Leadership and innovation in the 21st century: Future-proofing early childhood organisations

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KU Children's Services
Since 1895

Why

‣ Understand how leading and leadership emerges in KU

‣ Evidence base to support KU leadership initiatives and innovation

‣ Focus on leadership assets – structure, resources, relationships and needs that support effective leadership in KU

‣ Contribute to the discourse on early childhood education leadership

A word from...

▸ Associate Professor Christine Woodrow, KU Education Committee

Dr CHRISTINE WOODROW
Board Member, KU Children's Services

Research questions

▶ **How does KU foster and support leading, leadership and innovation for a 'future ready' workforce?**

- What does a 'future ready' workforce look like?

- What are the attributes and dispositions of current and aspiring leaders?

- How do current systems and structures support the development of leadership?

- How do current systems and structures support innovation?

- How is knowledge retained and transferred?

Our process

‣ Establish the research team

‣ Develop a detailed project plan

‣ Form an Advisory Group

‣ Follow a rigorous ethics process

‣ Conduct a literature review

‣ Procure data software
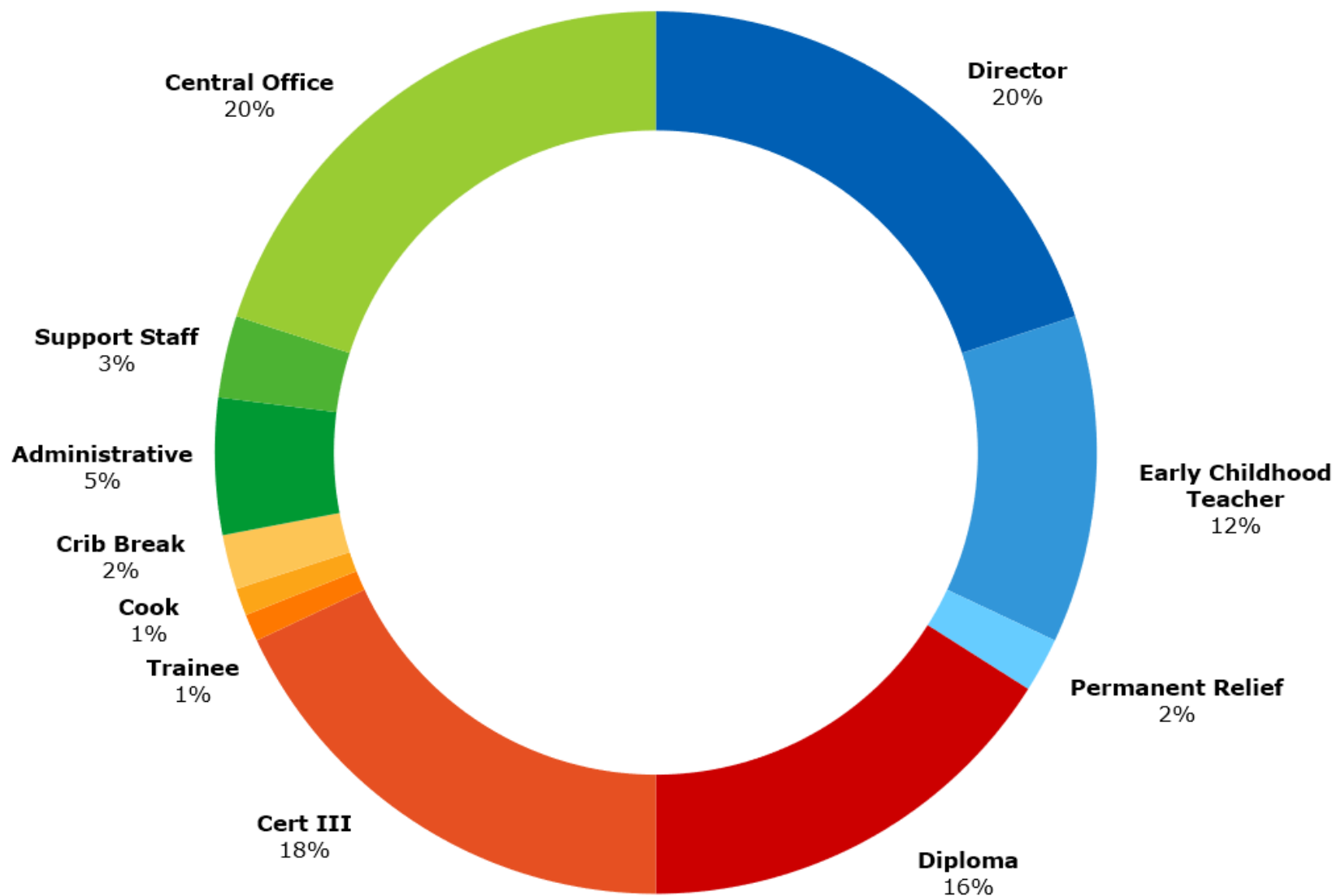
‣ Collect and analyse data

What the literature says

▸ 'Effective leadership' in ECE remains undefined

▸ Educational programs that provide for leadership development in ECE are inconsistent and their effectiveness is hard to determine

▸ Leadership is more "accidental" than "intentional" in ECE settings

▸ There is a symbiotic relationship between organisational culture and the development of leadership

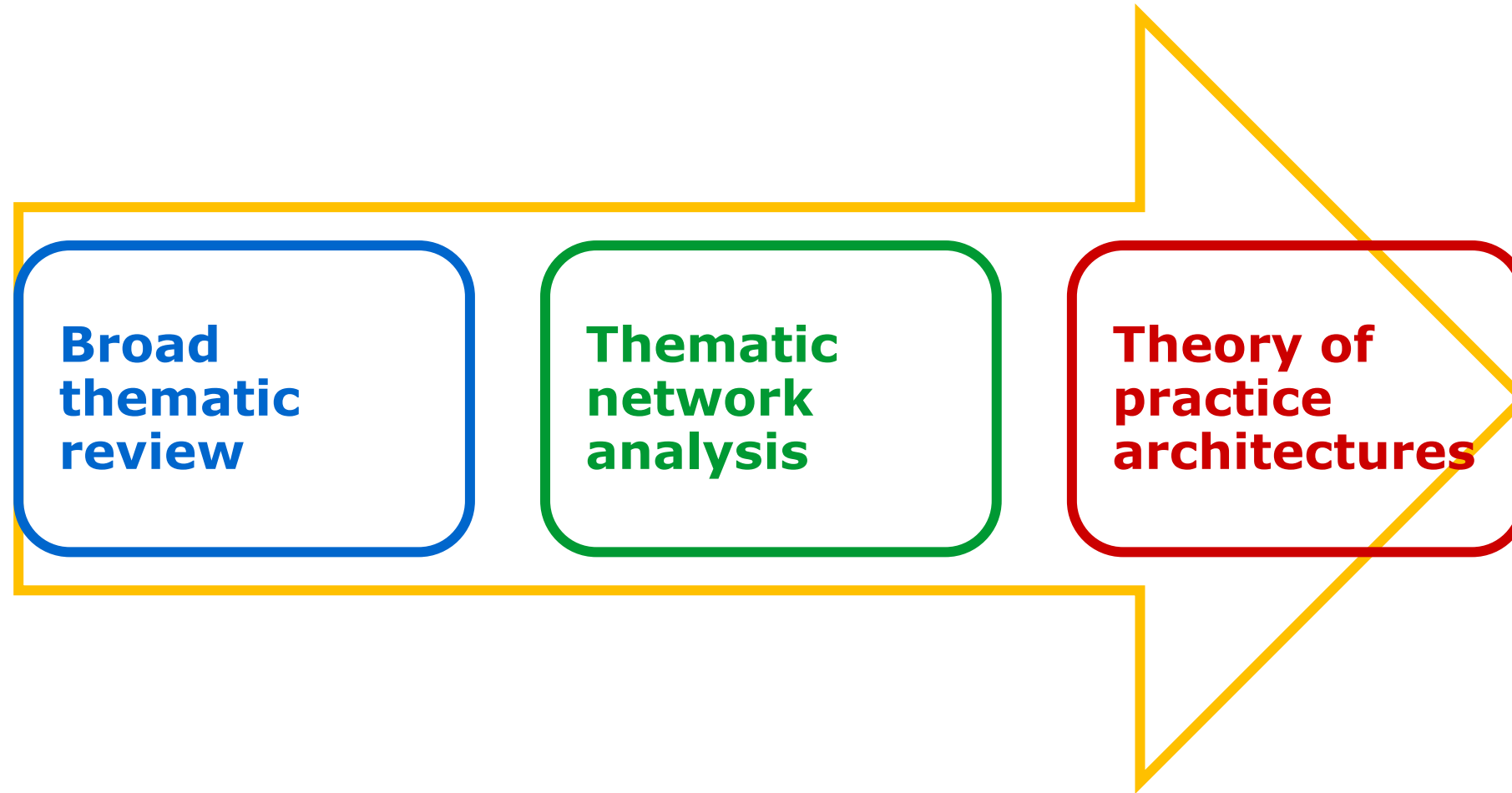▸ Innovation is enabled and constrained by compliance and management

What we did

- Survey (n=539)

- Interviews (n=55)

- Focus Group and Dialogic Café (n=9)

- Guided Reflective Inquiry webinars (n=25)

- Document analysis

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Participants

Central Office 20%

Director 20%

Support Staff 3%

Early Childhood Teacher 12%

Administrative 5%

Crib Break 2%

Cook 1%

Trainee 1%

Permanent Relief 2%

Cert III 18%

Diploma 16%

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Analysing the data

Broad thematic review

Thematic network analysis

Theory of practice architectures

Early findings

KU values and culture are observed and admired both across the sector and the organisation

- Pay and conditions attract leaders to KU

- Social justice practices attract leaders to KU

- Trust is very important for the development of leadership

The structure for service support is powerful when key leaders are aligned

- Some excellent role models for effective leadership exist in KU

- Taking initiative and making decisions is perceived differently

Early findings

Leadership development is recognised as an important contributor to quality

▶ Leadership can be by consequence of change

▶ Performance development supports the development of leadership

▶ Mentoring and coaching is a leadership development opportunity

Innovative solutions and ideas exist and there is an understanding of complexity

▶ Staff have innovative ideas and solutions

▶ Some initiatives are considered innovations and staff are proud of these

Early findings

Systems and processes support the development of leadership and innovation

▸ Compliance must be balanced with risk

Time is important for the development of leadership

Where to from here?

▸ Recommendations will inform KU's strategy, policy and budget directions, leadership agenda and initiatives

▸ Dissemination of findings

▸ Contribute to sector, political and academic conversations on leadership in early childhood education

Questions

If you would like more information about this project please contact leadershipresearch@ku.com.au