership, professional development, successful knowledge transfer

Introduction

Research and practice trends in early childhood education and care indicate that efforts to improve the quality of early childhood workforce have led to an increase in professional development (PD) access and uptake by educators (Irvine et al., 2024). This has heightened expectations for the successful transfer of knowledge acquired from PD events into practice (Brunsek, 2021). However, research indicates that for many educators, the transfer of learning from PD into teaching practice is still

developing (Nimante et al., 2025). Educators encounter numerous challenges in applying PD learnings within their early childhood centres following PD attendance. These challenges include limited time, inadequate implementation

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support, lack of know-how and lack of leadership support to guide knowledge transfer (Brown & Inglis, 2013).

Others like Harper et al. (2025) have attributed knowledge transfer challenges in ECEC settings to the increasing work overload experienced by educators, which has heightened administrative demands, documentation requirements, and staff shortages. These challenges are compounded by a sense of knowledge overwhelm (Bhowmik, 2025), wherein educators are inundated with a constant stream of new research, pedagogical updates, and compliance expectations, often without adequate time or support to meaningfully integrate them into practice. Further, it has been argued that the pervasive and relentless culture of performative accountability where emphasis is placed on demonstrating compliance rather than fostering authentic professional learning and growth, exacerbates these pressures and contributes to a work environment where knowledge transfer is deprioritised or superficially enacted (Lutovac & Körkkö, 2024). These challenges highlight a need to build capacity for SKT in ECEC settings.

Weber (2014) found that translating learning into action can be a slow and challenging process, especially if the knowledge is complex or highly specialised. This has been attributed to common barriers like educator resistance to change, workload and inadequate resourcing. Addressing these challenges and enhancing knowledge transfer capacities require effective leadership (Stacey, et al., 2024).

Literature on leadership highlights several key characteristics of highly effective leaders. For example, Wisdom et al. (2025), identify that highly effective leaders create opportunities for dialogue, build a culture of learning and psychological safety, proactively addressing process improvements, support work-life balance, leading with grace and courage, and maximising available resources. However, none of these practices are unique to early childhood settings.

Based on findings from a qualitative study about successful knowledge transfer practices of

early childhood educators after PD attendance, this paper highlights that successful knowledge transfer (SKT) in early childhood education and care settings occurs when meta strategic leadership is in place. Using a proposed framework, this paper identifies elements of meta strategic leadership and how they manifest in ECEC contexts.

Literature Review

In early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, professional development (PD) is tightly connected to SKT. PD alludes to the continuous learning by educators to enhance skills, knowledge and practice (McDonald, 2014). Research indicates that by attending PD, educators improve their capabilities and competencies leading to improved teaching practices, knowledge competencies towards specific aspects of their work and positive outcomes for children (Boeve-de Pauw et al., 2022). However, Knighton (2021) notes that while many early childhood educators participate in the required PD, they are still lacking the skills to effectively transfer PD learnings into practice. One reason for this is that successful outcome for PD attendance has historically been viewed as completing a set number of hours in training rather than transforming practice (Cooper et al., 2020). Yet, Egert et al. (2018) argues that simply completing hours of training does not guarantee that knowledge acquired will translate into practice. The key lies in successful knowledge transfer.

Different perspectives on knowledge transfer highlight diverse interpretations of what this entails. For example, Jasimuddin and Naqshbandi (2019) describe knowledge transfer as the process of acquiring knowledge and applying it to practice and routines. Others like Brown et al. (2022), describe knowledge transfer as a series of phases that involve identifying knowledge needs and the knowledge sources; acquiring the knowledge; sense-making; and applying and maintaining or sustaining the acquired knowledge. However, none

of these perspectives show-cases what leadership style best enables SKT in ECEC settings.

In this paper, successful knowledge transfer is interpreted as the efficient implementation of the knowledge transfer process to achieve improved outcomes for all stake holders including children, families, staff and the community with in which an ECEC centre operates. Various theories offer different insights into enablers of a SKT. For example, the social capital theory (Shen et al., 2015) posits that individuals, along with their social networks and the relationships cultivated within these networks, play pivotal roles in facilitating SKT, and that these relationships are influenced by social ties, levels of trust, and shared values. Although applicable to early childhood education and care contexts, this theory has been criticised as subjective and therefore inadequate in explaining what truly enables SKT (Claridge, 2018).

Agency theory (Shukla et al., 2023) suggests that SKT is facilitated by two critical factors. These factors include mutual trust between leaders and knowledge implementers, and the use of incentives such as financial rewards, professional recognition, and career advancement. Mutual trust is a shared belief between individuals or groups that each party is reliable, honest, and has good intentions (Bajaba et al., 2024). They further explain that such trust between leaders and educators fosters a safe, supportive environment for knowledge transfer, promoting open communication, collaboration, and innovation without fear of judgment. However, change in behaviour due incentivisation is reported in literature as a controversial issue (Kalantarzadeh Tezerjany, 2025). This is based the argument that, for incentivisation to work, people must possess the innate capacity for responsible actions, a natural aspiration to learn and understand things, and a desire to succeed in what they do (Ankli & Palliam, 2012). In this regard, agency theory provides a perspective of KT as a socially embedded process that is influenced by relational dynamics, an innate desire for growth and

development, and power control mechanisms (Björkman et al., 2004). This theory, like many that examine SKT outside educational contexts, neglects other crucial enablers of SKT such as intrinsic motivation and relationship dynamics.

Equally essential for SKT are knowledge transfer mechanisms (KTMs). KTMs represent the methods utilised to share, disseminate, and implement knowledge (Van Waveren et al., 2017). Examples of KTMs as reported by Chen et al. (2014) include mentorship programs, communities of practice, documentation repositories, and technological platforms. Tyumeneva and Shklierova (2016) identified that while KTMs play a pivotal role in enabling SKT, they are several challenges or limitations that may impact their effective use. Some of the identified challenges and or limitations include the existence of knowledge silos due to knowledge hoarding and lack of trust, staff resistance to change and power dynamics (Hwang & Krackhardt, 2020), over-reliance on formalised processes for knowledge management like documentation, lack of time to effectively use knowledge management systems and leadership support (Islam & Asad, 2024).

This paper identifies “meta-strategic” leadership as an effective approach for enabling successful knowledge transfer (SKT). However, definitions of effective leadership remain inconclusive and vary across contexts. For example, in Australia, the National Quality Standard (NQS), which is the national benchmark for early childhood education and care services highlights the importance of leadership in building a positive organisational culture and professional learning community (Cross et al., 2022). While this recognition emphasises the importance of leadership in developing shared values, setting clear direction and developing a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement, it does not specify which leadership approaches are most conducive to enabling SKT. This highlights a critical need for research into the leadership model that may most effectively drive positive knowledge transfer outcomes following PD attendance.

Professional Development Access and Uptake in Early Childhood

The access to and uptake of professional development (PD) by early childhood educators across a career cycle is on the increase because of professional standards mandates (Koellner et al., 2024). In some countries like Australia, PD attendance and access is critical to the ECEC workforce reform initiative and part of the National Quality standard (Sachs, 2003). In this paper, PD access and uptake refer to the availability and ease with which educators engage in activities and learning experiences or programs within in or outside their work settings to improve their skills, knowledge and competencies to educate and care for children (Perry & Booth, 2024).

For professional development to be effective, educators must successfully transfer the acquired knowledge into real classroom practice, a process that requires strong leadership support (Siliņa-Jasjukeviča et al., 2025). However, Green (2021), claims that the transfer of knowledge is still affected by the intensity of educator's workload and pressure resulting from heightened performance expectations, and accountability. These factors have led to stress, burnout, overwhelm, and knowledge fatigue among educators, further exacerbating the disconnect between PD attendance and implementation (Egert et al., 2018). Poulton and Mockler (2024) explain that this disconnect stems partly from most ECEC capacity building initiatives prioritising systemic changes and pedagogical or curriculum knowledge over developing capabilities for enabling SKT, such as meta strategic leadership.

Enablers of Successful Knowledge Transfer (SKT)

PD initiatives yield the greatest impact when enablers of SKT are firmly established and actively implemented. Literature on knowledge transfer offers insight into various factors that enable of SKT (Abakah, 2023). One of such

enablers is effective, clear and consistent communication among stake holders (Fascia et al., 2022). In contrast, Kubsch et al. (2020) offer an alternative view, proposing that SKT is driven by positive interactions and active participation in knowledge networks. Their perspective highlights the importance of social processes and strong interpersonal relationships in facilitating knowledge transfer. Similarly, Williams (2022) identifies additional enablers of SKT such as fostering a knowledge transfer culture, aligning knowledge transfer (KT) goals with the organisation's vision, ensuring role clarity, ensuring that knowledge is relevant and providing the effective leadership. While these enablers are pertinent, there is still a need to explore the type of leadership that combines the qualities and skills necessary for enabling SKT.

Meta Strategic Leadership

Research identifies various leadership styles, including transformational (Aliasghar et al., 2015), transactional (Antonakis & House, 2014), democratic and distributed leadership Woods (2004). Each style has unique strengths and limitations, with varying degrees of applicability to knowledge transfer. Literature does not provide an explicit definition of meta-strategic leadership but does highlight some attributes of meta leadership and strategic leadership. For example, McNulty et al. (2021) describe meta leadership as a broad overarching framework that transcends hierarchy, incorporating the leader's traits, context and stakeholder relationships. Meta leadership is distinct in that it is purpose-driven, emphasises influence over authority, and prioritises connectivity, collaboration, and interdependence (Borgmann et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Carter and Greer (2013) describe strategic leadership as the ability to meet diverse stakeholder expectations through skills such as adaptability, empathetic engagement, agility, and inclusive practices. Marcus et al. (2024) identify other characteristics associated with this leadership approach such as

visionary thinking, effective communication, influence and commitment to continuous improvement. Others like O'Shannassy (2021) have claimed that strategic leadership includes goal setting, resourcing, and development of capabilities, fosters innovation and sets the right culture and values climate for an organisation.

Based on the identified attributes of these two leadership styles and the findings of the study, this paper proposes that meta-strategic leadership, combines a duality of two key concepts of 'meta' and 'strategic, and that this type of leadership offers a potentially effective approach for supporting (SKT) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. The understandings of meta strategic leadership discussed in this paper emerged from a research project that explored enablers of SKT among early childhood educators situated in 'Excellent rated centres' following their participation in PD.

Research Context

The study aimed to explore the perspectives and knowledge transfer experiences of early childhood educators from excellent rated services. It was guided by the research question, "How do early childhood educators successfully transfer knowledge acquired from professional development into practice?" The study had three main objectives: (i) to understand the knowledge transfer processes used by early childhood professionals; (ii) to explore the factors and strategies that enable successful knowledge transfer (SKT) based on Australian standards for excellent ECEC practice, and (iii) to identify the implications of these factors and strategies for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

The study was grounded in a strength-based approach to understanding SKT based on educator's strength and evidence-based practice. For this reason, Excellent rated centres were selected as study sites due to their demonstrated exceptional practices against the National Quality Standard (NQS), a set of benchmarks used to assess and improve the quality of early childhood education and care services in Australia

(Phillips & Boyd, 2023). The NQS comprises seven key quality areas used to assess and rate the quality of ECEC services. Assessed and rated services are given one of the five ratings of excellent, exceeding, meeting or working towards NQS (Thorpe, et al., 2021). The highest NQS rating, 'Excellent', recognises exceeding practice across the seven quality areas, and exceptional practice in innovation, outstanding leadership, continuous improvement, and sustained excellence. Although contextualised to Australia's NQS, these indicators of excellence are relevant to educators globally.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative multi-site case study approach to explore the phenomenon and participants' lived experiences. Through purposeful sampling, four excellent rated early childhood education and care services were selected as study sites. The study was positioned within two paradigms: interpretivism and constructivism (William, 2024). The underpinning principle of interpretivism was that participants' constructs of leadership enabling SKT would be based on their lived experiences. From a constructivist perspective, it was assumed that due to the existence of multiple realities, participants would demonstrate different perspectives on what enables SKT. Using the two paradigms allowed the researchers to address both aspects of the study. Upon obtaining ethics approval from the University of Southern Queensland (USQ)'s Human Research Ethics Committee (HRCE), (project number H17REA048), ten Excellent rated centres were invited to participate in the study, with four Long Day Care centres agreeing.

Participant selection strategies were built into the study design to guide the selection process and ensure purposeful selection of participants who could best inform the study (Suri, 2011). Centre directors, acting as site coordinators, were invited to nominate three educators each, based on their knowledge of each educator's strengths in

implementing PD learnings. A participant metric and selection criteria (see [Table 1](#)) was shared with site coordinators to inform the selection of participants. This tool was developed based on the research objectives, the research question, and relevant literature ([Dahal et al., 2024](#)). The metric and selection criteria was shared and discussed with the site coordinators during onboarding. A total of 12 educators participated in the study with a diverse range of representation of teaching and leadership roles. The study was ethically conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines in human research. These included obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, transparency, and integrity throughout the project. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time without any obligation.

Data Collection

To inform the data collection process, and to help elucidate the key elements and phases of

the knowledge transfer process, the knowledge to action (KTA) conceptual framework ([Graham et al., 2006](#)), was adapted as the guiding frame of reference. This framework comprises two distinct, but related components: Knowledge Creation, and the Action Cycle. Data for the study was collected over two years using various methods which included: informal observations ([Seim, 2024](#)), document analysis ([Magaldi & Berler, 2020](#)), and semi-structured interview methods ([Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021](#)). Twelve interviews were conducted in neutral, distraction-free settings at each study site. This practice helped to ensure participant comfort. Participants received an interview guide with a set of pre-tested, open-ended questions about knowledge transfer ahead of their interviews, giving them ample time to prepare their responses. Interviews were audio recorded, with handwritten notes taken simultaneously to capture key ideas. The recordings were transcribed ([Bailey, 2008](#)), and the transcriptions shared with participants for member checking and accuracy before being included in the data.

Table 1. Participant Matrix and Criteria

Metric	Criteria	Examples of practice
Performance & practice	Highly effective and skilled in their role, consistently demonstrates exceptional practice, and directly works with children.	Works independently & collaboratively, Adaptive& exceptionally effective when engaging with children. Fosters competence across all areas of responsibility.
Leadership	Is either a lead educator in a room, educational leader or involved in a dual role of teacher and centre director.	Exemplifies professional learning. Models good practice. Lifelong learner. Supports and mentors others.
Learning and development	Demonstrates commitment to professional development.	Attended a minimum, or up to five externally facilitated professional development events in a period of six month. Demonstrates instances of skill and practice improvement. Demonstrates innovative ideas and practice.
Tenureship	A minimum of three years of experience working at the centre.	Deeply connected to the centre & team. Has a deeper perspective of the operational context than the rest of the team, knowledgeable with curiosity and commitment to continuous improvement.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) approach was used to identify and describe emerging themes, similarities, and differences within and among participants' knowledge transfer experiences following the attendance of PD. The analysis involved a sequential approach which started with an in-depth familiarisation with and summarisation of the data from each site into key words that encapsulated participants' knowledge transfer experiences. This was followed by the identification of meaningful segments and recurring patterns in the data from each sight to discern relevant and meaningful categories of information based on the research sub questions. This process also involved the assigning of units of meaning and clustering of emerging knowledge transfer enablers into broader themes to inform the cross-case analysis (Xu & Zammit, 2020). A colour coding system was used to identify emerging themes (Houghton et al., 2015). Following this iterative process, a cross-case analysis was conducted on all the emerging themes to identify major themes, which then informed the meta-analysis and consequently the identification of overarching findings regarding enablers of SKT, including meta strategic leadership.

Findings

In response to the overarching research question 'What enables successful transfer of knowledge from PD events into practice?' the study identified a significant number of interacting factors and strategies that could potentially contribute to enabling successful knowledge transfer in ECEC setting. Examples of these enablers included implementation approaches, knowledge management and transfer infrastructure, knowledge contextualisation and recreation, absorptive capacity and organisational culture. Most importantly, the study identified that within any ECEC context, these factors were centred on one overarching enabler of SKT, which the authors conceptualised as a meta but

also strategic approach to leadership. The meta strategic leadership approach discussed in this paper includes five interconnected elements that were drawn from the data. These elements are captured in Figure 1 A Meta strategic leadership framework for successful knowledge transfer. The elements, which include organisational vision, shared beliefs, values and identity, configuration design and systems of action will now be discussed.

Vision

The study revealed that successful knowledge transfer (SKT) relies on having a clear vision for the centre. The vision, representing the long-term goals of an early childhood setting, guides the effective application of knowledge into practice. Data drawn from participant responses included one participant commenting that "It is all about big picture thinking and asking questions like, what do we really believe to be necessary to our work? What is our vision?" Another participant explained that their commitment to SKT was inspired by a deeper commitment to every child, "Our role to nurture every child to reach their full potential drives us". These types of comments highlight that when educators are driven by a meaningful mission, they are more likely to engage with and more effectively apply PD learnings into practice.

Shared Beliefs, Values and Identity

Participants identified the importance of collective beliefs and shared values as critical for successful knowledge transfer (SKT). When asked how shared beliefs guided implementation, educators identified that when a team collectively agree to and hold themselves accountable to certain operational principles and standards of practice, they are more likely to stay true to these shared beliefs and values. This element was reflected in the following type of response, "we hold ourselves accountable to maintaining quality, we have a culture,

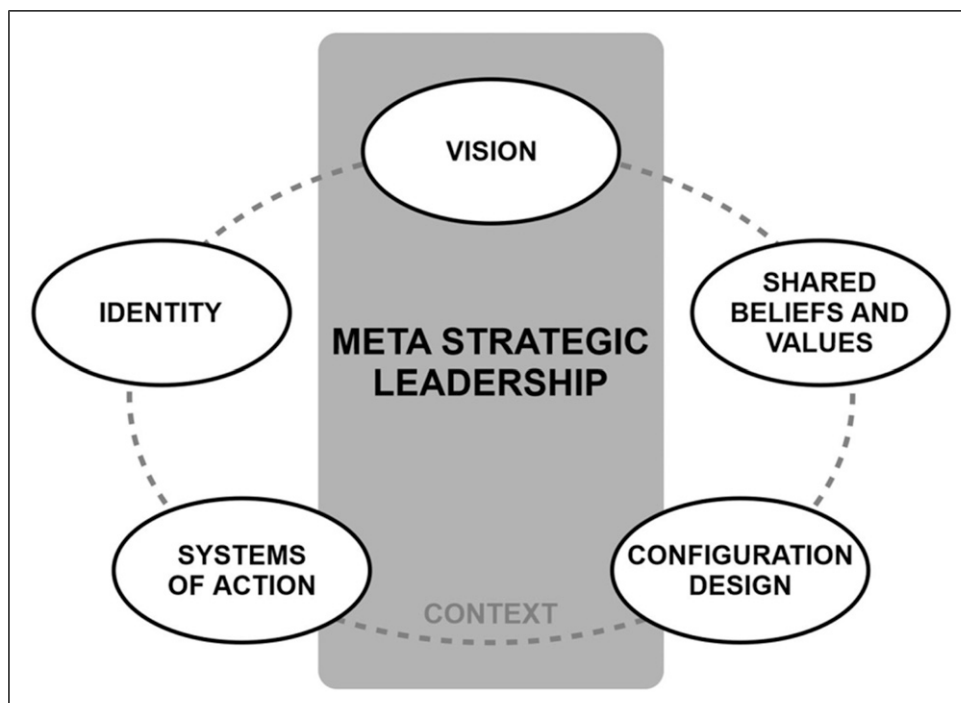


Figure 1. A Meta Strategic Leadership Framework for Successful Knowledge Transfer

professional growth and continuous improvement are part of this culture.” These shared beliefs were identified as a responsible for inspiring a culture of learning, collaboration, and implementation, making knowledge transfer integral to daily practice.

In relation to ‘shared values’, connections were made to leaders that trust and respect the team. Participants defined trust as confidence in the team’s integrity, strength, and ability to follow through with KT actions. When participants were asked how they foster trust, one respondent explained that they address instances where knowledge transfer has not occurred by offering support in a non-judgmental manner. They described their approach as follows: “I can see you haven’t completed this task yet. Can you tell me why? How can I support you?” This strategy reflects a commitment to constructive follow-up and maintaining relational trust through empathy and collaboration. Respect was described as acknowledging and rewarding staff efforts and

achievements, exemplified by a participant response such as this one: “Whenever anyone puts their PD learnings into action, we acknowledge their efforts or celebrate their achievements.”

Identity was perceived as the way in which meta strategic leaders see themselves or are perceived by their team. One participant described their leader as inspiring and trusting “X is someone who inspires the whole centre and the community. She trusts us.” Another saw identity as equality with the team. “I am a leader, but I do not see myself as being in any way better. I may have more knowledge or skills, but I am always willing to learn with my team.” These perceptions highlighted that SKT exists within leaders’ attitudes, their self-view, and their humility and willingness to learn alongside their team.

Configuration Design

The study found that SKT relied heavily on the configuration and design of a knowledge

transfer initiative. Configuration design (CD) was understood by educators as the processes, procedures and considerations involved in planning and orchestrating implementation. The study identified three focus areas that inform an effective configuration design, these being knowledge modularisation, knowledge representation, and evaluation.

Knowledge modularisation was understood by educators as a pre-thinking process of envisioning what KT process will or can look like in practice following PD attendance. The study identified that meta strategic leaders play a key role in enabling this process as evidenced by a participant comment, "I ask each one of the educators 'What are you going to bring back to us and to the children? How do you plan to enact this knowledge? I ask them to put this in writing.'" This process ensures that staff are aware of and plan for the implementation of expected PD learnings.

Knowledge representation was understood as exploring the form in which knowledge can be enacted to best meet the intended purpose. The study identified that a meta strategic leadership approach affords educators time and opportunities to deliberate on how acquired knowledge would be enacted to best meet intended purposes or achieve desired goals. As a participant reflected: "We all recently completed a two-day social and emotional well-being training. As follow up, we have had meetings together as a team and discussed what we want to articulate from this training into our space." These deliberations on forms of knowledge representation, supported meaningful application of PD learnings into practice as evidenced by one participant, "We left confident, knowing exactly what to do."

The study also identified that meta strategic leaders embed within the knowledge transfer process, opportunities for evaluating implementation. Evaluating implementation was understood by educators as the process of determining if the actioned knowledge achieved the intended goals and identifying necessary changes for improvement. The study identified

that educators used various approaches to conduct evaluations. For example, one participant shared that they used an implementation logbook to collect staff feedback on implementation progress. "So, they write in the log, they give it to me, I respond as the educational leader, and support whatever their vision or challenge is. At the end of the month, they write a report on how they feel they went with the feedback." This means that under meta-strategic leadership, SKT is partly informed through procedural reporting systems.

Another participant noted that evaluations were conducted through collective reflection on children's responsiveness and reactions to changes, stating, "Our reflections are guided by one key question: how are the children responding to what we're doing?" This approach highlights a collaborative and shared responsibility approach to evaluation. By centering evaluation on children's responses, meta strategic leaders encourage teams to remain attuned to real-time feedback and adaptive in their implementation journey. This approach reflects a leadership style that prioritises adaptive thinking and situational awareness, with meta strategic leaders guiding implementation through a collaborative and shared responsibility approach.

Systems of Action

Participants identified that this element of meta strategic leadership involves establishing the necessary knowledge transfer tools and resources educators need to implement PD learnings. A participant shared that they used the e-book to document their PD learnings to support knowledge accessibility and visibility. "This e-book is a collection of everything that occurs in the room, based on new learnings. It is part of our implementation record." Another participant shared that they used a pedagogy folder to document and share implementation ideas. "Sometimes we'll come across ideas. If C or I come across ideas we think would work well, we take a screenshot of the photo and save it in our pedagogy folder." This finding demonstrates that integrating tools

and resources makes knowledge accessible, usable, while enabling a coordinated and purposeful approach to knowledge transfer.

Discussion

In returning to the research question, what factor and strategies enable SKT in ECEC settings, it was identified that knowledge transfer challenges educators face are surmountable with meta strategic leadership. As evidenced in the findings, meta strategic leadership reflects various leadership attributes and strategies to enable SKT. Most importantly the findings confirm that the strength of meta strategic leadership lies in tailoring implementation support. This is reflected in a participant comment that; “It all depends on what the issue is, or what will best support the educator. At times I have to say to some educators; look, this is not working! Have you tried this? Sometimes I send them to a colleague to observe and learn and other times I will model the for them.”

Further, the study identifies that central to meta strategic leadership is the responsibility of inspiring commitment within educators. This was showcased in various ways across sites. For example, one participant highlighted the impact of small, thoughtful gestures, sharing, “X bakes us a cake each on our birthday. She does show appreciation when we do something good. This inspires us to do our best.” Such expressions of appreciation, though simple, play a powerful role in building morale, strengthening relationships, and reinforcing a culture of mutual respect and recognition. Another participant emphasised the importance of cultivating a learning-oriented culture, stating, “Coming to Jack’s Early Learning, I knew that PD was a big part of the culture here, and I am always excited to learn something new.” Together, these examples illustrate how meta strategic leadership manifests in both relational and structural ways, through acts of appreciation that nurture emotional engagement, and through systems that support ongoing professional development. By supporting both, meta strategic leaders create

environments where educators feel seen, supported, and motivated to contribute their best.

Collaboration and shared decision-making were identified as key attributes of meta strategic leadership that can leveraged enable SKT, with a participant stating, “When I have a new idea, I discuss it with the team, get their feedback, and once we’re all on board, we move forward.” Another participant echoed a similar view as per the comment; “It is a collaborative effort, you see. So, I do not say yay or nay to anything unless everybody else is on board.” Another participant commented that through meta strategic leadership, collaboration is “Being on the same page. I think it is good to be on the same page.” These comments illustrate how meta strategic leaders cultivate environments where collaboration is not only encouraged but embedded in the culture.

Another attribute of meta strategic leadership that stood out was enabling opportunities for ongoing reflection and conversation. One educator mentioned using reflective questions like to guide implementation planning “What are we doing now? What are we going to do differently? How are we going to do it? And how will we know we have achieved our KT goals? Such practice was perceived to negate complacency by encouraging continuous improvement. Moreover, the findings identified that meta strategic leadership includes opportunities for mentoring staff in their knowledge transfer efforts and encouraging them to share their PD learnings and knowledge with the team. “We have good mentors. They encourage us to share what we do, what we know, and our ideas, which keeps us going.” This highlights a relational and developmental dimension of leadership, where enabling is not about directing others, but about empowering them to contribute, grow, and learn from each other.

Conclusion

The findings of this study position meta-strategic leadership as a highly effective approach for enabling sustainable knowledge

transfer (SKT) in ECEC settings. By integrating the foresight of meta-leadership with the practical focus of strategic leadership, this model leverages robust systems, relational trust, and collaborative processes to translate professional development into meaningful practice. At its core, meta-strategic leadership is about empowering others, fostering collegiality, shared values, and collective decision-making to build a culture where knowledge is actively used and aligned with the centre's long-term vision. This approach not only bridges the gap between learning and implementation but also drives continuous professional growth and improvement across teams.

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