What is an 'educator'?: The impact of policy discourses on early childhood professionals.

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of

Master of Education (Research).

February 9, 2020

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband, beautiful daughter, my parents and my

family and friends who provided me with endless support and encouragement to reach for my

dreams.

Acknowledgements

Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I

have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary

institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the

thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant

Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

This thesis was edited on completion by services provided by Expert Editor.

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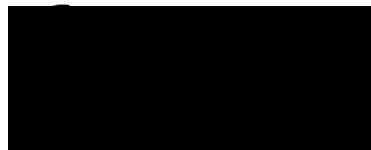
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09/02/2020

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Abstract

Background: This thesis investigates how policy-driven approaches to change in early childhood education in Australia are impacting on the field, and its dominant discourses, and on how professionals interpret the process of change. The thesis contributes to the investigation of the impacts of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) since its introduction in 2009. This is an important issue for early childhood education because understanding the ways in which educators see their role in the workplace has the potential to deepen our understanding of what it means to work in the early childhood field right now, as well as what it will mean for future practitioners entering the field.

Aim: The research question asked: *How do Victorian early childhood degree-trained educators perceive the term 'educator', as used in Australian policy documents?* The thesis identified a gap in the literature in relation to the naming of early childhood practitioners' roles. Although there is a growing body of literature around the use of the EYLF in relation to how it applies to children and families, there is limited research regarding what practitioners think of the changes the EYLF has made, and what these changes mean for them.

Method: The thesis takes a poststructuralist perspective on the role of language and uses a sub-category of discourse analysis, Membership Category Analysis (MCA), to analyse the data. Six degree-qualified early childhood professionals were interviewed. Three were based in sessional kindergartens and three in a long day care setting. The interviews were conducted over 45 minutes, primarily over phone or webcam.

Results: The thesis demonstrates that the meaning of the term 'educator', to those experiencing it, is constantly changing and developing, so it is difficult to come to a clear, defined, single 'truth' of what it means to be an 'educator'. Using MCA, the thesis argues

firstly that there are two categories within the data: discursive resisters category (teacher) and

discursive adapters category (educator). The two categories indicate that the field may well

still be finding its way into what it means to be an 'educator'. Secondly, this thesis argues

that these categories do not exist in isolation. There are a range of issues outside of these

categories that impact on the way practitioners understand their role in the field. The

implications for policy development and future research include the need for greater

understanding of how policy documents are embodied within the field. Further research could

also be expanded into diploma- and Certificate III-qualified practitioners to provide greater

topic saturation.

Keywords: early childhood education; teachers' work; policy reform; Membership

Category Analysis; Australia

Chapter 1:   Introduction to the Research

Introduction

Early childhood education has received priority within Australia over the last decade, as evidenced by the development of new national policies (Miller, Dalli, & Urban, 2011): the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations' *Belonging, being, & becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* [EYLF] (DEEWR, 2009), and the Council of Australian Governments' *National Quality Standard* (NQS) (COAG, 2014). One of the major shifts in discourse to come from these policies was the imposition of the universal term *educators*, defined as 'early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 48) and thus includes all early childhood practitioners regardless of qualification.

The term 'educators' shifts the language in Australian early childhood education significantly. The term suggests a focus on unifying a field where qualifications are no longer the means of differentiating between professionals. It is important to note when considering the intentionality of this language that the advisors of the framework (who supported the research and writing process of the EYLF) 'worked from the assumption that all educators are united in a shared goal of facilitating children's learning and wellbeing and that they take seriously their professional and ethical responsibilities' (Sumsion et al., 2009, p. 8). The term 'educators' was not chosen lightly by the authors of the EYLF but was a thoughtful attempt to bring together education and care. The present study is concerned with whether this has occurred — whether the new term did indeed set in motion a series of changes, and whether these changes are as intended or not. This thesis investigates how the term 'educators' has been taken and shaped by those who are living the term within the early childhood field.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how policy change through discursive shifts has impacted on degree-trained practitioners' concept of self, specifically the use of the term 'educators' in *Belonging, being & becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* for *Australia* (DEEWR, 2009).

If we accept that language both reflects and shapes our world, then the change in terminology has the potential for unintended consequences for how professionals work with each other and how they understand their role in the field. Previously, kindergarten 'teachers' were distinguished from long day care 'workers' or 'caregivers'; now, early childhood professionals are collectively referred to as *educators*. This means that the language used to talk about the professionals within the field has shifted not only in meaning, but power and positioning. The language used may be problematic due to its being an introduced term imposed by policy change. This means that the nature of the relationship that professionals have with the language used to describe their role is different from what was evident previously. The other aspect is that this change was policy-driven. A top-down approach was taken where the focus was on the benefits to children and families and the profession; the impact on early childhood professionals' everyday meaning-making was not in focus.

I will now outline the aims of this study and establish the research question.

Aims

This study will help explain how policy-driven approaches to change in early childhood education in Australia are impacting on the field and its dominant discourses, and how degree-trained practitioners are interpreting the process of change. The implications for this study are for policy developers to have a deeper understanding of the impacts of policy change within the field, with attention to the way in which professionals are positioned within and by these policies. It will also contribute to investigations of the impacts of the EYLF on

degree-trained practitioners and their ideas around their role since the framework's

introduction in 2009.

The importance of investigating this issue speaks to the identity of the professionals in

question. They are the ones expected to implement the policy change, and how they feel and

make sense of the renaming of themselves and those around them, and how they live out this

shift in their everyday life, directly affects the way the policy itself is understood and its

influence within the field's ever-changing identity. I argue that the language used in the

framework to name professionals may be problematic, and therefore warrants attention when

reflecting on how it affects the way practitioners understand their position and the practice of

professionals within early childhood. Accordingly, my research question asks:

> How do Victorian early childhood degree-trained educators perceive the
>
> term 'educators', as used in Australian policy documents?

Understanding the ways in which educators perceive their role in the workplace has

the potential to provide insight into what it means to work in the early childhood field right

now. It will also better support new graduates joining the early childhood community by

giving them a clearer understanding of what an 'educator' encompasses. The literature

suggests that pre-service early childhood teachers already have negative perceptions of the

early childhood field (Thorpe, Ailwood, Brownlee, & Boyd, 2011). This thesis provides

greater understanding for those who are currently working within the field of how certain

dispositions play out in the way meaning is made around the term 'educator'. As well, this

thesis has the potential to guide practitioners' ways of thinking about the term so that they

have a more positive image of it, both in theory and practice.

In this thesis, I examine how practitioners are creating and understanding what it means to be an educator within their everyday work lives. I focus on how this meaning-making is taking place and what categories and attributes are being made around this term.

Implications for Current Practice

The main purpose of the National Quality Framework (NQF), which produced the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework, was to bring about improved education and care outcomes for children in the early years. One way to address this was to unify kindergartens, childcare and family day care under a common regulatory framework. This goal of uniting the field was secondary but critical to implementation of the Early years Learning Framework. A further purpose was to reflect the goals outlined in international policy agendas such as those outlined in the Starting Strong series of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017). According to DEEWR (2009), 'The Framework is designed to inspire conversations, improve communication and provide a common language' (2009, p. 8). The hope of the language shift was to support universal access by all professionals to the same ways of assessing learning outcomes and communicating with each other within the field. It would also allow for greater accountability when coupled with the National Quality Standard under the National Quality Agenda (DEEWR, 2009; COAG, 2009). The language used within the EYLF unifies key players (teachers, childcare workers, and carers) within early childhood education and care (Sumsion et al., 2009). This will be explained in more detail in the literature review.

Those within early childhood are living out identities and expectations within their workplaces. How far-reaching are the impacts of the changed terminology? What is the impact on those potentially wishing to move into the field, as well as their reasoning to stay

within it? Are the new identities being formed stable and able to withstand the expectations and demands of an ever-changing workforce? Without further research into these questions, the goals outlined as being of upmost importance in the Starting Strong series (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017), such as improving the image of early childhood, along with its conditions, pay and qualifications, are left unanswered. There is no way we can improve other objectives identified as growing global trends, such as greater quality education for children, improved connections for families and communities, and a professionalisation of the field, without first investigating how professionals see themselves and the work they do. Understanding how those within the field make sense of who they are and what they do within their work will give us greater insight into how we can support professionals in a way that supports what research is telling us: that high-quality early childhood education and care is vital not only for child development but the wider wellbeing of our culture and society.

The research in general around early childhood professionals is minimal within an Australian context (Grieshaber, 2008). How professionals are positioned, and the understanding of the names given to them, has had some research attention internationally, but there has been only limited investigation of how professionals within the early childhood sector in Australia feel about the change in language from teachers or carers to 'educators'. There is no research into what the change in language looks like within the field several years on, with changes to regulations within the early childhood sector continuing to affect the way the framework functions as a policy document. There needs to be further exploration of how the term influences how professionals of differing qualifications make meaning of the term. This thesis aims to look at one side of the discussion about what it means to be an educator by examining a degree-qualified professional's point of view. In the next section I describe and defend the philosophical paradigm for this study.

I have chosen to use MCA (Membership Category Analysis) as a way of defining and understanding how practitioners have been creating and defining their role as educator. I will outline this within my methodology chapter before demonstrating the way this discourse analysis technique is applied in action through my first findings and discussion chapter, 'What is it to be an 'educator'?'. I will then use inductive analysis within the second findings and discussion chapter, 'The impact of policy change', to analyse other issues that were raised within the data beyond the categories and attributes identified through MCA.

I will now provide some personal context that led me to become interested in the term *educators* and how the meaning-making is taking place in the profession.

My Personal Context

Within this section I would like to explore my own bias and experiences within the field. Understanding my own perceptions and knowledge of the field will help to demonstrate not only my interest but the conclusions I have drawn.

I completed my undergraduate degree in early childhood education in 2008 and was successful in gaining employment at a privately-run long day centre that had been operating a funded kindergarten program for several years. The centre had found it challenging to keep staff and was keen to have someone who would commit for the entire year. I utilised the incentive grant offered by the Victorian State Government to make up the financial difference between the wage offered within the private sector compared to council and independent kindergartens.

I had worked casually in long day care services and so had an idea of the social dynamics involved, but I joined the team in an awkward position. I was young and a new graduate, but I had the highest qualification, technically, on site. I found those first few weeks getting to know my colleagues and establishing myself in a team of over twenty challenging.

In the first six months of my commencing full-time work, the Early Years Learning

Framework was introduced. With the support of my mentor, I reformed my program,

changing it and developing it to reflect the new ideas and concepts being offered in the

framework. Seeing my program, the directors approached me and asked me to support the

other staff in updating their programs. I found that while those staff close to my age were

open to discussions around their program, it was challenging engaging the more experienced

staff members. The expectation was that I would improve the programming of the other staff

to reflect current practices and guidelines.

While this was developing within my day-to-day practice, I found when attending

meetings and networking with other kindergarten teachers that there was a clear divide

perceived between kindergarten teachers working in the private sector compared with those

working in the public sector. As a result, I was often insulted or had my choice to work

within a long day care setting marginalised or made to appear like I was waiting for a 'real

job'. Other similarly qualified teachers often asked me how I felt working with 'young

inexperienced girls' and how I could work in such poor conditions. When I challenged their

perceptions, this was often dismissed as my not knowing any better.

I joined Peninsula and Chelsea Teachers Association (PACTA) and joined the

committee. With PACTA's history of only council-owned kindergarten teachers, they were

surprised to have someone from a long day care centre joining and excited to be able to claim

some level of diversity for the committee. Even so, the committee members often suggested I

apply for 'real' jobs and would put down the other professionals I worked with and had come

to respect.

At work, I was trying to encourage the other staff to attend professional development,

and it was indicated to me by the directors that there was an expectation that I would support

staff in attending professional development. I found often that staff in my workplace (all of

whom ranged from the unqualified to diploma-trained) would express interest in my requests

but become dismissive and tell me that they didn't want to go because they knew they didn't

'belong' or that often degree-qualified professionals would be dismissive or condescending to

them at professional development sessions that asked for group discussion or teamwork. I

was fascinated by the interplay of emotions and motivations and continued to encourage and

support them with varying degrees of success.

It was about six months into my first year that I was confronted by a teacher who had

been working as a stand-alone kindergarten teacher for several years. She bluntly asked me to

stop using the words 'educator' and 'service' in front of her, pointing out to me that 'we

aren't like THEM'. I explained that in the new framework these were the terms that were

used. Other teachers who had joined our small group nodded in agreement when she stated:

'We have worked too hard to be considered equal to primary teachers to be pushed back

again with them'. I was interested in this because, as someone working in a larger team, there

was for me no 'them and us'. For me, we were all working together to care and educate

children.

I continued to face challenges during both my networking opportunities and daily at

work in encouraging my co-workers to think more positively about themselves, as well as

their ability to participate in professional development and engage the wider professional

community as valued members. My efforts met with mixed success, with some of my co-

workers holding firm to their belief that it was a place for 'teachers' not 'childcare workers'. I

also experienced this level of discrimination in action at a networking meeting between early

years primary and kindergarten teachers, where the teachers mistook me as a diploma-trained

teacher. They spoke down to me, reminding me that it wasn't really my place to comment on

the transition reports. There was an awkward silence when I informed them that I was a

degree-trained practitioner working in a long day setting, after which their discrimination was brushed aside, and the subject changed.

I remained on the committee for another year, continuing to advocate for a more open-minded view, though I often got the impression that this was something that was merely tolerated because I was frank and clear regarding my opinions.

At the end of 2011, I moved to another long day service. This time as part of my employment, I was expected to take on the role of 'Educational Leader'. This included reviewing reports on students and assisting all rooms with planning and documentation. I found again there was a level of resistance as well as an almost automatic dismissal of the term 'educator', with many of my co-workers unwittingly correcting me to 'childcare worker' when referring to themselves or telling me that I was 'a real teacher'. I found when I insisted that an awkward silence would ensue. This continued until I changed employment.

Once in a council-run service, I was told that this was my first 'real' teaching job, and that I'd had lots of 'learning experience' before starting 'proper teaching'. This often came from families of children enrolled in our service.

These early experiences made me aware that, although the introduction of the term 'educator' was designed to be a straightforward and inclusive process alongside the introduction of the EYLF, for many professionals this was not how it was taken on. There seemed to be flow-on impacts for professionals of all qualifications across several settings, and some unintended consequences in how the discourse was taken up and understood. This was most notably shaped by the power structures within different parts of the early childhood profession. Although there was little understanding of the significance of the term 'educator' at this stage, it was this awareness for me that both inspired and revealed the need for this research.

Conclusion

In this thesis I first describe the current literature related to my topic of research before identifying the gap in the literature. Then I outline my methodological approach with reference to ethical considerations, before addressing my findings, looking to directly address the research question: *How do Victorian early childhood degree-trained educators perceive the term 'educators', as used in Australian policy documents?* I will then discuss the other issues that arose to create context for the findings, within the discussion chapter before concluding my thesis.

Chapter 2:   Literature Review

Introduction

Within the literature around what it means to be an educator, there seems to be little

that directly links to the research around how degree-qualified practitioners understand the

term 'educators'. There is significant research around the introduction of the EYLF, and the

NQS. There is also a focus on professionalising the field and educators in other settings of

education. However, there seems to be a silence in the literature around how degree-qualified

practitioners view their work in Australia as educators. I aim to demonstrate this gap in the

literature throughout this chapter, as it limited what I could discuss in the sense of context for

my thesis.

 In this chapter I will firstly review how I conducted my literature review. I divided

the research into three main topics. First, I addressed the history of naming professionals in

early childhood education, then early childhood policy on a global level — here, I addressed

how professionalism fits into my literature research, before moving to focus on the Australian

political scene — and, finally, I addressed the way educators are named and why this is of

importance.

Approach to the Literature Review

When starting my literature review, I used the Australian Catholic University (ACU)

library portal as the basis for my research. I used this to extend my catchment to books held

by the library as well as to access journals and databases. ERIC and ProQuest were my main

databases for peer-reviewed journals. I focused on terms such as 'early childhood'

'professionals' and 'EYLF'. By extending my search to include 'education' I started to get

some results that related to my topic. As my field has conducted limited research within peer-

reviewed journals, it took extensive searches to find articles that related to my topic. I found

in the wider searches there were many international articles that were based on professionals'

identities, not only in early childhood but in all areas of education. *Educator* as a term means

different things within international research. It can include just diploma- or certificate-

trained professionals, or, more broadly, professionals who work at university level, as each

country has its own application of the word. Authors such as Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin,

Schärer, Vanderlee and Viviani seemed to appear most often in the more international search

results that included the term 'educator'. The term is also used across different education

sectors. This variation meant filtering through information to find corresponding information

that most closely related to my topic.

Author names such as Ailwood, Dalli, May, Cheesman, Miller, Stonehouse and

Urban appeared most often in my searches with an Australian and New Zealand focus.

Within early childhood in Australia I found results mainly by Stonehouse, Sumsion, and

Woodrow when exploring current issues. What I found most often, though, was that there

was little research published around the educators themselves and the EYLF. There was a

focus on how the EYLF works to promote children's learning, and how early childhood is

being shaped by the EYLF and NQS, but this focus did not extend to what it means for the

educators' understanding of themselves as professionals or their experience in implementing

the curriculum.

Three articles that directly addressed this issue were by Grieshaber and Graham

(2017), Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin and Vanderlee (2013), and Ortlipp, Arthur, and

Woodrow (2011). Grieshaber and Graham (2017) focused on the equality of all professionals

being called an 'educator' and what this meant in relation to the skills and knowledge of

those working in the field. Harwood et al. (2013) discussed the importance of the educators'

meaning-making as an element of developing and maintaining meaning-making. Within the

Ortlipp et al. (2011) article, the focus was on the introduction of the EYLF and the feedback

given via the pilot group, which tested the EYLF prior to its release.

From here, I used the reference lists within the articles I found most useful or closely

related to my topic and searched for those cited authors. This was also based on the citation

within relevant articles (such as Grieshaber & Graham, 2017) to guide me with respect to

whether it might also be of relevance to me. I also used the library catalogue to conduct wider

searches and identify relevant titles to borrow.

While researching my topic, three main themes emerged: history of naming

professionals in early childhood education; government policies and their influence on early

childhood education; and naming early childhood work. Below I discuss these separately to

assist with clarity. In practice, and when engaging with the literature, I found that these three

themes were intertwined and in a dynamic relationship with one another to create the current

circumstances of the field. For the purposes of this chapter, I have separated them into the

three main categories listed above. I will be using these headings to guide my discussion.

History of Naming Professionals in Early Childhood Education

Within this section I address how the names used for professionals in early childhood

education have been shaped by international trends, and how these shifted to impact on how,

within Australia, the terms are informed by these trends.

When reflecting on the origins of any profession, it is unsurprising to discover that the

understandings and culture of the field are clearly marked by its historical background. It is

difficult to understand the contemporary context of early childhood education without

acknowledging the deep and often persistent link between early childhood education and

motherhood (Ailwood, 2008). Over time, practitioners have been reinvented, reviewed and

reshaped to fit the image of the current political and social climate (Stonehouse, 1989). Over

the course of history, professionals across early childhood have been given a range of names

that reflect their status and role within education and/or care. These names often vary from

country to country. Within Australia, the roots of kindergarten follow the UK with the

Kindergarten Movement (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009), similar to other European countries,

with 'Froebelian methods' being the first basis of teacher training within Australia (Ailwood,

2008). Underpinning Froebel's beliefs was a strong tie to maternalistic discourses, with links

between a teacher's role and her motherly instincts (Ailwood, 2008). Long day care has its

foundations in 'day nursery', speaking again to those maternal and care links, once again

adopting concepts from the UK to meet the needs and demands of families in low

socioeconomic conditions and/or working mothers (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009). Gradually,

these historical maternalistic discourses became the foundation for the traditional roles that

were outlined within the qualifications-based hierarchy that was prevalent prior to the

introduction of the EYLF. These shaped clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the

early childhood sector that were collectively understood and accepted by those working

within the profession.

A decade on from the introduction of the EYLF there continue to be varying

understandings of what it is to work with young children and how practitioners within the

sector work with each other. Is the qualification-based hierarchy that is historically evident

within the Australian setting still in play? Have the early childhood teachers within the field

accepted or rejected this dominant discourse?

These varied understandings within Australia are an amalgamation of historical policy

changes, ongoing research into best practice, and continued change in social understandings

of the value of children. This, in turn, has shaped the early childhood landscape (Cheeseman

& Torr, 2009; May, 2001). These understandings also shape the way in which early

childhood professionals understand their own work and who they are within their field. This

was the background that informed and guided the transition into the new language that was

introduced within the EYLF.

In this section of the chapter I address the ways in which government policies have

affected early childhood education within Australia and internationally. This section is

designed to build on the foundation of historic trends evident in education and gives further

evidence of how these policies have shaped the way we view early childhood education and

its practitioners.

Government Policies and Their Influence on Early Childhood Education

Early childhood policy, a global lens. Within *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006), we

see the first signs of the global trends that would soon appear in the EYLF. These trends

include a focus on providing a curriculum framework and improving the quality of staff in

the field and their conditions. As well, they show how global concepts found their way into

the gaze of Australian policymakers. The policy choices made for Australian early childhood

professionals were heavily influenced by international trends at the time. Within *Starting

Strong III* (OECD, 2012), there is again a focus on improving qualifications and, in turn,

public perspectives on early childhood professionals. These documents compare different

countries' efforts to improve early childhood education, while offering recommendations on

how they can continue to improve.

International policy change has seen many countries shift from a post-war model,

where professionals were positioned as autonomous, to a situation where governing bodies

influence the way professionals deliver information such as programming, content, and how

this is shared with families within their services (Oberhuemer, 2005). Australia followed the

trend in international policy where increasing value is placed on early childhood education

and the way it is delivered, believing that quality early childhood education is the basis for

high academic success, thus creating a stronger future workforce.

Over the past few decades, within Western societies, the health and wellbeing of

children has moved in and out of the political 'gaze' (May, 2006). This gaze reflected 'broad

rationales framing the pedagogical and political consensus necessary for new policy

paradigms' (May, 2006, p. 252). More recently, Woodrow (2008) reflected on the ongoing

process of the early childhood sector in Australia as being in a 'state of change' (p. 29). The

sudden shift of discourse from 'teacher' and 'caregiver' to 'educator' within the EYLF

reflected ongoing attempts by government bodies to shape and define the early childhood

profession. This resulted in professionals in the field being asked to develop new and

different understandings of what they do and whom they do it with. Cheeseman and Torr

(2009) identified this pedagogical change as a possible barrier to success prior to the

introduction of the EYLF. The consequences of this language are that it sharply shifts the

focus within the early childhood field towards a dominant discourse of educator within policy

and government documents engaging with the field. This aspires to create an image of a

unified field, with the hope of universal acceptance within the workforce; again, this was

questioned as a possible barrier to its success by Cheeseman and Torr (2009), who cited the

conflicting interests of the various financial stakeholders involved in this diverse field.

The persistent maternalistic discourse within early childhood education and care has

created an obstacle for many professionals to overcome to reshape their profession and

themselves in the face of the political and social change currently taking place in early

childhood. Is the educator discourse affected by the maternalistic discourse? Or is it separate

and independent of previously held concepts of what it means to work with young children?

Assessment policy has become not just an Australian but an international focus. This

shift impacts on what it means to work in early childhood because it 'provides a framework

and measure by which teachers are formally judged and monitored' (Bradbury, 2012, p. 176)

This trend, creates a level of accountability that flows through into the meaning-making that

practitioners create around their job.

      Early childhood policy — how this plays out in Australia. Many elements

influence early childhood policy, including political persuasion. Over the last two decades

Liberal and Labor governments have influenced the direction of education on all levels

within Australia (Thomas, 2012). According to Bradbury (2012), 'This trend towards

performativity, which is present in several countries' early education systems, involves a

judgement of the "quality" of early years care and education based on measurable outcomes

that can be quantified' (p. 177). Internationally, there have been policy moves towards

presenting education as an outcomes-based process, and the notion that students and their

work in educational institutions are a form of human capital that needs to be utilised and

developed to create strong outcomes into the future (OCED, 2001). In 2009, COAG agreed to

the National Early Childhood Development Strategy – 'Investing in the Early Years' (Fleet &

Farrell, 2014).

      The Commonwealth of Australia published the EYLF in 2009 and it became

mandatory from January 2012. The EYLF is a core document in the National Quality

Framework suite (DEEWR, 2009). The service accreditation tool within the NQF, the

National Quality Standard (COAG, 2009), asks for explicit evidence of using the EYLF

within kindergartens, childcare and family day care. This suite of documents supports the

notion of 'educators' within all of these services. This is demonstrated by using the term

'educator' in all supporting documentation for the NQS, which uses the approved and

universal language found within the EYLF when communicating with professionals. These

two sections of the early childhood reforms together marked the first time that kindergartens

in Australia had been assessed by a government body for quality in seven key areas, as part of

universal assessment of kindergartens, childcare and family day care, with the same ratings system and accountability across the whole sector.

The EYLF reflected a few international and national documents that attempted to address the importance of early childhood. Elliott and Tayler (2012) noted that it was agreed in Australia that there was value in raising the quality of education and care for children and families. This resulted in Australia following a growing trend within early childhood communities across the globe. Over a nine-month period from 2008 to 2009, which Brown, Sumsion and Press (2011) refer to as 'disruptive changes in the Australian political landscape' (p. 266), the EYLF was drafted and implemented across all early childhood services (Giugni, 2010). The document aimed to address concerns around quality care and education in Australia. A suite of documents, including the EYLF and supporting materials, was quickly introduced (Brown, Sumsion, & Press, 2011), resulting in the sudden introduction of new language and discourses that sought to achieve alignment of terminology across different government policy documents and websites. This created a situation where new terms such as 'educator' were prioritised over previously established language.

These areas of literature are primarily focused on the historical factors of early childhood education and the ways professionals have been named over time. Here I aimed to provide a global and then an Australian focus of early childhood education and care and the ways it has been represented in the literature. I will now turn to the related literature that sits around my primary interest before moving on to discuss the ways professionals in early childhood have been named, and why this is important.

Related literature. I will now address areas that came up in the literature search but did not fit into the primary search areas that linked to my research question. This literature is included here because it provides some context around the topic of the history of naming professionals in early childhood education. This section aims to provide greater

understanding of the early childhood professional's position, which will provide context for

issues that are raised in later chapters of this thesis. This literature provided context for the

comments and explanations raised by participants within the study.

Professionalism movement in early childhood. When conducting my literature

review, I found that there was significant research around professionalism. Much of the

literature that linked to my research interest fitted within this category. There is significant

research into what it means to professionalise early childhood educators on a global scale

(Bradbury, 2012). Professionalism is seen as a fluid concept that is changing the way teachers

complete their work (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009; Ozga, 1995). This shift has been driven by

policy change and seems to focus on shifting from educator autonomy to a greater pressure

on defining teachers' roles at a policy level (Bradbury, 2012).

Professionalism is a large (and often contested) research topic. There are a significant

number of publications around this topic, from whether professionalism is the correct term

for a mixed qualified workforce (Lloyd & Hallet, 2010) and what the purpose of

professionalism is in policy reform (Osgood, 2006) to the importance of professionalism

(Newman & Clarke, 2009). Although these articles appeared within my searches for relevant

literature, they did not directly relate to the central aim of this thesis. I was not focused on

whether professionalism was taking place through the EYLF (even though it was a relevant

discussion point raised by the participants); I was primarily concerned with what meaning

was being made in relation to the concept of *educator*. This was due to the scale of my

research project. It was also because professionalism is still a contested concept in the early

childhood field. It has as yet no clear bounds because it is a new concept that is currently

evolving. I needed to keep my research study focused and relevant and this was one way of

achieving this.

Professional identity. Within my literature searches, one area that came up in conjunction with the professionalisation of early childhood was professional identity. In this there was a focus on how those working in early childhood develop their sense of professional identity (Woodrow, 2008) and how their identity is affected by policy changes (Gibson, 2015). The focus of these articles was mainly on establishing what influences the practitioners' identities, either as established teachers (Woodrow, 2008) or pre-service teachers (Gibson, 2015).

As this is a global trend, the literature is focused on Australia — such as Gibson's (2014), Woodrow's (2008) and Edwards's (2014) work. While some articles included more international trends (Moloney, 2010), much of the research focuses on how identity of professionals is being developed or enhanced in long day care settings where degree-qualified practitioners are being employed (Edwards, 2014).

This literature is an emerging area of research that has contested parameters (Almeida, Moore, & Barnes 2018). Due to the contested nature of what is the identity of early childhood professionals (and how one would measure it), as well as the ongoing research being conducted in this area, I felt the scope of this research was too wide for my research project. It required very rigid terms to define what is meant by 'identity'. This is more suited to a larger study that allows for more interviews or focus groups for greater saturation within the data collection phase.

Pay and conditions literature. One of the most dominant advocates within pay and conditions literature is Moss (2010), with others being Adams (2008), Chalke (2013) and Langford (2007). There is significant literature that demonstrates the way pay and conditions has influenced the development of the early childhood field internationally. The major focus is on long day care educators within the literature, and primarily advocates for change to create quality of education and care within the early childhood sector. This is also intricately

linked to the literature around professionalism of the field, with a global trend towards

increasing qualifications in early childhood education (OECD, 2012). The literature around

pay and conditions shows that it plays a major role in decision-making by those practitioners

who go into early childhood education and care rather than primary education (Defries, 2008;

Sumsion, 2007; Thorpe et al., 2011).

Pay and conditions literature does not address the central question of my research.

However, it is relevant because it is part of the contextual background of what it means to be

an educator and the different sectors in which educators choose to work. The literature

suggests that pay and conditions plays a large role in how those within the profession see

their jobs and the roles and responsibilities of their work (Defries, 2008). In this way it is

relevant literature; however, it does not address my primary research question of naming an

educator.

In this section I aimed to touch on the main areas that also came up within my

literature searches. These areas held value because they sat around what I was investigating,

and in the case of identify and professional intensification, were potential areas I could have

taken this thesis into. The decision to shift the direction into the meaning-making of names

was primarily a reflection of what is possible within a Master of Research.

I will now look at the primary focus of my research — naming early childhood work

and why it is important.

Naming Early Childhood Work: Why Is It Important?

In this section I address how language has been used historically and, in the present,

to shape and define early childhood professionals. Historically, professionals across early

childhood education have been given a range of names. These titles normally reflect the

dominant discourse within the given country and aim to reflect the qualities of 'good' early

childhood professionals (Cumming, Sumsion & Wong, 2013, p. 230).

From an international perspective there has been research conducted into the way the

names of professionals in early childhood affect their own understanding and how they are

viewed more broadly in the community. This research is often more focused on long day care

services (or the equivalent) staff (Adams, 2008; Chalke, 2013; Langford, 2007; Moss, 2010).

Australia is at odds with other countries that have also introduced frameworks, as all other

frameworks make a distinction between degree- and non-degree qualified workers within the

early childhood field; Australia has forgone this, creating a new and unique discourse within

a global trend.

To further complicate the understandings of professionals within the field, Australia

historically had a split system between kindergarten and childcare, where the development of

qualifications and quality of care and education were clearly delineated. Qualifications were

used to identify roles, as well as maintain a clear distinction between 'teachers' and

'childcare workers', or, more broadly, education and care. These embedded practices were

the norm in Australia until 2009 and are therefore still the perspectives that underpin the new

era, where qualifications are no longer used as the sole means of identifying what

professionals do and how they do it.

A community of professionals accustomed to a profession where their title historically

suggested their level of training and their relative responsibility level might be uncomfortable

with a title that was inclusive of *all* qualifications and may be made uncomfortable by

language that dictates how professionals interact with each other. Ortlipp et al. (2011), during

a study into how professionals were embracing the introduction of the EYLF, identified that

'the fragmented nature of the early childhood field in Australia makes it difficult to identify a

shared professional identity ...' (p. 58). Their research showed that when the EYLF was

introduced there was already a divide that the term 'educator' was trying to breach. In

reflection, the writing party of the EYLF noted: 'we worked from the assumption that all

educators are united in a shared goal of facilitating children's learning and wellbeing and that

they take seriously their professional and ethical responsibilities' (Sumsion, et al., 2009, p. 8).

This suggests the choosing of the term 'educator' was an intentional act with planned goals

for its use.

In contrast, Grieshaber and Graham (2017) question the equality in using the

universal term of 'educator' to enforce a universal framework that requires the same level of

commitment and work from all individuals involved regardless of their qualifications. Using

a social justice lens, they examined the persistent inconsistencies in work, qualifications and

pay conditions within early childhood education and care and what they actually meant for

those working in the field and if those without degree training were actually having their

rights respected under the current policies.

The main purpose of the NQF was to bring about improved education and care

outcomes for children in the early years. One way to address this was to unify kindergartens,

childcare and family day care. These purposes were secondary but critical to implementation

of the framework. A further purpose was to reflect the goals outlined in international policy

agendas (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017): 'The Framework is designed to inspire

conversations, improve communication and provide a common language' (DEEWR, 2009,

p. 8). The aspiration of the language shift is to support universal use by all professionals of

the same ways of assessing children's learning outcomes and communicating with each other

within the field. It also allows for greater accountably when coupled with the National

Quality Standard (COAG, 2009; DEEWR, 2009). The language used within the EYLF

positions key players (teachers, childcare workers, and carers) within early childhood

education and care in a certain way (Sumsion et al., 2009).

Those within early childhood are living out roles and expectations within their workplaces. How far-reaching are the impacts of the changed terminology? What is the impact on those potentially wishing to move into the field, as well as their reasoning to stay within it? Are the new understandings that are being formed stable and able to withstand the expectations and demands of an ever-changing workforce? Without further research into these questions, the goals outlined as being of upmost importance in the Starting Strong series (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017), such as improving the image of early childhood, along with its conditions, pay, and qualifications, are left unanswered. There is no way we can improve other objectives identified as growing global trends, such as greater quality education for children, improved connections for families and communities, and a professionalisation of the field, without also understanding how those within the field make sense of who they are and what they do within their work. Such research will give us greater insight into how we can support professionals in a way that, in turn, supports what research is telling us: that high-quality early childhood education and care is vital not only for child development, but the wider wellbeing of culture and society.

Conclusion

Although I have reviewed these three areas in sequence, in the context of my study I see these areas as overlapping to highlight a gap in the research. The research in general around early childhood professionals within the Australian context is minimal (Grieshaber, 2008). How professionals are positioned, and their understanding of the names given to them, has had some research attention internationally, but, as previously noted, Australia is in a unique position, being the only country actively bringing together all professionals and attempting to merge and reshape a number of distinct discourses to create a new dominate discourse that is taken up by professionals over a range of fields. However, there has been only limited investigation of how professionals within the early childhood sector in Australia

feel about the change in language to 'educator'. The single article that addresses this topic by

Grieshaber and Graham (2017) focuses on the equity of naming all professionals in the early

childhood field 'educators' rather than what it means to them to be named as such. The only

other research conducted in relation to this topic is by Ortlipp et al. (2011), who use data

collected within the pilot program of the EYLF drafting process. There is no research into

what the change in language looks like within the field a number of years on from

development of the NQF or the EYLF, with previous commentary being influenced heavily

by the belief that the EYLF was an optional document for kindergarten professionals. So, the

understanding of what it means to professionals now, with the current regulatory

requirements within the early childhood sector continuing to impact on the way in which the

EYLF functions as a policy document, is largely unknown. There is also no research into how

those with the same qualification over different services (with their differing historical

dominant discourses) are creating and understanding the term 'educator' and how these may

or may not differ from each other.

There needs to be further exploration of how the term 'educator' influences how

professionals with differing qualifications make meaning of the term in the context of

ongoing policy shifts. Due to the nature of a master's program, within this thesis I will focus

on those working in different service types with the same qualification — a teacher education

degree — with goals to expand my research to include other qualifications in future studies.

In the next chapter I describe and defend the philosophical paradigm for this study.

Chapter 3:   Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and methodology adopted for this study. I will firstly outline my theoretical framework, which outlines the poststructuralist theoretical principles inclusive of, 'nature of discourse', 'power and knowledge', 'language', 'resistance' and 'positioning'. I will then turn to methodology, before focusing on recruitment, inclusive of participant selection and recruitment procedures. I will then look at data collection, ethics considerations, format for individual interviews, strength of interview approach, and finally an analysis of the interview data.

Theoretical Framework

I used poststructuralist theoretical principles during my research. Poststructuralism maintains that there is no single truth but many truths, and 'inspires a critical reflection on "self-evident truths", in ways that make visible who benefits, and who is silenced in meanings that are normalised and circulating in society' (Nicholson, Shimpi, & Rabin, 2014, p. 1195).

Poststructuralists argue that meaning is socially constructed, and that discourse is based on how people speak, and the power attributed to those words (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). This focus on how power is attributed to words is a different approach from other theorists who believe that meaning is socially constructed. Poststructuralists also argue that these discourses impact on how subjects understand their world and that subjects are 'products' of these discourses and their world (MacNaughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Therefore, subjects are always changing and developing over time. Poststructuralists also look to investigate the ways in which discourses impact on understandings of phenomena.

Features of poststructuralism. I was interested in how professionals in the early

childhood field understood the term 'educator' in the context of government policy change.

Using a poststructuralist lens helped me develop specific understandings around how the

discourse imposed through policy is understood by professionals.

Based on my experience and preliminary research, there is evidence to suggest that

the meaning of the term 'educator', to those experiencing it, is constantly changing and

developing over time, so it is difficult to come to a clear, defined, single 'truth' of what it

means to be an 'educator'. Teachers have constructed ideas of what their job is and how they

undertake it relative to the positions of others around them and these positions are maintained

through discourse. By adopting this approach, I was able to reflect upon my own views of

how this discourse is constructed through experiences and interactions, as well as reflecting

on aspects of discourse identified by poststructuralists such as 'dominant' discourses,

'positioning' and 'silencing'. As poststructuralists view the world through the lens of

multiple changing or developing truths that are reflective of how those experiencing a

phenomenon are understanding it (in my case, the introduction of the word 'educator'), I feel

this provides a useful basis from which to better understand the role of language and how it is

used to enact power within the field.

The nature of discourse. Discourse analysis can have a few meanings, with some

focusing more on linguistic and grammatically oriented approaches to language (Williams,

2014)

Poststructuralists argue that meaning is socially constructed, and that discourse is

based on how people speak, and the power attributed to those words (Robinson & Jones-

Diaz, 2006). With this approach, meaning is made through social interactions and it is within

these interactions that words are given power. In turn, the way words are used can 'silence' or

'value' different groups of people. Therefore, subjects (persons) are always changing and

developing over time. Poststructuralist analysis is distinguished from other approaches

through the way it draws on three key concepts to understand how the world around us

operates through discourse: power/knowledge, language, and resistance. These three features

plus a fourth (positioning) are interconnected, but for the purpose of this thesis I will speak

about them in sequence.

    Power/knowledge. Poststructuralists speak about power and knowledge together. As

power is not exclusive to knowledge for poststructuralists, knowledge is given to those who

have power. The voices of some are valued, and their perspectives become the dominant

discourse, meaning their knowledge is valued. Nicholson et al. (2014) elaborate on this

concept saying, 'Poststructuralist theory inspires a critical reflection on "self-evident truths",

in ways that make visible who benefits, and who is silenced in meanings that are normalised

and circulating in society' (p. 1195). Fairclough (2001) argues that there are ideologies that

underpin power and knowledge, but they in turn inform both elements as well. Fairclough

sees ideologies as contributing to the creation and acceptance of dominate discourses. He

believes that these ideologies are examples of taken-for-granted conventions between

community members, and these conventions decide how information is shared and which

member's opinion is valued in a given discussion (Fairclough, 2001). This perspective on

how information is shared and understood, and the power that is given to it, directly linked

with my choice of methods, where I planned to look for 'inference-richness' (Schegloff,

2006, p. 469) within my data set.

    Language. I have chosen to highlight language as a subcategory of power/knowledge

because this element is a key reason why a poststructuralist lens is appropriate to my

research. Fletcher (1999) said, 'Language and other forms of representations play in

mediating the relationship between power and knowledge' (p. 22). This means that the

language used plays a key part in how power and knowledge are played out in society.

Further, Fletcher said: 'Language is a part of society, and not somehow external to it … that

language is a social process … that language is a socially conditioned process' (2001, p. 18).

This is paramount to my research because I believe the way early childhood professionals are

making meaning through language, i.e. the term 'educator', will explain their understandings

about their developing insights into their role within the field.

Resistance. Another key concept within poststructuralism is resistance. This speaks

about the process where power is used to disrupt the dominant discourse (Fletcher, 1999).

This is important when considering my research because I sought to define a phenomenon

that was taking place in the field as it was experienced by a group of people, and I expected

to find participants who reported or enacted resistance during my interviews. This was further

supported within my research as I also looked for alternative meanings being made within the

interviews and this concept provided one way of sensitising me to any counter-discursive

moments.

Positioning. Positioning is another key element of a poststructuralist approach. This

reflects the belief that, within a community, not only is power and knowledge valued in

different ways, but also that everyone within a community is positioned in particular ways.

As Fairclough (2001) put it: 'In discursive practice, subjects and subject positions are created

through a process of significations in which they are named' (p. 23). The way subjects are

named within a community supports the notion of their value, the power they have, and

therefore their positioning relative to one another.

The concepts listed above underpin why I identified with a poststructuralist approach.

The idea that the way we speak about people, and how we use language as a means of

organising and defining ourselves and those around us, is the foundation of my research. It

also supports my decision to choose Membership Category Analysis (Freebody, 2003), a

branch of discourse analysis, as my main method of data analysis, explained in the section

that follows.

Research approach. In keeping with the nature of my research question and the

demands of a poststructuralist analysis, I used a qualitative approach for my data collection. I

wanted to examine how a small selection of professionals were making sense of the term

'educator' through discourse as they experience it and expressed it to me as a researcher. By

using a qualitative case study approach, I was able to highlight how these meanings were

being created in the field within a group of participants.

Methodology

Yin (2009) defines a case study as 'allow[ing] investigators to retain the holistic and

meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (p. 4). He defines a case study as research that

investigates a present event within its own context, especially when the boundaries between

the event and its context are not clearly defined. Case studies are mainly descriptive in nature

and the researcher aims at describing a situation as it is in context in relation to a certain

phenomenon. In relation to my study, this is relevant because one of my key aims is to have a

deeper understanding of the perspectives of the professionals in the study and a detailed

investigation into the impacts of policy change (the phenomenon), specifically their views of

the term 'educator'.

A case study aims to have a theme that holds all the relevant information together,

which is referred to as a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Within the context of my study, this

phenomenon is 'policy change'. This policy change was the event I looked into, with

attention on how a key aspect of this policy changes, the introduction of a new term by

policymakers into the discourse, is impacting on the perspectives of early childhood teachers.

The early childhood field is a bounded system, providing the boundaries for the research case

(Creswell, 2012). I considered treating each of the participating teachers as the case;

however, that was limiting because it did not investigate why the change in terminology

within the EYLF, as a policy document, took place. By focusing my study on 'policy change'

as the case, I could look inclusively at the policy documents involved, as well as the advisors

of the document and the professionals living out the policy within the field.

I used a collective case study into this specific phenomenon as my chosen

methodology for a number of reasons. A collective case study in this situation allowed me to

use a small sample (six participants) to collect my data from. My aim was to facilitate what is

already known about professionals' ideas around the term 'educator' and then use this as a

platform to further pursue these issues. As poststructuralists believe that there is no single

truth, but rather partial knowledges based in individual, rather than collective, understandings

(Fairclough, 2001), I aimed to gather evidence of individual perspectives and understandings

of what it means to be an educator.

Then, by examining the responses thematically, I gained insights into a phenomenon

taking place moment-to-moment for the participants, rather than collecting broad

generalisations about what was taking place in the field. To use Freiberg and Freebody's

words, I used 'meaning-making resources [so] that the classification of a person as a type or

member of a social category enables others to interpret, classify and assign meaning to

actions and utterances' (2009, p. 2). A collective case study allowed me to have a detailed

understanding of what it means for professionals to develop meanings for the term 'educator'

and provided me with examples of their perspectives on the ways in which meaning is being

made within this context at present.

Recruitment

I will now outline the different areas that comprised the recruitment process. In this

area I will focus on participant selection and the recruitment process.

Participant selection. Due to the time restrictions and study size of my master's research program, I chose to interview just six professionals. This met my collective case study requirements as the interviews provided six separate data sources. Even though I only used one data collection method, each of my data sources provided a different point of view on the phenomenon I was studying. My data collection sought to describe a group of individuals' experiences within their field. Creswell (2012) refers to this as homogeneous sampling. Below I outline the characteristics of potential participants that I used to define this 'purposive sample' (Creswell, 2012, p. 206).

My sampling criteria were that participants hold a 3-year or 4-year undergraduate degree in early childhood education and that they were currently working in a licensed and funded kindergarten program. Ideally, within my catchment of applicants I would be provided with a mixture of those who had worked prior to the introduction of the EYLF and then since its introduction, and those who had worked since its introduction. However, my main sub-criterion was that three of these professionals were employed in a long day care setting while the other three were employed in stand-alone kindergarten programs. I considered including diploma-qualified professionals in my participant selection, as they can be found in both settings holding a range of roles and having multiple experiences. However, due to time restrictions and realistic expectations of working within the framework of a master's program, I decided to limit myself to degree-qualified individuals to maintain the homogeneity of the group. There is the potential to include other qualified professionals in future studies.

The sub-criterion of childcare and stand-alone kindergarten employment did, however, aim to gain some range of saturation of settings within my research, as I felt I would potentially only be hearing one point of view if I were to have all my participants come from the same setting.

Recruitment procedures. My study focused on degree-qualified professionals' views (rather than that of management teams or children). The six participants were from an employment body that provides funded kindergarten programs in sessional kindergartens and long day care settings. With the support of my thesis supervisor I identified and contacted an appropriate employment body and sought approval to approach potential participants who met the sampling criteria. I provided the employment body with an informative letter about the study and had them approach participants on my behalf, with contact details for interested potential participants to contact me via email. This initial approach explained that their participation in the study would not be disclosed to their employer, to avoid any possibility of perceived or actual coercion in the recruitment of participants via their employer.

The initial introduction letter outlined the main forms of information required by the participants. These were:

- Purpose of the study

- What I would require of the participants (number and duration of meetings, where meetings would be held, etc.)

In response to emails from potential participants I forwarded them a more detailed letter and consent form. Once the consent form was completed, I forwarded all my consent forms to my supervisor. To produce the best results, I sought motivated and engaged participants. I explained that I would be asking them to discuss their own understandings and experiences of the impact of a phenomenon — policy change — and, specifically the use of the term 'educator' in the EYLF.

As my research aimed to be a study that would lay the foundations for a larger, more in-depth study within a PhD, my research provided the first steps to support me in starting to grapple with the broader concepts and phenomena I wished to investigate.

Data Collection

My interviews were designed within a discursive interview approach. Kvale (2007) describes this approach thus: 'A discursive interviewer will be attentive to and, in some cases, stimulate confrontations between the different discourses in play' (p. 74). To conduct my interviews, I used a semi-structured approach with open-ended questions.

Each interview was approximately 45 minutes in duration. I audio recorded the interviews, which had clear benefits such as accurate and concise transcripts for data analysis and less distraction for the participants during the interview process. It also allowed me to refer to the transcribed interview data quickly and easily. All interviews were transcribed before commencing my data analysis, and the transcripts checked against the audio record. Each participant was also provided with a copy of their individual interview for their reference.

Ethics Considerations

My Ethics approval was granted on 26/09/2016 by the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee. The reference number for my application was: 2016-175E. Below I discuss my justification and rationale for this being a low-risk ethics application. As a guide for my discussion I have considered the four guiding principles of Ethics in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007): research merit, justice, beneficence, and respect for persons.

Research into how professionals in early childhood in Australia perceive themselves or others in relation to the language of the EYLF is limited. My research addressed the relationship between how professionals understand the term educators and the positioning of early childhood professionals within policy discourses. This provided more information regarding how best to support existing and new professionals in the field as they develop

their views around their professional role. As the EYLF is a national document, this research

could be used to address emerging professional identities within early childhood on a national

level. My study also provided me with an introduction to the views and perceptions of

professionals to support my future studies.

Based on my strategy of purposive sampling, my project could be categorised as low

risk. Those who chose to be involved in my study had similar qualifications to each other,

and no one I knew to be vulnerable or easily manipulated was included.

The only risk associated with my research was that of the participants becoming

uneasy when interviewed by the researcher. To ensure they felt comfortable during the

interviews, my research only aimed to discuss how educators currently perceive themselves.

If my participants became distressed in the interview, there would be an opportunity to pause

or stop the interview, and either discontinue or continue when they felt more composed. No

pressure was placed on participants by the interviewer to continue the interviews when

distressed or upset. By doing so I limited the opportunity for sharing of information that

might be considered inappropriate. I did not ask for any information about the children they

taught, or any that would position any professional in a negative light. Participants were able

to use a pseudonym to conceal their identity for privacy reasons or if they wished to share

personal experiences.

In addition to being assured of confidentiality within the interview process (in order to

encourage them to speak freely), participants were informed prior to the interview (in the

consent form) that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. This provided an

additional opportunity for the participants to control the interview process and the reporting

of data.

My final consideration went to how to address the fact that I was currently employed

as a kindergarten teacher in the field. As an 'insider', I needed to take extra measures to

manage the researcher/participant relationship within my research. Using participants from an

employment body that is separate from my own ensured that I had no familiarity with the

participants. But being consciously aware of my position and reactions, my aim was to

actively maintain a research relationship, rather than professional collegiality, between

myself and those involved in my study. I did this by acknowledging my position as an insider

and actively focusing on the content of my interview questions and, when the need arose,

acknowledging that I had an employment background in education but that for the purpose of

these meetings I would be a researcher.

Individual Interviews

My main interest was to understand how early childhood professionals made

meaning from the term 'educator' as part of the process of policy change in Australia, with a

specific focus in this study on the experience of early childhood degree-qualified teachers.

One way to determine these meanings was through a one-on-one interview with each

participant. Creswell suggests one-on-one interviews are ideal 'for interviewing participants

who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate and who can share ideas comfortably' (2012,

p. 218). I chose an open-ended, semi-structured interview approach, which supported the

sharing of information but allowed me as the researcher to guide the conversation in ways

that provided the most useful data for my research.

Individual interviews were conducted face to face and the participants were asked to

attend one 45-minute individual consultation. This formed the basis of my data for this

project, with my aim being to provide detailed information around the participants'

perspectives on the term 'educator'.

Each interview aimed to cover:

- The general context of the participant's career in kindergarten teaching

- When the participant first heard the term 'educator' and their first impressions of

  it

- Their current understanding of the term within their setting

- How they would characterise an 'educator'.

Within my question format, I planned to have one main question, followed by bullet

points to prompt areas for discussion during the interview if they did not arise naturally — for

example:

1. Tell me about your professional history.

   - How long have you been in the field?

   - What is your highest qualification?

   - What do you call yourself when someone asks you what job you do?

2. Can you tell me what first comes to mind when you think of an educator?

   - What do you think are the characteristics of an educator?

   - How do you think these characteristics relate to the EYLF?

   - What roles and responsibilities should an educator have?

   - Why do you think the writers of the EYLF chose the term 'educator'?

(See attachment D for full details.)

The group I drew from were 'degree-qualified early childhood professionals', which

sat within the category of 'early childhood professionals'. Egbert (2004) highlights the

difference between the group and the category it sits in: 'A group is a social formation of

members of a category who think of themselves as a group, and who often or sometimes act

by reference to the fact that they are a group' (p. 1469). I made this distinction between the

category (early childhood professional, aka an 'educator') and the group (degree-qualified

early childhood professionals) because my research investigated how a section of the early

childhood community understood a concept. I will now explain in detail the reasons these

distinctions were important in my approach to the analysis of the interview data.

Strengths of Interview Approach

The interview style required to successfully engage in the MCA approach allowed me

to build with the participants their understandings of the term educator within the interviews

themselves. It also allowed me to be flexible and adapt the questions to each participant as

they revealed more information to me. I felt this produced strong data, as it meant that the

way the interviews unfolded or the information that was shared could be personalised to that

participant.

Clearly, in a larger study this would be more difficult but in a small case study where

I was the primary person completing the interviews, I could provide those nuances that

allowed the participant to express their understandings. A strong example of this was my

interview with Georgia. Throughout the interview process, Georgia was reserved, providing

only the information that I explicitly asked for. She would provide closed short yes/no

answers where possible and seemed unsure when asked direct questions that required a

longer answer. However, when we had finished the formal 'interview' section, I offered her

an opportunity to discuss other concerns. I revealed a little bit about myself and soon she was

opening up to me and providing me with a lot more detail about how she felt about the field

and things that were impacting on her directly in her work life. I could see that if I had chosen

a different style of interview that either provided limited opportunity for participants to

express their opinions or finished with the formal questions (as I would have if this had been

a questionnaire, for example) I would have missed out on a wealth of information about Gail

and how she was actually seeing her work life.

As my process evolved, I found that when organising the time to speak to

professionals it was challenging to line up our schedules for in-person interviews. Adapting

to this challenge, I adopted phone and live-chat interviews. The use of phone and online

camera interviews also provided a fantastic opportunity to engage with the participants. This

came in several ways. Realistically, as an insider to the field, I understood that my

participants were time poor in their work lives. This meant often it could be challenging to

find times for them to come away from their work duties to complete interviews. The use of

phone and online camera interviews meant that the participants were offered that flexibility in

the way they engaged with me. For some, this meant they could speak with me when they

were at home or had stepped off the floor for a short time. For others, this meant my fitting in

with the hours they worked. I also found it an asset as it meant that if their situation changed

— such as they were unable to speak to me, a staff member had called in sick, or they had to

complete another task first — this was all easily accommodated without adding extra stress

by having someone there waiting expectantly. They could easily fit me in around their busy

schedules, and they could use any space that was available for the interview itself — again

reducing the stress when engaging with me.

Another strength came from it being significantly less confrontational, particularly for

those doing the phone interview alone. I found after the initial introduction that it was easy to

fall into a smooth flow of conversation within the interview process — which is an asset

when using MCA, as not everyone is comfortable discussing private thoughts and feelings

when facing a stranger across a table. That comfort allows for easier expression and less

hesitancy when speaking within the interview processes. The knock-on effect of this was that

it allowed my interviews to be richer in data because the participants were more comfortable

in their setting and situation when interviewed. This was a particular benefit to me. As a

learning researcher, I was still learning to master my facial expression and was aware that if

the participants said something I found particular confronting, the facial cue that would be

unavoidable in a face-to-face interview was minimised, allowing me to focus on my tone to support my agenda.

I also felt that the fact that they could not see me making notes sometimes helped the flow of conversation. One of my main goals as the researcher gathering data was for the information to be authentic and genuine and I think some of those habits that are traditional to interview processes can make people feel quite nervous or self-conscious about what they are saying. The barrier of technology, which acts to draw attention away from some of these processes and focus it more on the discussion at hand, works within the principles of MCA — that is, the meaning is being made within the interview itself rather than in the question-and-answer approach traditional to interviews.

Another strength of the interview process was the use of collaborative discussion. Being an 'insider' allowed me to put my participants at ease as I could express understanding and relate to their different situations. I found some of the participants were hesitant to discuss their concerns or thoughts with me before they realised that I was also part of the early childhood profession in a working capacity. I think this reflects the reality for some professionals that there are clear divisions between those working in the profession and those outside it, and, in turn, how much they understand of the struggles and frustrations as they live on a grassroots level.

One of the challenges of doing interviews this way was that if they opted not to use a camera when speaking to me, then we had to rely on voice alone to communicate. This sometimes became tricky if certain phrases were lost due to a technological fault. It required that I be strong in problem solving in the moment to support the understanding of my participants or mentally keep track of the conversation in hand.

I think those who rely on gestures and body language to communicate their thoughts also found themselves in a challenging position as they had to think about how to

communicate to me with words rather than gestures. One participant commented that this was

the first phone interview she had ever done, and that it was trickier than she had expected. I

think this highlights that not one size fits all.

Analysis of Interview Data

In this thesis, I have completed two chapters that provide analysis of the interview

data. The first findings and discussion chapter: 'What is it to be an "educator"?', uses a sub-

category of discourse analysis, Membership Category Analysis (MCA), which was the most

salient approach to data analysis for this study. Freebody (2003) notes, 'MCA is a way of

explicating how speakers draw on and reconstruct common cultural sense in specific

situations' (p. 156). The main reason I chose to adopt MCA is that it allowed me to

investigate how the participants were creating meanings *in relation to the creation of*

categories of early childhood professionals. This helped me identify the dominant discursive

themes in the way the participants talked about their work in the context of policy change.

Schegloff (2006) describes MCA as 'how speakers come to use the words they do, and how

that informs the hearing that the talk gets from the recipients' (p. 463).

In using MCA, I employed two main analytic concepts. The first is how participants

create and define the *category* of 'educator' as a type of early childhood professional.

Secondly, MCA allows researchers to identify, in the participants' dialogue (Schegloff,

2006), the *characteristics* used to create these categories. These may be both positive and

negative attributes of an educator, which would assist me in identifying, for example, who is

an 'insider' and who is positioned as an 'outsider' within the discourses of 'educator'.

Schegloff (2006) emphasises the importance of this sense of positioning through categories

and the listing of:

> … these orientations and convergences — or lack of them — [which] can
>
>   be profoundly consequential for how someone is understood, how they are

> treated, how the scenes in which they figure are grasped and whether or
>
> how another intervenes in them and so on. (p. 475)

As I used a poststructuralist approach to inform my study, I also needed to look for the different ways discourse is used to position professionals in the field. The participants may agree or disagree with the dominant discourse and may use counter discursive measures to reposition themselves and others. Within MCA these 'moves' are identified through the use of categories and characteristics. I used this framework to allow me to review the ways in which the participants used dominant discourses or counter discursive measures to define their own understanding of the term 'educator'.

A further feature of MCA is that it focuses on the way participants create the attributes and categories that support their everyday understandings *as they speak in the real-time context of an interview*. Stacks refers to the resulting information as having 'inference-richness' (cited in Schegloff, 2006, p. 469). Schegloff (2006) explains Stacks's approach thus: 'He is speaking about the categories that people give, [which] are not just names, but are the "store house and the filing system for the common-sense knowledge that ordinary people … have about what people are like, how they behave etc."' (p. 469).

MCA draws forth the deep knowledge of participants by unpacking the categories they use and the way they are interpreted and understood within the interview process itself. The integration of method (interview) with analysis (MCA) was a key aspect of my research, justifying the use of semi-structured interviews as a means of engaging with participants.

The tools offered by MCA were valuable in assisting me to tease out the important ways in which meaning is made to help me address my research question. The selection of MCA as an analytic tool also linked with my methodological approach of poststructuralism, which seeks to make visible the ways in which meaning is made, and that 'its conclusions

should be observable; they should emerge from the process of analysing the data, not be

'proved' by the data' (Lepper, 2000, p. 45).

There are a few questions that can be considered in using MCA as a method of data

analysis. I referred to Freebody's (2003) suggestions when approaching my data analysis,

which include such prompts as:

- What categories of people do speakers use in their description of the topics?

- How do these categorisation moves rely on, call on, or make relevant certain
  meaningful collections of categories?

- What attributions are made or assumed to be relevant about members of these
  categories? (p.157)

In the second findings and discussion chapter, 'The impact of policy change', the

themes to be analysed were identified using an inductive approach. This approach focused on

identifying themes from the data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain: 'In this approach, if

the data have been collected specifically for the research (eg, via interview …), the themes

identified may bear little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants'

(p. 84). Within this thesis, the primary focus of the interviews was on addressing the research

question via embedding MCA within the semi-structured interview. However, there were

extensive rich data included in the interviews that provided context outside the lens of MCA.

It is important to note that in 'The impact of policy change' chapter, the questions and

themes were not:

> … driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic.
>
> Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to
>
> fit it into a preexisting coding frame, or the researcher's analytic
>
> preconceptions. In this sense … thematic analysis is data-driven. (Braun &
>
> Clarke, 2006, p. 84)

Thematic Data Analysis was also used. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic

analysis as a form of analysis that is 'used to refer to a wide range of pattern-type analysis of

data, ranging from thematic analysis within a social constructionist epistemology… to forms

of analysis very much akin to the interpretative repertoire form of DA' (p. 86). By taking on

this approach, I hoped to provide a more global view of what was happening in the field as

reflected in the data. MCA provides a strong lens to conduct data analysis through; however,

it provides a very rigid lens when looking at what it means to be an educator. This second

findings and discussion chapter allowed for the data that were generated within the interviews

to be contextualised outside the lens of MCA. This provided a richer insight into what was

happening within the field right now in relation to policy change and ensured that some of the

important themes raised during the interviews were not overlooked.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described a robust theoretical framework and methodology and

demonstrated the suitability of these approaches for this study. I touched on important

elements such as features of poststructuralism, the recruitment process, ethical

considerations, and the strengths of my interview approach. I provided a concise outline of

how I planned out my research steps prior to commencing my data collection phase. In the

next chapter I will discuss the first part of the findings from the data collection process.

Chapter 4:   Findings and Discussion: What Is It To Be an Educator?

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to address the research question: *How do Victorian early childhood degree-trained educators perceive the term 'educator', as used in Australian policy documents?* Harwood et al. (2013) identify the value of understanding an educator's perspective:

> What does it mean to be an early childhood educator …? The ways in which early childhood educators conceptualize and narrate their role is an important focus of inquiry since the meaning's educators attach to themselves may be the essential aspect of contesting and situating professionalism within a meaning making paradigm. (p. 4)

This idea, of the importance of understanding the impact of meaning-making and its flow on into meaning-making, is reflective of the goals of this thesis. To address the research question, it is important to acknowledge this key element.

In this chapter, I report on the two categories I identified in the data collected. These broadly distinguish between the participants who took up the discourse introduced in 2009 by the EYLF, and those who remained closer to the discourse that dominated the early childhood field prior to 2009. For reasons that I will explain later in this discussion chapter, I have named the first of these categories 'discursive adapters' and the second 'discursive resisters'. The categories show the 'varied and often contested' (Harwood et al., 2013, p. 5) nature of how professionals have been named within the early childhood field over time within Australia. I identified that a key factor in distinguishing these category definitions seemed to relate to how the participant understood the title of 'teacher' prior to the introduction of the

EYLF. This key difference in perspective seemed to create the foundation for the other attributes given to the categories.

Within this chapter, I first give a brief overview of each participant (using a pseudonym for each). I then describe the category 'discursive resisters' with its supporting attributes, and the category 'discursive adapters' with its supportive attributes. In discussing each of the categories, I also consider attributes that I identified as being excluded or silenced by each of these categories, how each category addresses the research question, and how the EYLF is positioned in each category. I conclude the chapter by comparing the two categories and what this comparison means for addressing my research question. Before elaborating on the two categories, I provide a brief description of the context for the participants' work and a short pen-portrait of each participant.

Attachment G provides a detailed summary of the kinds of attributes that were attributed to the categories that were constructed during the interviews.

The Context for the Participants' Work

All the participants worked within the same service cluster management organisation. Cluster managers in the Victorian context are typically a city council, a business, or a not-for-profit group that employs teachers and educators and undertakes many of the administrative tasks required when running a kindergarten or childcare service. The participants were each entitled to the same annual leave and ratio of contact to non-contact hours. They all routinely attended an annual conference run by their cluster management body. All the names listed below are pseudonyms to meet the ethical criteria of this thesis.

Alice. Alice moved to Victoria from Sydney after completing her Master of Teaching degree. She works in a long day care service in an urban area of Melbourne as a teacher in the funded kindergarten program. She has been working in her current position for six years.

Emily. Emily is originally from New Zealand, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Early Childhood. She has been teaching for eight years, three of those years in a sessional kindergarten in New Zealand; she has been in her current position for three years. Emily is currently teaching in a long day care service, working with the children five days a week.

Gail. Gail started in early childhood education with a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. More recently, she has completed a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies. She has worked in ECE on and off for the past 18 years. She has worked in the same sessional, stand-alone kindergarten for the past three years.

Louise. Louise holds a Diploma of Teaching, a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, and recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership in Early Childhood. She has been working and managing services within the early childhood sector for over thirty years. For the past four years she has been the Educational Leader as part of a leadership team within a children's hub (a service that provides childcare, kindergarten, and allied child and family services all in one location).

Samantha. Samantha completed her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education as a mature-age student (she was fifty years old at completion of her degree). She previously worked as an assistant within a sessional kindergarten but now works as a full-time kindergarten teacher.

Tracey. Tracey holds a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies. She previously worked for 14 years in a variety of long day care services as a funded kindergarten teacher, then moved to a sessional kindergarten. Tracey has been the teacher in this kindergarten for the last four years.

The Relationship between Resisters and Adapters, and Their Work Contexts

Before turning to separate discussions of the two categories and their attributes, it is worthwhile touching on the relationship between the construction of the categories and the participants' work contexts. Early in the data analysis process, I identified a key difference in the participants' perspectives that influenced how they understood the interview questions, and interacted with me, when creating the categories and attributes within the interview. This, essentially, came down to the extent to which participants felt that 'teacher' was a term that aligned with 'educator', including diploma- and Certificate III-qualified staff. For some, 'teacher' was a separate category that sat outside their definition of an 'educator'. This meant that when creating the categories and attributes within the interview process, the participants sometimes gave noticeably different answers from other participants when asked the same question. In other words, for some participants 'teacher' and 'educator' were interchangeable, while for others 'educator' was another term for someone who was diploma or Certificate III trained, i.e. holding a sub-degree qualification, whilst the participants self-defined as a 'teacher'.

Given the split in the participant group (three teachers in stand-alone kindergartens and three in kindergartens in long-day childcare services), it is perhaps logical to assume that the participants' construction of these two categories would reflect their location in long day care versus standalone kindergarten, as this historically has been identified as a point of difference (with the split system in place within Australia up until recently) that creates tension within the profession (Ortlipp et al., 2011). Surprisingly, service type was *not* found to be a reliable predictor of participants' perspectives.

Samantha, for example, had worked as a kindergarten assistant for 25 years in a sessional kindergarten before becoming degree-qualified and continuing to work in stand-

alone kindergarten services. Samantha contributed to construction of the 'discursive resisters'

category when she stated:

> I believe, they [parents] should know that I am the degree-trained teacher.
> And this is my co-worker who is diploma [qualified] and this person is
> Cert[ificate] III-trained so that they may expect a different, not a different
> level of communication, but a different level of knowledge. (Interview
> 11.10.2017, Lines 48–51)

However, Louise, with a similar background of 35 years as a sessional kindergarten

teacher before becoming the Educational Leader at a large children's hub (an early years'

service that includes childcare, kindergarten, and allied health services), contributed to the

'discursive adapters' category when she said:

> It [the term 'educator'] crosses all realms of the field from the certificate-
> trained up to, you know, who holds a bachelor or a diploma qualification,
> so, we are educators of children, and it is all-encompassing. Everyone
> comes to a position with particular knowledge, and some have different
> qualifications but looking [at] world views and world knowledge, everyone
> brings that to their teaching and educating of children.
> (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 77–81)

A similar view was held by Tracey, who currently works as a teacher in a stand-alone

kindergarten after moving from the childcare sector and studying for her degree. Tracey told

me, when discussing her job history:

> The other girls I was working for, or working with, you know, we were in
> fact educators. (Interview 21.12.2017, Lines 40–41)

All three of these participants presented with a range of experiences and qualifications, and there was no defining characteristic that unified them beyond their level of training. Each had a unique set of life experiences that helped them to make meaning of, and live out in their workplace, the term educator. However, those who saw 'teacher' as a term that sat above and separate to educator would logically respond to the interview questions differently from those who considered 'educator' to be an inclusive term. This distinction meant that the data raised questions like: How can the term educator simultaneously have attributes of inclusiveness (Tracey, Interview 21.12.2017, Line 44) and [being] dumbed down (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Line 66)? This apparent paradox is due to the way MCA works in a real-life interview process. MCA examines the way categories and their key attributes are created within the interview between the researcher and participant 'in the moment'. It is also important to understand that the aim is not to identify the category with which the participants self-identify, but to work with the participants to construct categories by both identifying attributes that the categories *include* as well attributes they do *not* include. In this way, each of the participants contributed to construction of *both* categories, although this was most evident in the 'discursive resisters' category, which I describe next.

'Discursive Resisters' Category

As noted above, the discursive resisters category drew a distinction between teachers and educators. To clearly define this position, I argue that participants constructed the resister category by viewing teachers as sitting above educators in a workplace hierarchy, with educators being anyone working within their workplace who did not hold a degree.

I identified five main attributes in the construction of this category, which I describe here with evidence from the data.

'Educator' is an unknown profession within wider community. The concept of the immediate and broader community having a lack of an understanding of 'educator' was used to help define this category. Alice addresses these two communities when discussing what the writers of the EYLF intended:

> So, it is the best word they could find, that was uplifting, empowering, educating the community as well. I wonder what the public feels about that, what families might feel, how they might be adapting to that. I see so much backlash on the media, with the 'Big Steps' [industrial union] campaign; when on the news they read it as 'childcare workers are walking on the street ...'. All the comments go: 'we're educators now, we're educators'. (Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 129–133)

This commentary fits with Fleet and Favell's assertion that 'Australian community perceptions are influenced by media events …' (2014, p. 39) and reflects how such attributes are shaped by participants' perspectives on how the term 'educator' fits within the minds of the broader community. The construction here is that 'poor community awareness' increases the hesitancy of the use of the term 'educator' and, in turn, its broader understanding in the community. This perspective was highlighted by five of the six participants, who each stated they would use 'teacher' to describe their job in a social setting when asked what they do for a living.

> Samantha reflects on more immediate concerns within a workplace, saying:

> I also think that, as people we are all equal, and everyone deserves respect and all of that, but I do believe their needs to be a differentiation between the training and how our families perceive us (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 44–46)

It was important to Samantha that families using her service knew her qualifications. This attribute of 'poor versus positive community perception' contributed to the construction of the 'discursive resisters' category by demonstrating how the participants saw the wider community's understanding of their work and how the perceived value the community places on these terms affects use of the terms 'teacher' or 'educator'.

Loss of power. Power and its perceived removal within a given workplace, and, more broadly, for the participants as they engage with allied professionals, was a second attribute contributing to construction of the 'discursive resisters' category. I interpreted this based on comments that suggested that, by becoming an 'educator', participants had experienced a loss of their agency within the field. Samantha, for example, stated:

> They [the writers of the EYLF] are trying to make everybody the same. You know, we all have to use the EYLF, so in essence, everything is the same. We all have the same regulations, so everything is the same there, so now it's the same. So now we're educators, so it's all the same. (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 56–60)

Samantha's comments reflect that something is being lost by embracing the term 'educator'. In turn, this construction views power as essential to maintaining the discursive resisters category.

Lack of power or control over their professional agency became a clear attribute of the discursive resisters category.

Loss of pride and value in the profession. Closely related to attributes of power and control were attributes of pride in, and valuing of, work in early childhood education. These attributes were often the centre of the resistance to the term 'educator' in participants' category constructions.

This appeared, for example, as concern about the direction the profession was taking
for funded kindergarten teachers. Pride in their work was partly contextualised around pay
and conditions, and partly by comparing the quality of education that could be offered
beyond the capability of those identified as educators in the EYLF. I identified that this was
used as a way of maintaining this category with the justification being that there was a
significant difference between degree-qualified and diploma- or Certificate III-qualified
professionals, and so the separation of 'teacher' from 'educator' was necessary. Emily, for
example, strongly identified with the term 'teacher':

> I feel that it [educator] dumbs you down. I did a teaching degree, so, I
>
> would want to be called a teacher. But in the Australian climate it's used
>
> because people feel like they can't call someone with a diploma a teacher.
>
> (Emily, Interview 10.10.17, Lines 52–54)

A sense of pride in having qualified as a 'teacher' was an important attribute in
constructing the discursive resisters category because it spoke to how the participants
justified this category and its attributes.

The use of qualifications to create a hierarchy of practitioners. A fourth attribute
of the discursive resisters category was the use of formal qualifications as an organising
principle for the early childhood workforce.

This included industrial elements such as pay and conditions, which were included
when constructing this attribute. This is consistent with Moss (2010), who discusses the way
pay and conditions impact on the quality of education and care in long day care services. His
views are held by others (Adams, 2008; Chalke, 2013; Langford, 2007), who argue that
quality education and care can only exist when pay and conditions reflect the importance of
the work. As Alice said:

> But I feel … there is a huge difference between quality interactions
>
> between a Cert III-qualified person and a diploma-qualified person. (Alice,
>
> Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 143–145)

Alice elaborated on this distinction when discussing different workplace conditions and expectations:

> I don't do it in a way of wanting to say I'm better than you, or this and that.
>
> But when I have chats, say, with my husband, he says — or a former boss
>
> said, 'Don't feel like you have to apologise for what you achieved. You've
>
> studied, you're there for a reason.' I am thinking back on things, I get a lot
>
> more holidays. (10.10.2017, Lines 111–114)

This attribute reflects the complex thinking that sits behind construction of this category. The participants work within a multi-qualification profession, where staff with a range of qualifications work collaboratively within the same workplace towards common goals. However, I argue that an attribute of the discursive resisters category is the effort to carefully maintain a gap between 'teachers' and the other practitioners they work with, with pay and conditions sometimes cited as a way of justifying this separation.

Belonging to a league of 'teachers'. Finally, I argue that how participants had previously experienced the term 'teacher' in their work life appeared to support the construction and maintenance of the discursive resisters category. As Emily said:

> My mum is a teacher, and my grandmother was a teacher ... I am a teacher.
>
> (Interview 10.10.17, Lines 143–147)

Emily demonstrates how she is maintaining this category by clustering herself within a group of teachers she admires. By doing this, Emily reflects how such attributes can be quite personal; the sense of belonging drives the category formation. For this category to be

held onto, it requires member participants to have deep-rooted beliefs and ideas that go

against the dominant discourse being promoted within policy and government

communications within the field.

Based on these five attributes, I now discuss how the discursive resisters category was

also constructed by the omission of attributes, before turning to how this category relates to

the EYLF more broadly and my research question.

What was excluded from the category? The construction of the discursive resisters

category relied primarily on exclusion of 'degree-trained professionals' as an attribute of the

term 'educator'. To achieve this, the participants created the category of 'teacher' within their

interviews and only discussed 'educators' in terms of diploma- and Certificate III-trained

practitioners.

What attributes were silenced? To further maintain the separation between

'teachers' and 'educators', the participants that contributed to this category had to create a

situation where an educator was the 'other'. Those who were associated with this term

(diploma and Certificate III educators) were silenced through their qualification contributions

being given a lesser value within the meaning-making process.

How did the participants maintain this category? This category was maintained

during the interviews by correcting or restating the category when I attempted to be inclusive

or challenge their perspective within the interview process. Participants often used narrative

as a way of providing examples of how the terms were different and how 'educator' was not

a term they associated with themselves. Examples of this could be as simple as 'My mum is a

teacher, and my grandmother was a teacher … I am a teacher' through to more elaborate

narratives that had built into them the maintenance of the category.

There were also positive and negative word associations that became clear when examining the data. Those who contributed to constructing the discursive resisters category tended to downplay the importance of the work of those they positioned as 'educator' as being 'less' than work done as a 'teacher'. This included Emily, who worked in a service that had decided to call all staff 'teachers'. Emily's explanation for this decision confirmed 'pride in the workplace' as an attribute in constructing this category, as her co-workers saw 'teacher as a more professional' and powerful title and one that they were keen to be identified with.

Addressing the research question: 'What is it to be an educator'? The construction of a discursive resisters category highlights that there is no simple or easy answer to my research question. Because the term 'educator' was introduced in policy with such a broad definition, it has created a situation where there are many variations of an 'educator'. In the discursive resisters category, however, an educator works in the early childhood field but is not degree-qualified. Therefore, their skills and depth of knowledge will reflect their lesser qualifications.

How was the EYLF positioned in this category creation? The discursive resisters category treated the EYLF as something that restricted the field, as in the case of Sue, who felt the framework supported the 'dumbing down' of the profession. In a similar vein, Emily saw the use of the term educator in the EYLF as something that had incorrectly labelled those within the profession. Although the participants in this category could understand the goals of the writers of the EYLF, they had not taken up this discourse in the way it was intended when the EYLF was published. The attributes constructing this category reflect the initial concern identified by Ortlipp et al. (2011) when the EYLF was introduced. This was that the 'fragmented nature' (p. 58) of the profession would create challenges in uniting the profession. In summary, participants who generally supported this category referred to themselves as 'teachers' who actively resisted the discourse of 'educators'.

'Discursive Adapters' Category

I now discuss the five main attributes identified within the data to construct the category I call 'discursive adapters'. As with the discursive resisters category, the attributes of this category tend to be closely interlinked but focused instead on equality of professional relationships within the early childhood field. I have attempted to separate the attributes for the sake of clarity; however, they should be understood as overlapping. When knitted tightly together they present the overall picture of the discursive adapters category.

Belief in inclusivity. The concept of inclusivity as an attribute played an important role in defining this category. Its use emphasises how the two categories varied. Gail, for example, was positive about the term 'educator'. She passionately believed it was a positive move for the profession:

> I felt that, I liked that it, kind of, what's the word? It represented everyone that, you know, was working, because there is such a range of experience and a range of qualifications. (Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 28–30)

Alice likewise reflected on the role of practitioners within the workplace:

> In many ways, we needed something to professionalise the profession and I guess you have to make it black and white; you are here to educate children, as educators. So, it is the best word they could find, that was uplifting, empowering, and educating the community as well. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 129–133)

These examples demonstrate how the sense of being inclusive helped to construct the category of discursive adapters. For this category, a sense of belonging to a larger community was valued, as all would gain from the new term.

Valuing all practitioners' contributions. Another attribute that was evident within this category was a sense of all practitioners, regardless of their qualifications, having something of importance to contribute. Louise, for example, said:

> It [the term educator] crosses all realms of the profession from the certificate-trained up to, you know, who holds a bachelor or a diploma qualification, so, we are educators of children, and it is all-encompassing. Everyone comes to a position with particular knowledge, and some have different qualifications but looking [at] world views and world knowledge, everyone brings that to their teaching and educating of children. (Interview 9.11.17, Lines 77–81)

Louise's comment shows how the participants who constructed this attribute acknowledged the diverse value of those working within the field; i.e. that skills and knowledge can stretch beyond formalised training as a means of defining the value of a practitioner. This attribute appeared to be allowed to arise when the focus of defining 'educator' shifted away from qualifications.

Flexibility in perspective. Being flexible with terminology was an attribute that appeared to support the attribute of inclusivity in constructing this category. The idea that practitioners have more than one label was a strong attribute for this category:

> When you look up the word educator, it's a very similar meaning to the word teacher — to educate, to teach, they go hand in hand. However, I think what they were trying to do is be inclusive, which is great. (Emily, Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 86–89)

This attribute pushed back on the rigid history of the early childhood sector and
acknowledged that the work is more complex than just filling one role. Louise discussed this
from an Educational Leader perspective:

> I suppose with the qualifications, the teaching qualification, there is that
> difference. You're qualified as a teacher and therefore that title you are
> bestowed. Talking in general, as in 'we are all educators' is what we tend to
> do when referring to our staff, then break it down, the teachers do … blah,
> blah, blah, blah, blah. Or as a teacher we would expect, on that individual
> basis. (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 42– 47)

Louise's use of 'educator' as an overarching term, and then teacher as a more
personalised term *within* the term educator is an important nuance. It demonstrates how the
attribute of flexibility within this category allows for practitioners to simultaneously be a
teacher and an educator.

Collapsing a perceived hierarchy. This attribute was the greatest contrast to those in
the discursive resisters category. It contributed to the discursive adapters category by moving
aside the hierarchy that had traditionally been used to structure practitioner relationships,
with the use of qualifications as a guide, to a situation where a team approach is more of a
focus. This clearly integrates with the other attributes of inclusivity and valuing the
contributions of all. As Louise said:

> That's what we do. We are educating, and I think I'm quite comfortable in,
> you know, in the knowledge that I have, that it can be, it's not, it's not a
> hierarchical situation, per se. (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 61–63)

I interpreted this attribute as speaking to the way responsibility and influence were
understood as more fluid within this category.

Responsiveness to the political 'gaze'. Within the early childhood education literature there is significant research around how policymakers and government bodies are attempting to change the way education is delivered, and how those working in the profession go about their job (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Oberhuemer, 2005). May (2006) refers to this as a political 'gaze'. The participants acknowledged an awareness of their job being directly impacted by policy change. One of these was Tracey, who reflected on how things had changed over her time in the profession:

> I guess I feel like there is a little bit more pressure now, than years ago, in terms of, you know, holding that position. Just with, obviously, as an educator before, as a kindergarten teacher, I was doing, you know, my programming; you know I was doing the same way for so long. And when the framework was introduced, as much as they were, pretty much, very similar, it was just having to make the changes over to the framework, and a different way of doing things, that was quite challenging. So, I did feel some pressure with that. (Interview 21.12.2017, Lines 94–100)

Tracey's comment reflects how the sense of responding to policy change was constructed as an attribute in this category. It demonstrates that, for practitioners aligned with this category, their work is not independent of the curriculum frameworks that are in place.

Gail also voiced this attribute of responding to the political gaze, but in a less positive sense than Tracey, while explaining why she has chosen to leave kindergarten teaching for working as a director in a long day care setting:

> … part of it, was just that frustration. You know, of all those expectations, of all those roles. And every time I'd go back to [the role], there would be another meeting and it would be 'Okay as Ed Leader you need to do this'.

> Or 'As nominated supervisor we need you to do this, you need to do that'.
>
> And it's like 'Yep okay'. I'm willing to do it and I feel like I can but then I
>
> don't have the time ... (Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 310–312)

The understanding that there is more responsibility on practitioners due to policy change was a key attribute for those constructing the discursive adapters category.

I understand this category and its attributes as reflecting a shift that is taking place within the early childhood field to taking a strengths-based, rather than qualifications-based, approach to team formation. The discursive adapters category views all those contributing in early childhood services as having something of value to offer and encourages an exchange of ideas.

In summary, the participants who supported this category generally referred to themselves as 'educators'. I now discuss how the category of discursive adapters and its attributes fit within the theory of MCA's elements of discursive theory, how this relates to the EYLF more broadly, and how it relates to my research question.

What was **e**xcluded from this **c**ategory? The discursive adapters category did not focus much on the Nominated Supervisor or Educational Leader roles, two positions that have been introduced under National Law since 2012. Neither position is explicitly linked to qualifications. If these positions were discussed by the participants, they spoke about finding it awkward to explain them to those outside the profession or they described them as titles provided to them by senior management as a means of allocating responsibility. Although training and skills came up in relation to the expectation of workload or understanding in these roles, they were not used to categorise the field. Unlike the construction of the discursive resisters category, there was very little use of language to maintain hierarchy in the discursive adapters category.

How did the participants maintain this category? As noted above, the use of inclusive language was one way that the discursive adapters category was maintained. There were many references to the value and importance of all professionals contributing, rather than delegation of the responsibilities or clear separation of the roles, as demonstrated in the construction of the discursive resisters category. The discursive adapters category views all contributions as worthy, with positive and empowering words used to describe 'educators'.

Addressing the research question: 'What is it to be an educator'? It was much clearer to see how 'educator' fitted into this category for the participants, particularly those who identified with it themselves. The category is inclusive and unifies the different professionals within the early childhood field.

How was the EYLF positioned in their category creation? This category is more closely aligned with the perspective that the writers of the EYLF were aiming for, a term that is representative of all those who work with children under the age of eight years.

The interviews showed that the policy documents themselves had an impact on the way professionals constructed this category and, in turn, the term educator. This category positioned the EYLF as a way of fostering inclusivity and empowering colleagues, one that lifted the profession and provided a united front that encouraged everyone to work together professionally.

What do the differences between the two categories mean for the participants? The construction of the discursive adapters category meant that, in effect, 'educator' was the same as 'teacher', even where there was variation in terms of job description and responsibilities, while the discursive resisters category relied on the separation of the terms 'educator' and 'teacher'. However, it is important to note that the participants themselves did

not fall neatly across these two categories; rather, they all sat along a continuum of perspectives.

The participants often showed they could move along this continuum, and that they could contradict themselves within it. This movement created tensions in their ideas, and they presented conflicting ideas at times about what it meant to be an educator and how they justified their position or understanding. An example of this was Emily, who at the start of the interview stated clearly that she did not identify with 'educator' and that 'teacher' was the only acceptable term for her and her colleagues; however, when we started to discuss at length the concepts and ideas behind use of the term 'educator' in the EYLF, she admitted she could see value in its use:

> … When you look up the word educator, it's a very similar meaning to the word teacher — to educate, to teach … Which is why when I really take it back, educator isn't a derogatory word; it only feels like that because I've never been called it before, and I prefer to be called a teacher, and for my colleagues to be called teachers… (Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 86–92)

This movement in the participants' perspectives during individual interviews sheds light on what might be happening in the field more broadly: that there is a mixture of meaning-makings taking place, and that this mixture is not confined to workplace settings or qualification backgrounds. The participants are part of a wider field and the experiences of the field at large are inevitably impacting on how they see and use the word educator. This perhaps explains how there could simultaneously be attributes of empowerment (Alice, Interview 11.10.2017, Line 172) and 'dumbing down' (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Line 56).

Interestingly, although it may have been the aim of the writers of EYLF to provide a title that reflected 'good' qualities (Cumming et al., 2013, p. 230), the two categories constructed within this project remain commonplace within the field and still speak to its historical context, despite the policy shifts that have been implemented within the early childhood field in the last decade in Australia. It was evident from the interviews that there was no clear and defined answer to my research question or what it means to be an 'educator'.

That some participants could provide both positive and negative attributes to the construction of the same category reflects how complicated the development of new discourses can be and reflects again how the profession continues to be in a state of change. My conclusion is that these categorisations present a complicated picture of how those in the field are making meaning around the term 'educator'.

Conclusion

The two categories described in this chapter were the discursive resisters category, most closely aligned with historical definitions of 'teacher' as a distinct role, and the discursive adapters category, which takes up the more recent discourse of 'educator' in a positive way. Due to the spread of the data, the category constructions included perspectives from all participants in the study, but the attributes attached to the two categories show a trend towards a segregated viewpoint. These categories, as outlined in this chapter, still echo the divide noted by Ortlipp et al. in 2011 shortly after the introduction of the EYLF.

This division is reinforced when looking at what is being silenced or omitted within each category. The two categories indicate that the field may well still be finding its way into what it means to be an 'educator'. It also shows that, for some, adaption to change has been easier than for others.

Within this chapter, I have provided an outline of my findings using an MCA lens. MCA asks for clear categories and attributes developed within the interview, backgrounding other factors that may have been evident within the data. To directly address the research question, I have chosen to discuss these other factors in the following chapter, since understanding them is also relevant to understanding the overall view of what it means to be an 'educator'.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion: The Impact of Policy Change

Introduction

Chapter 4 was defined by MCA. It allowed for the key descriptors and categories to come from the interviews, these categories became the structure of the chapter. In this chapter I will discuss the other areas I consider to be most relevant to demonstrating the context of how the categories are being developed at a grass roots level. The categories identified do not exist in isolation, and this means other factors have affected the way the participants created their understandings. In this chapter using inductive analysis I was able to gather similar discussion points from the participants interviews. At times this was where they elaborated beyond the initial category definition and put those categories into context within the interviews. This approach was coupled with looking for similar topics being discussed across multiple participants. Some of these, were independent of the defined MCA categories but provided a better understanding of how these categories are being developed at grass root level.

I will begin by discussing the intensification of the workload, with a focus on the expectations on all professionals, cultural variations between kindergarten and long day settings, and fairness of title. I will then turn to community perceptions; the impact of conditions on participants' understanding; and the push-down of policy change. I will conclude by discussing Stonehouse's 1989 premise of 'nice ladies' and how 'educator' fits into the evolution of the early childhood professional.

My primary argument in this chapter is that the categories alone, although they are important and address the research question on what it means to be an educator, do not tell the full story of what is happening at a grassroots level for practitioners in the early childhood profession. To fully understand the importance of the categories, the reader needs to

understand what considerations influence the participants to their understanding. I will use

the six groups listed above to guide this chapter and explore some of the key factors found

within the data to support my argument. Some of these are like the attributes identified in the

previous chapter; however, they are addressed here to further expand these concepts and

speak to the data that fit outside of the framework of MCA.

Intensification of Workload

The idea that there has been an intensification within the field regarding the level of

work that is required at both teaching and administration levels was a talking point among all

the participants. As Louise put it:

> It's [educational leader] a little bit of a weird role, I suppose, in terms of
>
> what responsibilities I have. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 137–138)

The concept of these roles fitting awkwardly were raised by some participants when

discussing these more formal roles. Tracey explained how the roles of Educational Leader

and Nominated Supervisor fit with her ideas of her professional identity:

> I don't really, for lack of a better term, advertise that is my role. If people
>
> sort of ask me, I might provide further information and say I'm the
>
> nominated supervisor over at [x service]. I don't really call myself an
>
> educational leader, it's not something that really comes to mind. (Interview
>
> 21.12.2017, Lines 318–321)

The responsibilities of early childhood professionals vary across early childhood

services. This means that the feedback given by the participants sometimes speaks to the

responsibilities directly required of practitioners within their teaching hours and the

responsibilities related to this.

> When the framework was introduced, as much as they were, pretty much,
>
> very similar. It was just having to make the changes over to the framework,
>
> and a different way of doing things, that was quite challenging. So, I did
>
> feel some pressure with that. (Tracey, Interview 21.11.2017, Lines 97–100)

Others spoke of the additional responsibilities required that partitioners take on
currently under NQS and are implicated within the profession through the EYLF.

> The expectations are more, so I'm also educational leader of our service.
>
> And, and just don't get opportunity to fulfil those roles even though I'm
>
> expected to do so. So, what happens is something gives in the equation,
>
> because I can't do all of them — if you get my drift, I can't physically …
>
> I'm not paid enough, and I'm not taking work home, because I don't get
>
> paid enough to do that, I don't think. (Gail, Interview 13.11.2017, Lines
>
> 270–275)

It comes as no surprise that this 'weird role', combined with the increased pressure for
the Nominated Supervisor, is intensifying feelings.

> I think that, the expectation as the nominated supervisor and the teacher …
>
> there is a lot of expectation, and pressure. But there isn't the opportunity to
>
> do what's required, like, with time allocated. Like I'm working to the
>
> award, and I have to pour a couple of extra hours planning time. (Gail,
>
> Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 263–267)

The introduction of these terms has taken on a top-down approach, where they reflect
on the suggestions from the OECD (2012) to increase quality early childhood education as a
means of improving economic outcomes in Australia. The shift in agenda from engaging in
maternal education and a care ethos to those of outcomes-based drivers that reflect an

increasing focus on demonstrating accountability and proving that quality education is taking

place can be seen in the discussion that the participants had with the researcher. This change

has created tension between the maternal and care ethos and increased accountability and

'professionalism'.

> [A] difference is the professional attitude. I forgot to touch on that,
>
> professional attitude to the workplace. I think that so far, from myself and
>
> from all the teachers I have met, the professionalism is very different.
>
> There is this attitude that I have felt from, say, diploma or Cert[ificate] III
>
> where it's a bit 'meh' get the job done, get in get out, go home and get paid.
>
> (Alice, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 307–312)

Narratives around how the ways in which kindergarten and long day care

professionals work together, the value they place on their job and the concepts of

responsibility and obligation they feel towards meeting the outcomes create a picture of how

much pressure is being placed on professionals within the field to meet the outcomes on an

individual and service level.

> Yes, so it's that feeling that, you're going the extra mile, and yes … and I
>
> am not saying I slave away here until the end of the day but I'm talking 15
>
> minutes, 30 minutes, which is really all you need to engage the community,
>
> and speak to families. That is definitely for me the biggest difference:
>
> professional commitment. That willingness to train, to network, to go out of
>
> your walls, your four walls, to see what you can do. (Alice, Interview
>
> 10.10.2017, Lines 324–330)

The sense of frustration that was expressed regarding how the participants felt about what was currently happening within the profession demonstrates how this element is driving some of the discontent for educators and has become a reference point for difference.

> … Part of it, was just that frustration, you know, of all those expectations, of all those roles. And every time I'd go back to, there would be another meeting and it would be 'Okay as ed leader you need to do this.' Or 'As nominated supervisor we need you to do this, you need to do that.' And it's like 'yep okay'. I'm willing to do it and I feel like I can, but then I don't have the time. (Gail, Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 308–312)

The messages around equality within the EYLF, where there are clear legal responsibilities with the regulation, particularly in standalone services, affected the level of frustration or disillusionment the participants expressed.

> We all have to use the EYLF, so in essence, everything is the same, we all have the same regulations, so everything is the same there, so now it's the same. So now we're educators, so it's all the same. (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 56–60)

The data from this research project shows that some practitioners feel the current workload is unrealistic for degree-trained professionals, let alone a cross-skilled workforce.

> So, I don't want to be saying 'people should be doing this' because they can't. It would be in an ideal situation I think, you know, if people have, just, that, depth of knowledge, that comes from, you know, being exposed to different ideas, and you know those sorts of things. (Gail, Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 206–209)

Gail expressed this when asked if there was more that educators could do in their

workplaces. Alice was clear in her thoughts of the limitations of diploma and Certificate III

educators.

> Mentoring other team members, I don't think the people skills are quite
>
> there yet. I think there would be more the sense of running a room, but
>
> perhaps the confidence to mentor others wouldn't be quite there, that's one.
>
> Another would be having difficult and challenging conversation with staff
>
> and with families, that as well. I feel an educator might be more able to
>
> operate on their own team level, not so much on a broader scale ... as far as
>
> reflecting on a child's learning, their interests and abilities. A diploma-
>
> qualified educator may be more likely to focus on developmental outcomes
>
> and not as much [on] social and emotional observation. (Interview
>
> 11.10.2017, Lines 244–252)

This sense of feeling trapped had even led to one participant revealing she had

chosen to resign from her position because she was tired of feeling like a failure in her

workplace.

> … It was like you were forced a bit to sit on your hands … and that was
>
> really frustrating. It was also really undermining because you always felt
>
> like nothing was getting done, nothing was getting done properly… I
>
> recognise that I was feeling like I was falling short but that it wasn't
>
> actually my fault. (Gail, Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 226–333)

This climate raises questions about the price of answerability and the growing push

towards outcomes-based accountability within early childhood. This appears to be the living

embodiment of push-down of policy. The OECD (2017) speaks to the importance of

improved quality in ECEC. These improvements recognise Australia's efforts to shift from a

universal system for education from our split system history and continue to make efforts to

decrease ratio numbers within early childhood settings. However, the report shows little data

regarding the impact these changes, coupled with the increasing responsibility, has had on the

wellbeing of the practitioners working within the field.

To look more deeply at the ideas raised here, I will now move to the expectations of

all professionals (not just degree-qualified practitioners) as another point of concern raised by

participants.

Expectations on all Professionals in the Field

Again, this is something that was identified within the previous chapter as an attribute

for a category. In this chapter I want to look more broadly at how the expectations of all

professionals have changed since the introduction of the EYLF and the NQS and how this has

influenced the way practitioners view their work and those who work with them.

Having one single term to describe all professionals regardless of their qualification

raised a discussion about what was expected of all professionals. As Kilderry, Nolan and

Scott (2016) pointed out: '[Educators] are being asked to be more accountable for their

practice' (p. 344). Regardless of the participants' personal position around the use of the term

educator for themselves, they all touched on whether it was fair to use the term to describe

everyone. A good example of this came from Alice:

> I had one time, in 2012 where everyone was being pushed to take their
>
> diploma, because the NQS [was] to come into place, and there was
>
> someone teaching a lot at my workplace … and she said to me … she was
>
> looking at my planning, you need to be teaching THIS to your team. And I
>
> said … I was under the impression that there was a different expectation of

> me because I'm teaching at this level, I've got these standards to complete,
>
> and she responded: no. They need to be working at your level. (Interview
>
> 11.10.2017, Lines 152–160)

Grieshaber and Graham's 2017 idea that the use of a single term created an expectation that all professionals worked to a certain standard is consistent with what I found in the interviews.

It was interesting to see that a few of the participants chose to speak about levels of expectation as a way of managing the job responsibilities of educators. In this situation, they viewed 'educator' as an overarching term; however, they expected each different skill level to work to their best ability. There was again a focus on quality, but within this context it seemed to be the healthiest view regarding how the workload should appear. An ability to recognise that one title does not actually equate to the same contributions provided room for appropriate expectations. Although, even within this, the participants acknowledged that this did result in more work overall being done by all professionals as they aimed to meet the expectations and goals of the EYLF and NQS.

As noted in the previous chapter, for some, the expectations were creating a situation where non-degree-qualified professionals were being asked to take on more responsibility and tasks that were above their job description and training.

Gail spoke very clearly about her views around the fairness of workload, considering the number of degree-qualified educators in the field:

> Because, part the decision that I came to was because I didn't feel I was
>
> appropriately recognised for my qualification, in a stand-alone
>
> kindergarten, in that setting. (Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 28–30)

When I asked Gail to elaborate, she continued:

I think because, because I think that, the expectation as the nominated

supervisor and the teacher, is, quite … there is a lot of expectation and

pressure. But there isn't the opportunity to do what's required, like, with

time allocated … I feel like, you're not [enough]. The expectations are

more, so I'm also educational leader of our service. And, and just don't get

opportunity to fulfil those roles even though I'm expected to do so. So,

what happens is something gives in the equation, because I can't do all of

them … I can't physically, [I'm not] enough, I'm not paid enough, and I'm

not taking work home, because I don't get paid enough to do that.

(Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 263–275)

Alice was also vocal about the pressure being put on educators to rise to expectations
and do more within their work hours. She notes that:

… there is a huge difference between quality interactions between a Cert

III-qualified person and a diploma-qualified person. (Interview 11.10.2017,

Lines 143–145)

 This raises the question: how do they contribute more, document more, engage more
actively, contribute at Quality Improvement Meetings, meet reflective practice expectations?
All these things, which were what was expected of degree-qualified practitioners, now are
being expected of all professionals. Is the increase in responsibility and accountability
improving the quality of care and education as it was intended?

These perspectives are important because they give an insight into the thoughts and
feelings of the professionals working at grassroots level. This research project did not
interview pre-service teachers, or those working at a policy-writing level around the ways
they hope or plan to engage with the term 'educator' and more broadly within the profession.

The participants are living out a situation that has been put to them in a top-down approach. Alice's feelings of being overworked and not being 'enough' bring up questions about the success of outcome-based accountability to measuring success in early childhood.

> Yes, so it's that feeling that, you're going the extra mile… and I am not
>
> saying I slave away here until the end of the day but I'm talking 15 minutes
>
> 30 minutes, which is really all you need to engage the community, and
>
> speak to families. That is defiantly for me the biggest difference,
>
> professional commitment. That willingness of training, to network to go out
>
> your walls, your four walls [to see] what you can do. (Interview
>
> 11.10.2017, Lines 324–329)

I will now turn my attention to cultural variations and the effect of these on the participants' perspectives.

Cultural variations between stand-alone kindergartens and long day care services. The early childhood field has a long history of being positioned as 'educational' and 'care' sectors. As noted previously in the literature review, a community of professionals accustomed to a profession where their title historically suggested their level of training and their relative responsibility level might be uncomfortable with a title inclusive of *all* qualifications and may be made uncomfortable by language that dictates how professionals interact with each other. Ortlipp et al. (2011), during a study into how professionals were embracing the introduction of the EYLF, identified that 'the fragmented nature of the early childhood field in Australia makes it difficult to identify a shared professional identity ...' (p. 58). Their research showed that when the EYLF was introduced there was already a divide that the term 'educator' was trying to breach.

In this thesis there was a surprising variation from what the literature suggests is the current culture within Australia. There is a general agreement within the literature that, due to the history of early childhood education and care within Australia (previously falling into the 'split system' approach to kindergarten and childcare), that there is a perception that within Australia kindergarten is seen as a higher quality education and care than childcare due to its origins.

A few the participants discussed at length the different cultures that exist in sessional kindergartens and long day care settings and what that means for them — some of these comments fitted with the literature, such as Louise's acknowledgement:

> … we still hear 'but it's only long day care'. You know we still hear that,
>
> from the mouths of kindergarten teachers who are within our organisation.
>
> 'But that's childcare, that's not kindergarten.' There is — of course there is
>
> — because it will be a very long time before that changes, that perception,
>
> but I think that needs to change within the profession itself and I think
>
> that's a long way off for some. (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 177–182)

This commentary fits closely with what was identified in the literature as the culture of split system educational and care professions.

There was a focus on the difficulties of finding similar expectations for all. Depending on the work history of each of the participants, their views and ideas of what high quality might mean varied. With the increase of practitioners moving from various employment institutions, the split system, as it was once known, has become increasingly blurred. Within Australia there is a policy push towards having degree-trained practitioners in long day settings (such as Alice, Emily and Louise) and upskilling opportunities for diploma-

trained practitioners (such as Tracey and Gail), which allows for more perspectives to be seen in the data.

The most surprising element concerned those who had made the crossover from long day care to kindergarten — i.e. the fact that there was a strong history of accreditation and regulation in long day care, which had not been a driving force until the introduction of the EYLF and NQS in kindergarten in 2009–2012. Tracey and Gail both spoke about how they struggled with the initial transition to kindergarten services long day care because there was a lot of historical habits in place that were not really in keeping with best practice or standards that reflected the accreditation process around administration and following policies. The culture of 'we have always done it this way' was a major driving force in kindergartens and they found the knowledge of the co-educators to be less informed around regulations and the EYLF than they were when working in early childhood services.

Closer in line with the cultural norms, Alice focused on how it was important to create a division between 'teachers' and 'educators'. She felt that this separation was important not only for the culture of her service but to support families in understanding the dynamics of the kindergarten team.

The comments around creating a divide between teachers and educators by Alice, reflects the ongoing process noted by Woodrow (2008). That there is still an on ongoing process of the early childhood sector in Australia being in a 'state of change' (p. 29).

Alice said:

> I was working in a stand-alone for a short period and I was a casual then and I was studying. I was called 'childcare worker' I think. I remember finishing my placement and my mentor teacher says, 'she's a teacher now!' and she was saying it to the children. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 82–85)

It is important to note that now, almost 10 years after the introduction of the EYLF,
those working within the field are still facing these challenges. The challenges have evolved
but in no way have they resolved since the initial introduction of the reform suite.

The data paint a picture of an overworked and somewhat confused profession. It is
easy to see how this sense of frustration continues to promote a sense of 'other' when talking
about the roles and responsibilities (and in turn the term 'educator') within everyday work
life. With such high expectations regarding workload, how are all practitioners expected to be
viewed as equal, especially when the very policies and regulations that guide the profession
require practitioners to fill roles that create levels of accountability? This being a point in
standalone kindergartens where there is a requirement that someone take on the roles of
Nominated Supervisor and Educational Leader, which are roles that are often taken up by the
director within childcare settings. This raises the question of how fair this is to those working
in the field. I will now move my attention to fairness of the title. This topic continues to build
on the concepts previously raised around the equality of the term 'educator'.

Fairness of the Title

There is a subtle difference between fairness of the tile and intensification of the
profession. When discussing fairness, participants seemed more focused on whether it was
right or wrong to put additional pressure on professionals who did not have university-degree
qualifications. To elaborate on the idea of fairness that was raised above, the participants,
more broadly than for pay and conditions, questioned the fairness of 'educator' as a term for
all practitioners working with children under the age of 5. Ortlipp et al. (2011) identified that
'the fragmented nature of the early childhood field in Australia makes it difficult to identify a
shared professional identity...' (p. 58). I feel this is reflected in the data. These 'fragments',
seemingly pressed together by policy documents and managing bodies to create a profession

that is united, seem to fall short in the minds, and possibly the workplaces, of some early

childhood services. Grieshaber and Graham (2017) discuss this at length in their investigation

into the equity of being an educator and how power is being used within the EYLF. It could

be argued that the data collected in this thesis demonstrate their theory. The participants in

this study were able to recognise the importance of the unfairness of having everyone

meeting the same expectations and that some work was more valued than others. Alice notes:

> What seems to be happening is everyone is expected to operate at this
>
> [*holds hand up near face*] level, but at the same time, no one can get paid at
>
> that level, no one. The level of thinking and reflection is not always
>
> reflected to be at that level, but they want everyone to. (Interview
>
> 11.10.2017, Lines 147–150)

Some questioned the ability of all those working in the early childhood field to

successfully meet the demands of the EYLF and the NQS.

The focus here was on whether it was fair to ask so much of people who have not

studied early childhood at university. Is there a power at play within the EYLF creating a

situation where diploma and Certificate III professionals are working more hours and

investing unpaid personal time to meet the expectations of what it means to be an 'educator'?

Tracey expressed how in her team she addresses the reality of the limitations of the skill base

of her team:

> … I rely on them to just do things I know they are capable of doing. You
>
> know, obviously, that doesn't mean I'm not going to push them to try
>
> harder. I don't expect them to do things that I feel are impossible for them.
>
> If I give them something to do, and they feel they can't do it, then we might

come back together and try and do it together. (Interview 21.12.2017,

Lines 180–184)

When asked whether the EYLF affected her expectations of co-educators, she also

noted 'I don't feel my expectations of them have changed' (Lines 184–185), suggesting here

too there are come counter discursive measures at play to manage expectations.

Are the broad descriptions and open-ended nature of the EYLF's description of

'educator' creating a situation where those who are working in early childhood education and

care are feeling that they must work up to a certain standard? If so, is this a good thing when

they are a cross-qualified profession? This raises questions of the equality of an environment

that asks much of its workforce without this being reflected in their training and pay.

There are people who are reading it at the certificate level, people who are

reading it at the diploma level and people reading it at the degree or higher

level, and then it's like applying, you know you've got your tool box of

knowledge and take those tools out and applying them to different contexts

or ways of doing things, is how I see it. The term *educator* within that

document [is] just the vehicle to taking the tools you already have, and the

tools I might have, as a bachelor-trained teacher, compared to a Cert III-

teacher are different, because we have acquired different skills and tools

along the way. (Emily, Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 256–263)

Impact of Conditions on Participants' Understanding

To build on the fairness of the title, this idea was further embedded in the concept of

pay and conditions. With not only pay but conditions defining the different practitioners of

the profession, it is again unsurprising that this was used as a contextual point to display the

differences within the profession and how these lead to concerns around the term educator.

> I feel an educator might be more able to operate on their own team level,
>
> not so much on a broader scale. We've got 5 to 6 rooms, so that's
>
> something. As far as reflecting on a child's learning, their interests and
>
> abilities, a diploma-qualified educator may be more likely to focus on
>
> developmental outcomes and not as much [on] social and emotional
>
> observation. (Alice, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 248–252)

Even those in the participant group who identified with the category of educator questioned how the pay and conditions currently governing those working in early childhood within Australia create an environment where everyone can be equal contributors in the field.

Moss (2010) discusses in depth the way pay and conditions impact on the quality of education and care in long day care services. His view, which is held by others (Adams, 2008; Chalke, 2013; Langford, 2007), is that quality education and care can only exist when pay and conditions reflect the importance of the work. It could be argued that this concept is playing out in the data, for some participants queried what the impact of the pay and conditions differences meant when applying the term 'educator' to all who worked within the profession.

> How come you get to go on school holidays? Aw well, good question.
>
> Because the award I teach under enables me to have those conditions. My
>
> colleagues are still at work at the moment, as are most of my children.
>
> Yeah, those sorts of things. So, I guess it comes up a little bit, but I am very
>
> mindful of the language I use. I know it's about conversations, particularly
>
> about quality, that really influence the community when we are thinking
>
> about specifics, when we're talking about specifics between teacher versus
>
> educator versus carer, long day care versus childcare versus early learning.
>
> So, you can really make a real point of addressing some of those small

points in language. Then we can take some bigger steps. (Emily, Interview

10.10.2017, Lines 236–245)

It was clear that many of the participants were grappling with this concept. This area

was where most of the contradictions within individual interviews took place. It appeared it

was one thing to believe in the principles or ideals of a concept, but another to act it out at a

grassroots level. When asked how Tracey introduced herself in social settings, she responded

with: 'I tell them I'm a kindergarten teacher' (Interview 21.12.2017, Line 270).

Despite stating earlier in the interview that she identified as an 'educator', she did not

hesitate in her response when focused on outside-of-the-profession discussions.

I do begin by saying I'm a kindergarten teacher, so they have context

around that. Then I say I no longer teach children; primarily, I support

educators to learn and carry out their craft and support the development of

programs for children. (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 248–251)

Louise, as well, identified herself as an educator as part of a large team; however, she

also opted for 'teacher' as well when speaking in a community setting. This tension easily

could be applied to the profession as a whole to varying degrees. It is easy to see how the

messages at a state or national level regarding practitioners and their co-workers differing

responsibilities put against regulations, as well as pay and conditions would sit

uncomfortably alongside an ideal of being a unified profession with common goals and

values when they do not include pay and conditions. This was particularly the case with those

kindergarten practitioners who were working in long day care settings. Here, they fit within a

larger team, which means there is more open discussion about the discrepancy in pay and

conditions. Furthering the discomfort appears to be a lack of clearly defined roles. For many,

clear expectations allowed them to work effectively within their workplace:

> … I am the degree-trained teacher. And this is my co-worker who is
>
> diploma and this person is Cert III trained so that they may expect a
>
> different, not a different level of communication — but a different level of
>
> knowledge. (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 46–51)

This loss of a sense of defined roles had them rejecting the concept of educator because it did not provide them with a clear idea of what they should be doing and, more broadly, their expectations of their co-workers and how these roles should play out at a grassroots level. This research paper aimed to identify some of those characteristics to better understand what is happening within the field. It is clear from the data collected, however, and the conflicting characteristics that the challenge remains for those living it out in real time. Those individuals who identified with 'teacher' feel lost without the guiding lines of what it means to be a 'teacher' as they once knew it. I will now take a step back from the inner dynamics of the workplace to look at how community perceptions impacted on the participants' understandings.

Community Perception

Community or public perception is not a new concept to be raised in early childhood education. Fleet and Farrel (2014) note: 'There is a tendency for both this workforce group … to be marginalised or belittled' within the public and media domain. It is no surprise then that the participants were hesitant to use the term 'educator' in a wider setting outside of their workplace. It became apparent that this lack of awareness or negative perception of early childhood education and, in turn, the term 'educator', coupled with a desire to express a level of responsibility or professional standing to the immediate community, were major barriers for some participants. Alice explains how she addresses the gap in understanding within a social setting:

> Yeah, I say I am a kinder teacher … I explain that I work in a long day
>
> care, which supports families that have to work, that we intergrade the
>
> learning. (Interview, 11.10.2017, lines 346- 351)

The characteristics were particularly impacted by this because there seemed to be a Catch-22 mentality among the participants. Most said they told community members when asked that they were teachers when they discussed their job in a social setting. They often expressed that it provided more social standing:

> I'm guilty of saying to them, 'I'm a kindergarten teacher' and if the
>
> conversation goes on like that, I will say 'AND I can teach in primary
>
> school, but I choose to teach in kindergarten … So, am I defending my
>
> choice? I'm defending my choice to be a kindergarten teacher because I
>
> love it. (Samantha, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 256–258)

Telling others that they were teachers accessed a universal understanding. When pushed by the researcher, the participants noted that they felt that others who did not work within the profession had no understanding of what it meant to be an educator and would not see the value in this title. They made it clear they wanted to be accepted and respected for their job and that was most easily achieved by tapping into the category of 'teacher':

> … I say things like 'it's a registered kindergarten' so I use a lot of catch
>
> phrases, or key words. (Alice, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 350–351)

Another aspect that seemed to be evident was displaying responsibility to families accessing a service. Louise shares how this is communicated in a large service with both a funded kindergarten program and long day care.

> In our education and care rooms, we would say 'Talk to one of the
>
> educators in your room' but then in our programs that have an ECE teacher

in them, we would say 'Talk to the teacher in your room.' I suppose in that,

because in the funded program we do require there to be an ECE-qualified

ECE, so that is when we would refer people into that aspect. (Interview

9.12.2017, Lines 104–111)

Samantha and I discussed how she affirms her teacher position without using the word 'teacher' with families.

I think they just know because … the written communication comes from

me, the teacher. And even in the online platform I know the parents know

our Sunday message … they know I'm writing that. (Interview 11.10.2017,

Lines 95–99)

An inability to express to families who they needed to address their questions to, as well as the value of their work (particularly with degree-trained work in a childcare setting) to families, have become concerns for participants. This seemed to be closely related to the frustrations of the title that were noted above — participants wanted to have a clear understanding of who they were within their community.

Interestingly, many of the participants reported that their co-workers, regardless of their actual qualification, would not correct families if they addressed all educators as teachers when talking to the children or staff.

I think the families call them teachers as well. And I've heard my co-

educators refer to themselves as teachers as well. (Alice,

Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 193–194)

They would also use the term themselves when talking about their work to families or children. This practice suggests that community perception is firmly focused on 'teacher' and

that the characteristics associated with that allow for respect to be exchanged between

families and educators.

> I wonder what the public feels about that, what families might feel, how
>
> they might be adapting to that. I see so much backlash on the media, with
>
> the Big Steps campaign; when on the news they read it as 'childcare
>
> workers are walking on the street'. All the comments go: 'we're educators
>
> now, we're educators'. (Alice, Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 133–137)

Alice also commented on the industrial action that was taking place at the time of the

interview. She noted the ignorance of reporters on the correct terminology and how

detrimental that was to the cause of developing fair working conditions. She made a point of

how those within the field had been critical on social media platforms that such reporting

breaks down their cause rather than improves it.

Considering it has been over a decade since the terminology was introduced, it is a

question why this information is not being embraced and brought forward into the broader

community. It also raises questions as to how this status quo is being maintained. Some of the

participants said that they had not become truly aware of the change in terminology until the

introduction of the NQS around 2012. Louise offers a possible idea:

> There is a bit of mixed feelings around that, I suppose with the
>
> qualifications, the teaching qualification … you're qualified as a teacher
>
> and therefore that title you are bestowed. Talking in general, as in 'we are
>
> all educators'. (Interview 9.11.2017, Lines 42–45)

With this came documentation that communicated directly with the collective

profession by cluster managers and the Education department. It was this communication that

bought attention to the intensification of the workload in the profession.

The matching of the expectations of what an educator would do under the current

EYLF and NQF, and what different skill levels were capable of, came up throughout the data

collection. Participants voiced concerns over the quality of education and care being provided

and what the actual capability was, based on the hours worked and training provided to each

level of training (Gail, Interview 13.11.2017). Some posed that the quality and depth of

knowledge among diploma and Certificate III staff were lacking, based on their training

(Alice, Interview 11.10.2017). Others used this to justify their position, highlighting it to

demonstrate the lack of fairness or realism regarding the work that is expected (Samantha,

Interview 11.10.2017).

Alice was very outspoken in questioning whether early childhood professionals were

being recognised in the wider early childhood community, or whether long day care

professionals had reached the goals that were initially outlined in the EYLF regarding

improving the communities' perceptions of the field. She expressed concerns around the use

of the term educator by diploma and Certificate III professionals, regarding the recent strike

action.

> when they use educator … it's different to how we would use it. (Interview
>
> 11.10.2017, Line 137)

This awareness of how the meaning of the term 'educator' takes on different values

depending on who is putting it forward is an important area to note. To Alice, when

'educator' is used by degree-qualified professionals, it provides them with a lesser feeling of

power, compared to diploma- or Certificate III-workers, who use it as a term of

empowerment, extending themselves into new ways of being.

All the participants were aware of how the language used within the framework had

challenged the way they saw themselves or other key stakeholders within the early childhood

profession. It was clear from their discussions that they understood that there were clear intentions behind the language in the EYLF when naming professionals. Sumsion et al. (2009) notes the importance of this thinking. The participants, regardless of the actual conclusion they drew regarding what these might be, understood there was an intention to position everyone a certain way. This awareness carried either positive or negative connotations, depending on the experience of the professional being questioned.

An example of a negative interpretation came from Samantha. She responded very strongly when asked about the intention of the writers of the EYLF.

> I feel, how I can I put this? In a way I think it's dumbing down. They are trying to make everybody the same. You know, we all have to use the EYLF, so in essence, everything is the same, we all have the same regulations, so everything is the same there, so now it's the same. So now we're educators, so it's all the same. I feel that I worked hard to become a teacher, very, very, very hard. And I feel that by everybody being called *educator* I don't feel that sense of pride. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 44–46)

For Samantha, she felt the messages within the framework pulled degree-trained professionals down, pulling them away from their identity as teachers. I dug a little deeper, asking 'Do you think it's about control and power? … sort of around that image of early childhood and their intention for that, you perceive it as a negative, a negative intention on their part?' (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 61–64). Samantha then elaborated:

> I think that it is passed down. I now work for a cluster management company. The same thing there, we are being dumbed down. We are

referred to as educators; so, we refer to everyone as an educator — so that's

the way it is now. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 65–67)

Interestingly, even though Alice did not agree with degree-qualified professionals

being called 'educators', she considered the term to be a positive thing.

I think it is good because of the politics of language, we need something to

shift and propel the industry forward and move it beyond childcare worker.

Childcare worker to me sounds very industrial, it's very day in day out —

you do the same thing; you're a bit of a machine without critical reflection.

Educator? I felt like it was, I felt it was a good thing, it was a bit confusing

to have to differentiate myself as a teacher. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines

71–76)

Louise felt completely different from Samantha and was more inclusive than Alice in

her attitude to the term, but she also responded strongly to this question:

It [the term educator] crosses all realms of the field from the certificate

trained up to, you know, who holds a bachelor or a diploma qualification.

So, we are educators of children, and it is all-encompassing. Everyone

comes to a position with particular knowledge, and some have different

qualifications but looking [at] world views and world knowledge, everyone

brings that to their teaching and educating of children. I think that's a

valuable thing to consider. Just because you are a teacher doesn't mean

you're the most, have the highest point, you know in the hierarchy. I

suppose we work in a more collegial aspect of things, where everyone has a

way of observing children and assessing learning is based on what their

knowledge is, so we can all have, whether it's in teaching or personal life,

> an opinion on how things are. But having everyone qualified with that
>
> educator term, by having us all under that one umbrella, about having to,
>
> you know, meet the regs and the expectations of the framework. (Interview
>
> 9.11.17, Lines 77–88)

Now that I have explored how the practitioners responded to the concept of 'educator' more broadly, I will shift to how push-down of policy change influenced the participants' thinking.

Push-down of Policy Change

I have touched on how push-down of policy change has influenced the participants' understanding of the term educator. Over the last two decades, Liberal and Labor governments have influenced the direction of education on all levels within Australia (Thomas, 2012). Internationally, there have been policy moves towards presenting education as an outcomes-based process, and the notion that students and their work in educational institutions are a form of human capital that needs to be utilised and developed to create strong outcomes into the future (OCED, 2001).

International policy change has seen many countries shift from a post-war model, where professionals were positioned as autonomous, to a situation where governing bodies influence the way professionals deliver information such as programming, content, and how this is shared with families within their services (Oberhuemer, 2005). Australia followed the trend in international policy where increasing value is placed on early childhood education and the way it is delivered, believing that quality early childhood education is the basis for high academic success, thus creating a stronger future workforce.

The language used within policies by the Australian Government is within the context of global trends and research highlighting the importance of early childhood education and

care. The Starting Strong reports (OECD, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, 2017) are international

documents that inform not only Australian policy but many countries around the world,

reflecting the global nature of policy changes in early childhood education. For example, in

the Starting Strong series, there is a focus on 'quality' education and care (OECD, 2006,

p. 3). This trend includes a focus on improving the quality of professional practice within

early childhood, which is, in turn, a reflection of the focus on accountability and

professionalisation on a global scale.

The interviews showed that the policy documents and their outcomes-based agenda

had an impact on the way professionals understood their role. As Tracey put it:

> I guess I feel like there is a little bit more pressure now, then years ago, in
>
> terms of, you know, holding that position. (Interview 21.12.2017,
>
> Lines 94–95)

This is not a new phenomenon. Woodrow (2008) reflected on the ongoing process of

the early childhood sector in Australia being in a 'state of change' (p. 29). The policy

documents have also created an atmosphere where there has been a shift in focus. All

participants discussed how their workplace had been impacted by the EYLF and the NQS,

with a focus on accountability, documentation, and power. I will discuss this in more depth

below.

Within the literature there is a significant body of research around how policymakers

and government bodies are attempting to change the way education is delivered, and how

those working in the field go about their job (Cheeseman & Toor, 2009; Oberhuemer, 2005).

May (2006) refers to this as a political 'gaze'. When interviewing the participants, they

acknowledged their perception of their job had been directly impacted by policy change. For

some, this inspired new ways of working:

> … I was going the same way for so long. And when the framework was
>
> introduced, as much as they were, pretty much, very similar. It was just
>
> having to make the changes over to the framework, and a different way of
>
> doing things. (Tracey, Interview 21.12.2017, Lines 97–99)

For Tracey, trying to develop and enhance programs or pedagogy to reflect the current climate within the industry was signalled by the introduction of the EYLF, while for others, this was a reflection of the manipulations or pressure brought to bear by government bodies to push and change those working within the industry and often, in their view, not for the better.

> I feel that it dumbs you down. I did a teaching degree, so, I would want to
>
> be called a teacher. (Emily, Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 52–53)

This pressure appeared to create an environment where there was a focus on pride and martyrdom. This seemed to hark back to those long-held beliefs that have their foundations in the split system between childcare and kindergarten. The uniting of the two sectors by the EYLF made a few of the participants extremely uncomfortable. This feeling made itself known through outspoken commentary regarding the dragging down of kindergarten teachers by using the term 'educator' and, more broadly, the introduction of the EYLF and NQF (as demonstrated above with Samantha). It also appeared in the outright refusal to accept 'educator' as any part of their professional identity, either using another name completely (such as the case with Emily) and/or expressing resentment at the use of the term broadly within the cluster management (demonstrated by Samantha).

A question within the interview that revealed the ambiguity of the use of the term 'educator' was: What did the participants think the writers intended when they selected the term 'educator'? This seemingly simple question allowed the participants to express their own ideas in the context of the policy document itself. It was no surprise that each

participant's view hinged on their personal ideals of what it means to be an educator, although most were able to identify it, for either themselves or their colleagues, as a positive move forward as far as professionalism went. Alice, who identified herself as a teacher within the interview, shared this commentary:

> I think they were looking for a way to inject education into the mix without throwing qualifications, without putting their foot in their mouth about qualifications. In many ways, we needed something to professionalise the profession. (Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 127–130)

Emily, who called herself and her entire team (within a long day care setting) 'teacher', provided this commentary:

> When you look up the word educator, it's a very similar meaning to the word teacher — to educate, to teach … I think what they were trying to do is be inclusive, which is great. Which is why when I really take it back, educator isn't a derogatory word. (Interview 10.10.2017, Lines 86–90)

These two examples highlight how conflicted the thoughts and ideas of practitioners can be. Both Alice and Emily were averse to the term educator; however, they both could acknowledge that the term had been introduced with good intentions for the profession. Gail, in contrast, identified as an educator herself, and her response reflects that subtle difference in perspective.

> Well, like I said, it was about [a] professionalising thing, and also to acknowledge that what people are doing in services and in varying forms you know, long day care, early childhood, you know, kindergarten settings — all the different settings — that people are there in a role not just as carers but as educators, and that is integral to the position, you know, to the

> role and what we're doing, and it was about acknowledging that to the
>
> industry, you know, as well as to the broader community and this is who
>
> we are. (Interview 13.11.2017, Lines 57–63)

These examples provide insight into the current climate within the early childhood profession. It also highlights possible ways of moving forward with a more united approach regarding the term 'educator'.

In 2011, Ortlipp et al. identified that 'the fragmented nature of the early childhood field in Australia makes it difficult to identify a shared professional identity ...' (p. 58). I feel this is reflected in the data I collected. These 'fragments', which have been pressed together by policy documents and managing bodies to create a field that is united in theory, seems to fall short in the personal minds and possibly the workplaces of some early childhood services. What was interesting was that this did not seem to be tied into a service type. For example, not all degree-trained educators working in standalone kindergartens (which have received extensive funding by government bodies and have had a focus on 'education' historically) considered the universal title as a drawback; and conversely, those working in long day care services (with their focus on care) didn't all consider the term educator as a positive.

It was evident that push-down of policy change impacts strongly on the way the participants interacted with and understood the term educator and, more broadly, their role in the early childhood field.

Stonehouse – 'Educator': Where Does It Fit in the Evolution of the Early Childhood Professional?

During the literature review for this thesis, I came across an article from 1989 by Ann Stonehouse. In this article, she argued that early childhood professionals fall into the 'nice

ladies' syndrome. She also argued that over time the early childhood professional ideal has

evolved to reflect current policy and community pressures and expectations. Even though

Stonehouse put this concept forward during the 1980s, the themes of community pressure and

expectations are still relevant today.

The participants spoke a lot about their perceptions and how policy and community

pressures were directing how they interacted with the concept of 'educator':

> I see so much backlash on the media, with the Big Steps campaign, when
>
> on the news they read it as 'childcare workers are walking on the street'.
>
> All the comments go: 'we're educators now, we're educators'. (Alice,
>
> Interview 11.10.2017, Lines 133–137)

Alice touches on this marriage of policy change and community expectations. How do

these two parts fit together? Are they currently functioning correctly together?

The last phase of Stonehouse's evolution of the early childhood professional was that

of a futuristic robot who could do everything simultaneously. I ask if the evolution to

educator from teacher and childcare worker has taken its traits from this robotic ideal? Is the

term educator taking on the elements of teacher, where professionals were asked to be all

seeing and knowing, and has this become the framework for the current idea of educator? The

characteristics suggested by all participants, regardless of their opinion as to whether it

applied to them, suggests they expect an educator to be someone who is reflective,

participates in professional development, engages with policy documents, uses their own

resources to engage children, and supports families, just to name some of those

characteristics. This sounds suspiciously like the tongue-in-cheek concept Stonehouse put

forward in her article. The real questions are: Is this what an educator should be? Is this what

was intended by bringing everyone under a single term? Was the goal to put pressure on

professionals across the field, to the point of leaving their workplace, to relieve the pressure

(as is the case with Gail), or avoid appointing higher responsibility roles despite

qualifications (as suggested by Alice around her co-workers)?

The landscape of the early childhood profession is evolving and changing all the time.

When Stonehouse wrote her article in the late 80s, she highlighted the fact that at that time

there was within the kindergarten professional community a sense of being overworked and

being asked to do more than they were capable of doing. The roles and responsibilities of

educators were being pushed to new levels within their community and within policy

documents. The questions are: Is this a by-product of a merging of multiple roles and

responsibilities that to some asked (as Stonehouse suggests) a multitude of expectations and

responsibilities that historically had been built into the profession, or is this due to increased

policy and political influences playing out in the field?

Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter, I have argued that to appreciate the way 'educator' is

understood within the field, it must be taken in context. MCA gives a very specific insight

into the meaning-making of those interviewed, but it doesn't provide information on the

overarching concepts that often overlay the meaning-making that is taking place. I have

touched on the main concepts that were raised within the data and posed questions of my own

throughout the chapter and while using Stonehouse's evolution of the teacher.

Unsurprisingly, the concepts of pay and conditions, community awareness, and policy

change all play a key role in the way the term 'educator' is embodied by professionals. My

aim is not to provide any obvious answers to this situation, but to acknowledge that these

other elements impact on how the term is being negotiated and taken up within the field

currently.

Another study (not within Australia) found five qualities to embody a good early childhood educator: 'passion, happiness, inner strength, caring, and alertness to individual children's needs' (Langford, 2007, p. 339). I wonder if this is where the term educator will evolve to over time in Australia? Will we see a shift away from the struggles and upheaval of this term towards a universal view of educator? Only time will tell.

In the next chapter I will conclude the study and review the previous chapters, posing possible questions and suggestions for further study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter I will review the main points of this thesis. I will also offer a reflection on how my experience of being interviewed improved my approach to interviewing others. I will then move to the research implications, particularly for the work of degree-qualified educators, before addressing the limitations of my study and making recommendations for future research.

Beginning from the Research Literature

This thesis identified a gap in the literature in relation to the naming of early childhood practitioners' roles. I have argued that, although there is a growing body of literature around the use of the EYLF in relation to how it applies to children and families, there is limited research regarding the degree-qualified practitioners' points of view of the changes the EYLF has meant for them in their meaning-making. Previous research that touches on this topic has either focused on the fairness of the title 'educator' in light of the pay and conditions disparity between the different qualifications in early childhood education and care (Adams, 2008; Chalke, 2013; Langford, 2007; Moss, 2010), or used data collected during the pilot period of the EYLF, when the EYLF was not tied into regulations (Ortlipp et al., 2011). By exploring the concept of educator in this thesis, I am providing a small but new insight into how policies are affecting meaning-making within the field for degree-qualified early childhood practitioners.

Ethics and Methodology

I used poststructuralist theoretical principles in this thesis. Poststructuralism maintains that there is no single truth but many truths, and 'inspires a critical reflection on "self-evident truths"' (Nicholson et al., 2014, p. 1195). I have demonstrated in this thesis that the meaning

of the term 'educator', to those experiencing it, is constantly changing and developing over

time, so it is difficult to come to a clear, defined, single 'truth' of what it means to be an

'educator'.

Poststructuralists argue that meaning is socially constructed, and that discourse is

based on how people speak, and the power attributed to those words (Robinson & Jones-

Diaz, 2006). The findings and discussion chapters demonstrated this to be the case within this

study, and the use of narratives to communicate the considerations of practitioners to reveal

their understanding has highlighted how meaning-making of the term educator is socially

constructed and resists a single meaning being taken up by professionals in the field. That

power, knowledge, and resistance were all evident within the findings demonstrates how

these key features were critical in showing how this discourse is developing.

Yin (2009) defines a case study as 'allow[ing] investigators to retain the holistic and

meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (p. 4). He defines a case study as research that

investigates a present event within its own context, especially when the boundaries between

the event and its context are not clearly defined. Due to the time restrictions and study size of

my master's research program, I chose to interview just six professionals as a collective case.

The interviews within this thesis reflect Kvale's (2007) advice that, 'A discursive

interviewer will be attentive to and, in some cases, stimulate confrontations between the

different discourses in play' (p. 74). As the researcher I had to engage in an ongoing process

of creating understandings within the interviews themselves. By challenging the participants

and asking them to elaborate on their understandings within the interview, I produced

evidence of this approach, particularly on occasions where participants contradicted their own

comments throughout the course of the discussion.

I selected a sub-category of discourse analysis, Membership Category Analysis

(MCA), as the most salient approach to data analysis for this study, particularly for the data

analysis in my first findings and discussion chapter to address the question: 'What is it to be an educator?' Freebody (2003) notes, 'MCA is a way of explicating how speakers draw on and reconstruct common cultural sense in specific situations' (p. 156). The main reason I chose to adopt MCA was that it allowed me to investigate how the participants were creating meanings *in relation to the creation of categories of early childhood professionals.*

In the second findings and discussion chapter, 'The impact of policy change', I used inductive analysis to identify relevant themes. As Patton argued in 1990, 'An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves' (cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). It is important to note that this second findings chapter adopted an inductive approach because: 'Inductive analysis is … a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. In this sense … thematic analysis is data-driven' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). MCA provides a strong lens to conduct data analysis through, but a less flexible lens for identifying issues beyond what it means to be an educator. This second findings chapter allowed data that were generated within the interviews to be contextualised *outside* the lens of MCA. I argue this has provided a richer insight into what is happening within the field right now in relation to policy change.

I found no evidence of participants feeling pressured during the interview process. By completing the interviews primarily over the phone or via web chat, there was flexibility both for me as the researcher and for the participants. For example, I was able to adapt to last-minute changes or unexpected events that the participants experienced (such as having to cover work shifts). I felt this allowed the participants to be comfortable with the timing of the interviews. The use of technology in the interview process also enabled participants to speak about something that was potentially uncomfortable in a non-confrontational space.

The Experience of Being Interviewed as the Researcher

As part of the learning process for me, my Principal Supervisor interviewed me, using the interview protocol for the study, to demonstrate the skills I would need to use to implement MCA. During this interview, I found myself feeling confused and a little uncomfortable as the interview questions challenged my own thoughts about the topic. I knew how I felt when I first started my research project, but during the interview process I was looking at how I felt as a practitioner also working in the field. This highlighted to me the complex nature of the research process I was conducting. The act of being interviewed and asked to articulate my own feelings on the subject as they related to my own workplace left me more perplexed than I had been at the beginning. I had thought that I had a clear understanding of how I felt about the topic at hand.

However, I found that when conducting the interviews with the participants, this experience supported me in following the logic of MCA through the interviews, because I understood how my own thoughts had developed in response to the questions, and I could therefore better appreciate the way the answers given were sometimes contradictory.

What Can Be Claimed from the Findings and Discussion Chapters?

There were two categories described in the findings and discussion chapter: 'What is it to be an educator?'. I have labelled the first as a 'discursive resisters' category, most closely aligned with historical definitions of 'teacher' as a distinct role. The second I have called a 'discursive adapters' category, which takes up the more recent discourse of 'educator' in a positive way. Due to the spread of the data, the category constructions included perspectives from all participants in the study; however, the attributes attached to the two categories show a trend towards a segregated viewpoint. These categories, as outlined in the first findings chapter, still echo the divide noted by Ortlipp et al. in 2011 shortly after

the introduction of the EYLF. This division is reinforced when looking at what is being

silenced or omitted within each category. The two categories indicate that the field may well

still be finding its way into what it means to be an 'educator'. It also shows that, for some,

adaption to change has been easier than for others.

Within this thesis I have provided an outline of my findings using an MCA lens.

MCA asks for clear categories and attributes developed within the interview, backgrounding

other factors that may have been evident within the data. To directly address the research

question, I chose to discuss these other factors in an additional findings chapter, since

understanding them is also relevant to understanding the overall view of what it means to be

an 'educator'.

Over the course of the second findings and discussions chapter, 'The impact of policy

change', I argued that to understand the way in which 'educator' is understood within the

field, it must be interpreted in context. MCA gives a very specific insight into the meaning-

making of those interviewed but provides less information on the overarching concepts that

often overlay the meaning-making that is taking place. I have touched on the main concepts

that were raised within the data and posed questions of my own throughout the chapter, while

also using Stonehouse's (1987) articulation of the evolution of the 'teacher' in Australian

early childhood education.

Unsurprisingly, the concepts of pay and conditions, community awareness, and policy

change all played a role in the way the term 'educator' was understood by the participants.

My aim was not to provide answers to these issues, but to acknowledge that these other

elements affect how the term 'educator' is being negotiated and taken up within the field

currently.

In a study by Langford (2007), five qualities that embody a good early childhood educator are identified: 'passion, happiness, inner strength, caring, and alertness to individual children's needs' (p. 339). I am left speculating whether this is how the term educator will evolve over time in Australia. Will we see a shift away from the struggles and upheaval of this term towards a universal view of what it means to be an educator?

Limitations of the Study

This thesis has several limitations. The case study only included six degree-qualified participants, meaning the scope of the research was not extensive. The thesis offers an insight into what is happening in the field but does not claim to provide the in-depth view that a larger study might have provided.

Although the scale of the case study and the use of qualitative research do not necessarily allow for generalisation of the findings, they nevertheless provide the potential to build understanding, which is a primary function of case-based research. As the findings are based on a term that was introduced in the EYLF and driven by policy change introduced in Australia, they may have limited relevance for other countries where the term 'educator' is used differently in the policy documents. However, as an Australian educator subject to a term that comes from the EYLF, the findings in this thesis have high relevance.

A final reflection is that there were several other role designations discussed within the interviews, including Certificate III, Diploma, Nominated Supervisor, and Educational Leader. These terms were not problematised by the participants in the same way 'educator' and 'teacher' were, suggesting that the discourses around these terms for degree-qualified participants remain less contested within the meaning-making that is taking place. This may simply be a reflection of the fact that the participant group was entirely made up of degree-

qualified professionals, and also the scope of my interview questions, which focused

primarily on their personal perspective on the term educator within their work.

Future Research

The findings in this thesis have contributed to the small body of qualitative research

about how practitioners are taking up the term 'educator' as an emerging discourse in early

childhood within Australia. This thesis provides additional insights into how the previously

dominant discourses are interacting with the current emerging discourse as it has been

introduced through policy change. This research provides greater understanding of what is

happening within the field for those who have joined or were already working in early

childhood education and care prior to the introduction of the EYLF in 2009. Future directions

for understanding the progression of the discourse of the developing understandings of pre-

service teachers would provide another angle for understanding.

Further research could also be expanded into diploma- and Certificate III-qualified

practitioners to provide more saturation and a greater understanding of how the field is

developing understandings across all qualifications. It would be helpful to provide further

insights into how practitioners with these other two qualifications view the discourse of

educator.

Concluding Reflection

Based on the findings in this thesis, it appears there will continue to be development

in early childhood practitioners' perspectives on what it means to be an educator. The term

'educators' was introduced in the EYLF and subsequent policy documents without explicit

guidance or acknowledgement of the need for an organic understanding of what it means to

be an educator. This thesis shows this has resulted in both positive and negative

interpretations of the term.

These findings provide a glimpse into the current culture of early childhood education and care, a culture that includes counter-discursive practices meeting a policy-driven dominant discourse. With recent shifts in regulation toward greater numbers of degree-qualified practitioners within long day care services, as well as the introduction of 15 hours of funded three-year-old kindergarten (Victorian State Government, 2019), there will be an influx of opportunities within the early childhood profession for these discourses to be shared and developed. This means the understanding of what it means to be an educator will become increasingly valuable as the field sees an increase in the numbers of practitioners working across a variety of services.

For pre-service teachers, supporting them to have positive discourse of 'an educator' may increase the number of pre-service teachers choosing to go into early childhood education. This could improve the quality of educators that will be moving into the profession (Thorpe et al., 2011).

Finally, this research suggests it is important that centre managers understand the impact of the words they choose to use when communicating with the profession since, as indicated in both the findings and the discussions chapters, this impacts on how practitioners embrace these words. Greater attention to language in use would support the marrying of the two conflicting discourses that have been presented in this thesis.

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Attachment A

Email recruitment script.

Dear ……...

My name is Rebecca Matthews and I am a Master of Education (Research) student in the Faculty of Education and Arts at the Melbourne Campus of Australian Catholic University, under the supervision of Associate Professor Joce Nuttall.

I invite you to participate in my research about …... You are eligible to be involved in this study because you have been identified as a University-qualified educator.

Please find attached an Information Letter and Consent Form providing further details about the study.

If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email [acu email] or contact me on ….

Kind regards,

Rebecca Matthews

Attachment B

Participant infomration letter

PROJECT TITLE: The impact of policy discourses on early childhood professionals: What

is an 'educator'?

Ethics Register Number: 2016-175E

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Joce Nuttall

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Rebecca Matthews

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Master of Education by Research

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This project is investigating the perspectives of degree-qualified pre-school educators in

Victoria on the use of the term 'educator' to describe their role in contemporary Australian

early childhood policy frameworks. The term 'educator', in keeping with international policy

trends, seeks to unify the profession, but the extent to which this is being achieved is unclear.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Rebecca Matthews and will form the basis for the degree

of Master of Education by Research at Australian Catholic University, under the supervision

of Associate Professor Joce Nuttall

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

No risks are anticipated beyond normal daily life. You will not be expected to talk about

anything upsetting or that you consider inappropriate. You will not be asked for any

information about the children you teach, and the project will not position you in a negative

light. You will be able to use a pseudonym to conceal your identity if the information you

choose to share, such as personal experiences, is considered sensitive by you.

What will I be asked to do?

- You will be invited to answer up to 6 interview questions. The interview will be digitally recorded.
- The questions asked will relate directly to the Early Years Learning Framework and your thoughts on the use of the term 'educator'.
- The location of the interviews will be determined later by appointment.

How much time will the project take?

The interview will be up to one hour in duration.

What are the benefits of the research project?

The project addresses the relationship between how professionals understand the term

educators and the positioning of early childhood professionals within policy discourses. This

will provide the early childhood field with information about how best to support experienced

and new professionals in the field as they develop their views around their professional role.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to

participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without

adverse consequences.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

The study will be published, with up to two journal articles based on the research conducted in the study. The data will be identifiable during the data collection process. All identifiable data will become non-identifiable before publication. The data will be kept on a password-protected computer at the ACU campus.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

You will receive a summary of the research, with an option to receive a copy of the finished thesis.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

The Principal Investigator for this project is Associate Professor Joce Nuttall. Her contact details are:

Email: joce.nuttall@acu.edu.au

Mail: Faculty of Education and Arts, Australian Catholic University, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy MDC, VIC 3065

Phone (business hours): 9953 3532

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2014 xxxx). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics

c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

Australian Catholic University

North Sydney Campus

PO Box 968

NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059

Ph.: 02 9739 2519

Fax: 02 9739 2870

Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be

informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?

Please return the consent form to:

Rebecca Matthews, Email:

Attachment C

Consent form
Copy for Researcher/ Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT: The impact of policy discourses on early childhood professionals:

What is an 'educator'?

Ethics Register Number: 2016-175E

(NAME OF) PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR): Associate Professor Joce

Nuttall ....

(NAME OF) STUDENT RESEARCHER (if applicable): Rebecca Matthews..........................

I .... *(the participant)* have read and understood the information

provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my

satisfaction. I agree to participate in a face-to-face interview, of up to one hour in duration. I

understand the interview will be digitally recorded. I realise I can withdraw my consent at

any time without adverse consequences. I agree that research data collected for the study

may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me

in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ....

SIGNATURE ....   DATE

....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR): ....

DATE:…………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ....

DATE:.........................……….

Attachment D

Research Question:

1. **Can you tell me about your professional history?**
- How long have you been in the field?
- What is your highest qualification?
- Work history

My research is about the concept of the term educator and how it is been introduced in the

NQF across all early childhood services.

2. **When did you first hear about the term educator?**
- How did you feel at that time? Why did you feel that way?
- Has there been a time where you have felt uncomfortable being called an
  educator? If so – can you tell me about it and why you felt that way?
- Why do you think the writers of the EYLF chose the term 'educator'?

3. **What do you refer to those in your service team members as?**
- Within team meetings or interactions?
- When speaking to families accessing the service?
- If different:
    - Why do you feel the need to vary your language?
    - What do the parents call you?
4. **Has the change in language impacted on the way you see yourself?**
- If yes:
- How does that make you feel about yourself? Other professionals?

5. **Could you tell me what do educators 'not do?'**
- What do you think are the characteristics of an educator?
- How do you think these characteristics relate to the EYLF?
- What roles and responsibilities should an educator have?

6. **When you're at a party... what do you call yourself when someone asks you?**

7. **Do you have any further thoughts about the reform agenda in general?**

8. **(may need to be explained).**

Attachment E

Ethics approval letter
From: Kylie Pashley <Kylie.Pashley@acu.edu.au> on behalf of Res Ethics

<Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au>

Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 11:40 AM

To: Joce Nuttall <Joce.Nuttall@acu.edu.au>; Rebecca Matthews

<rebecca.matthews@myacu.edu.au>

Cc: Res Ethics <Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au>

Subject: <u>2016-175E Ethics application approved!</u>

Dear Applicant,

Principal Investigator: A/Prof Jocelyn Nuttall

HDR student: Rebecca Matthews

Ethics Register Number: 2016-175E

Project Title: The impact of policy discourses on early childhood professionals: What

is an `educator'?

Risk Level: Low Risk

Date Approved: 26/09/2016

Ethics Clearance End Date: 30/09/2017

This email is to advise that your application has been reviewed by the Australian Catholic

University's Human Research Ethics Committee and confirmed as meeting the requirements

of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

The data collection of your project has received ethical clearance but the decision and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process and approval is subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that outstanding permission letters are obtained, interview/survey questions, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to ACU HREC before any data collection can occur. Failure to provide outstanding documents to the ACU HREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Further, this approval is only valid as long as approved procedures are followed.

If your project is a Clinical Trial, you are required to register it in a publicly accessible trials registry prior to enrolment of the first participant (e.g. Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry http://www.anzctr.org.au/) as a condition of ethics approval.

If you require a formal approval certificate, please respond via reply email and one will be issued.

Researchers who fail to submit a progress report may have their ethical clearance revoked and/or the ethical clearances of other projects suspended. When your project has been completed a progress/final report form must be submitted. The information researchers provide on the security of records, compliance with approval consent procedures and documentation and responses to special conditions is reported to the NHMRC on an annual basis. In accordance with NHMRC the ACU HREC may undertake annual audits of any projects considered to be of more than low risk.

It is the Principal Investigators / Supervisors responsibility to ensure that:

1.   All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC with 72 hours.

2.   Any changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the HREC by submitting a Modification/Change to Protocol Form prior to the research commencing or continuing.

http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher-support/integrity-and-ethics/

3.   Progress reports are to be submitted on an annual basis.

http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher-support/integrity-and-ethics/

4.   All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Letter and consent form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

5.   Protocols can be extended for a maximum of five (5) years after which a new application must be submitted. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Kylie Pashley

on behalf of ACU HREC Chair, Dr Nadia Crittenden

Ethics Officer | Research Services

Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

Australian Catholic University

THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL

Attachment F

Department of
Education & Training

2016_003138

Mrs Rebecca Matthews
2/34 Gardner Street
KOO WEE RUP   3981

Dear Mrs Matthews

Thank you for your application of 20 July 2016 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian early childhood settings titled *The impact of policy discourses on early childhood professionals: What is an 'educator'?*

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Training.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from centre directors. This is to be supported by the Department of Education and Training approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Training for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education Training in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.

VICTORIA
State
Government

Attachment G

Data analysis

LDC = Long day centre   SK = Standalone Kindergarten

Educator	Teacher
Louise (LDC) line 61-71 ah, no, no I don't think so. Because that's what we do. We are educating, and I think I'm quite comfortable in, you know, in the knowledge that I have, that it can be, its not, its not a hierarchal situation, per se. You don't refer to me, as anything but a teacher, I don't have that. So if someone said as an educator what would you do, or and I would say, this is what I would do, this is how I teach blah, blah, blah, blah. I would just reply in that sense, I wouldn't go aw, I'm not an educator, I'm a teacher! Because they're interchangeable I suppose, depending on where the other person is coming from. What their knowledge is, so if it needs more clarification around qualification say. I would ask, as an educator what are you qualified as? And I	Louise (LDC) line 81-82 Just because you teacher doesn't mean you're the most, have the highest point, you know in the hierarchy. Louise (LDC) line 110-116 but then in our programs that have a ECE teacher in them, we would say 'talk to the teacher in your teacher in your room.' So refer directly to that person, that the person who is most responsible for the programming in that room. So in that sense rather than, referring to the educators, we would say you need to talk to the teacher within your room. I suppose in that, because in the funded program we do require there to be an ECE qualified ECE, so that is when we would refer people into that aspect. Louise (LDC) line 121-126

would go on to say: actually, this is my qualification. I am a teacher of early childhood, with these degrees.

Louise (LDC) line 75-88

I haven't really thought about it I guess. If I was, It [the term educator] crosses all realms of the field from the certificate trained up to you know who holds a bachelor or a diploma qualification, so, we are educators of children, and it is that all encompassing, everyone comes to a position with particular knowledge, and some have different qualifications but looking world views and world knowledge, everyone brings that to their teaching and educating of children. I think that's a valuable thing to consider. Just because you teacher doesn't mean you're the most, have the highest point, you know in the hierarchy I suppose, we work in a more collegial aspect of things, where everyone has a way of observing children and assessing learning is based on what their knowledge is, so we can all have, where its in teaching or personal life have an opinion

yeah, I think that is the case, and that's where we would expect there expertise to actually be used, so if it was regarding something about programing we would be expecting the teacher be the one who is talking about that. The educators would of course know, but if it was a specific question, you know, it might be 'talk to the teachers in your room' if it was a kindergarten program, I might just refer to that because it just rolls off my tongue, historically.

Louise (LDC) line 128-130

yeah, absolutely, as apposed to, primarily talk to your child's teacher, would be what we would say, and have that higher expectation of teacher within the room to be able to answer you know and qualify any questions, there about.

Louise (LDC) line 138-142

yeah, it's a weird, it is a little bit weird, I refer to myself as a teacher, so if I'm ringing somebody, I will say, Hi I'm Leonie, I'm a teacher at [x], apposed to I'm

on how things are. But having everyone qualified with that educator term, by having us all under that one umbrella, about having to, you know, meet the regs and the expectations of the framework.

Louise (LDC) line 101-104

We would also probably refer to them as everyone to educators, absolutely, the team would be – as a team we need to do this, and then quantify that back down I suppose to, or qualify I should say, to as educators we all need to be mindful of... da, da, da.. Yeah, yep.

Louise (LDC) line 109-110

I suppose there is a slight variation in how we would refer to people in that sense then, in our education and care rooms, we would say 'talk to one of the educators in your room'

Louise (LDC) line 165-168

no, I don't think it has – not at all. I think I just know my skill level, and I know what I'm able to provide for children, and

the educational leader, as that gives more context to most people, what a teacher is, or I might say co-ordinate the kindergarten programs, so its kind of, it's a little familiar to them.

Alice (LDC) line 75-76

I felt like it was, I felt it was a good thing, it was a bit confusing to have to differentiate myself as a teacher

Alice (LDC) line 102-108

I have found that they do refer to me as a teacher though, I have felt the difference compared to a couple of years back where people would go 'oh yes.. My child is going to a proper kindergarten now..' there were things like that, that the language – I've pushed so hard to emphasize the education that takes place is the same, and things like that. But a lot of work has been put in by myself just to help. I feel that as I've been here a number of years, I've been able to push and influence quite a bit.

Alice (LDC) line 111-114

families and therefore it doesn't matter what titled is bestowed upon me.

Louise (LDC) line 209-214

[They] provide, provide quality program for the children they work with, and follow the policies and procedures that are in place, in regards to care and safety of children. Work in collaboration with families so they will develop, happy and secure relationships. I think they have, they all have a requirement of doing all of those things, providing the best care and education at the services that they work within.

Louise (LDC) 218-220

no, I would be expecting in general, well depending what their experience is and what their qualifications are would be the depth their understanding of their accountability would be.

Louise (LDC) line 233-237

no, look, I suppose, in terms of experience, I would like to see generally, a lot more understanding of inclusive practice, and I

I don't do it in a way of wanting to say I'm better than you, or this and that. But when I have chats say with my husband, he says, or a former boss – said 'don't feel like you have to apologize for what you achieved. You've studied, you're there for a reason.' I thinking back on things, I get a lot more holidays

Alice (LDC) line 193-197

I think the families call them teachers as well. And I've heard my co-educators refer to themselves as teachers as well.

Rebecca: Yes, which is a whole different set of issues regarding names for people.

Alice: Yeah – and I'm not going there for that one. I have heard them say 'we listen to our teachers'

Alice (LDC) line 223-226

The standard was much more, well the team spirit was 'mind your own business, I'll do my own thing,' planning was about making the same scrap book for every child, every

don't mean all about children with

additional needs I think, that's also

somewhat personal point of reference for

people, just around terms of difference

around families and what they might

celebrate and how can services incorporate

the different celebrations and things.

Louise (LDC) line 245 – 249

but I think that's a cultural perspective that a

greater understanding by all educators about

that, our responsibility to make that a level

playing field. I think that for me would be

something that is really important. And also

too, the context of aboriginal and Torre

strait islander culture is a focus of mine too.

Alice (LDC) line 49 – 58

but in the beginning, it was different, the

dynamics of the workplace were so

different. But then, so what was expected of

my colleagues back then, is so different to

what is expected of them now. There has

been some progress but it was different back

then, I felt that my training and what I was

week, and you're different because your

kinder, you're different.

Alice (LDC) line 273-274

yes, I think its because of the study that

takes place at a bachelor level is so much

reflection and critiquing and so much

personal reflection.

Alice (LDC) line 279-282

I think that's a characteristic, 'we' are more

likely to take things on, and internalize

them.

Rebecca: okay, and just to clarify we you

mean teachers then?

Angela: yeah, teachers.

Alice (LDC) line 285-303

reflective is definitely one of them, critical,

confidence level is different as well, for

more experienced ones, for the graduate

teachers it's a whole different ball game and

speaking to someone now how is a graduate

she has, she is working at (x) in Carlton

exposed to in Sydney was a little bit, it asked for more of the educators.

Rebecca: Yes, so you mean not, I am just going to clarify so I know for myself what you meant. So you mean the other professionals like the diplomas and the cert 3's, there was a higher expectation of them in Sydney, than verses when you moved to Melbourne.

Alice: Yes.

Alice (LDC) line 67-69

I feel like quite possibly, everyone was called staff when I moved here in the beginning. Everyone was staff or childcare workers, must have only been a recent shift.

Alice (LDC) line 71-76

I felt that – I guess a couple of back-stories to that. I think its good because of the politics of language, we need something to shift and propel the industry forward and move it beyond childcare worker. Childcare worker to me sound very industrial, its very day in day out – you do the same thing;

North, she has a team of 5 to manage and she keeps coming to me for advice 'how am I going to do this? I am so new and there are 5 people who are already established in what they're doing, and that's very different as well. I have to clarify that, that comes with time. Teachers are able to, I think that teachers are able to see the big picture something, and know when to let go of things and know that you don't always have to be that way. I have a very challenging group this year, very challenging and they say to me, you're too soft with them, you're too soft things like that, and they need strictness and things like that but you need to be able to see the big picture as well, if you have a strict approach all day what does that do the confident children and things like that? I think we can see a bit more the bigger picture, in more in that sense when guiding behavior there is a lot of, I have seen in my colleagues of, I need to win this battle right here, vs. learning to step away.

you're bit of a machine without critical reflection. Educator? I felt like it was, I felt it was a good thing, it was a bit confusing to have to differentiate myself as a teacher.

Alice (LDC) line 91-95

yes, I believe that, for me personally I would not call colleagues teachers. But my son attends childcare as well, he's here in the 2 year old room and colloquially with my friends and peers, with my family I refer to his educators as educators. I don't say his teachers have done this. Things like that, the reason being is I think there is a need differentiate.

Alice (LDC) line 127-137

I think they were looking for, personally I think they were looking for a way to inject education into the mix without throwing qualifications, without putting their foot in their mouth about qualifications. In many ways, we needed something to professionalize the profession and I guess you have to make it black and white; you are here to educate children, as educators.

Rebecca: So would you say then that there the differences between a teacher and an educator would be the focus on behavioural management then?

Alice: I would say so.

Alice (LDC) line 323-329

yes, so its that feeling that, you're going the extra mile, and yes, it might pain me when my colleagues say "go home, go home" and I am not saying I slave away here until the end of the day but I'm talking 15 minutes 30 minutes which is really all you need to engage the community, and speak to families. That is defiantly for me the biggest difference, professional commitment. That willingness of training, to network to go out your walls, your four walls so what you can do.

Alice (LDC) line 334-340

yeah, definitely, you see it at staff meetings as well, conferences, we have an organization wide conference and you see everyone not everyone is too keen with it

So it is best word they could find, that was up lifting, embowering, educating the community as well. I wonder what the public feels about that, what families might feel, how they might be adapting to that. I see so much backlash on the media, with the big steps campaign, when on the news they read it as 'child care workers are walking on the street..' all the comments go: 'we're educators now, we're educators.

Alice (LDC) line 143-145

I think having a blanket term is a start. But I feel its, but there is a huge difference between quality interactions between a cert 3 qualified person and a diploma qualified person.

Alice (LDC) line 202-212

So has using the term educator for everyone impacted the way I see myself as a professional? I think, I've grown more confident through the years professionally, it's given me more confidence about maybe standing up for the profession? Perhaps? Before, couple of years back, if someone

and interacting with other people and its very, very different. I don't know if that's the same case for someone who is someone who is a teacher graduate and is never worked in any other work place but I'm guessing a lot of the placements that a teacher has to undergo for their training, properly develops that professionalism as well.

Alice (LDC) line 346- 351

yeah, I say I am a kinder teacher. Oftentimes I get asked "oh so.." or if I say teacher and they say what grade and I say preschool its "oh okay, oh nice" and then they ask what school? And I explain that I work in a long day care, which supports families that have to work, that we intergrade the learning. I say things like 'it's a registered kindergarten' so I use a lot of catch phrase, or key words.

Samantha (SK) line 31-33

I feel, as a teacher, and as a mature age teacher who went through a lot to get, to be a teacher. I don't like the term; yeah I don't

asks, "so, where do you work?" "Oh in child care?" "Oh… okay." And it would just end there in terms of small talk. But these days I can talk at greater length about the critical work that we do for the children, that has changed the way I operate in that sense, I feel more confident speaking about what I do and what we do as a team as well. I think, I do believe that the term educator hasn't really caught on as much with families and the public as it has within us, within the profession. Just my gut feeling really.

Alice (LDC) 218-226

What I've seen, a big improvement in the team, as I said I've been here a couple of years. I have seen a shift in this teams standards, from 5 years ago. We had some effective leadership from 2013-15 we had someone, a boss back then who was bachelor trained and she did a lot to improve the standards and there has been a shift since then. But as I had arrived, as I joined the team. The standard was much more, well

like the term for teachers. I prefer to be called a teacher. I am a kindergarten teacher.

Samantha (SK) line 40-42

yes, and I, this might be another one of your questions but I, if we have to use it, no – for a teacher I don't think it should be used. For the other cohorts, I still think, there needs to be some differentiation between a diploma and cert 3

Samantha (SK) line 48 – 51

I believe, they should know that I am the degree-trained teacher. And this is my coworker who is diploma and this person is a cert 3 trained so that they, may expect a different, not a different level of communication – but a different level of knowledge.

Samantha (SK) 94-100

I think, I probably yes, I think they already know that – probably because, but in saying that, the other girls do use [the online platform]. I think they just know because a

the team spirit was 'mind your own business, I'll do my own thing,' planning was about making the same scrap book for every child, every week, and you're different because your kinder, you're different.

Alice (LDC) line 231-236

yes, and then the new leadership around 13-15, 13-14 really encouraged a lot more reflective learning stories and then I found now that we're using, an online platform, that's really upped the accountability for everyone in regards to their reflections and planning, and their interactions. So it has propelled forward in this team, its not the same people, I think. There have been a lot of resignations and that's seen new people coming in.

Alice (LDC) line 244-258

able too – one would be mentoring other team members, I don't think the people skills are quite there yet, I think there would be more the sense of running a room, but perhaps the confidence to mentor others

lot of the communication, the written communication comes from me, the teacher and even in the online platform I know the parents know our Sunday message which is [an acronym of teaching teams initials) but I also know, that they know I'm writing that and I would refer to me. Does that make sense?

Samantha (SK) line 131-135

Rebecca: I have found when discussing it with some of the other participants, that they talked about, so if a parent was talking to their child, would they call you all teachers? So for example "you need to listen to your teachers today", so they would give you all the same title?

Sam: Yes,

Samantha (SK) line 150-155

Sam: Yes. Yes it has. I, again for me, its dumbing down. I feel that I worked hard to become a teacher, very, very, very hard. And I feel that by everybody being called educator I don't feel that sense of pride.

wouldn't be quite there, that's one. Another would be having difficult and challenging conversation with staff and with families, that as well. I feel an educator might be more able to operate on their own team level, not so much on a broader scale, we've got 5-6 rooms, so that's something. As far as reflecting on a childs learning, their interests and abilities. A diploma-qualified educator may be more likely to focus on developmental outcomes and not as much social and emotional observation.

Rebecca: and you have found that to be the same with your cert 3? Or?

Alice: defiantly with the cert 3s is very much this is what I saw, this is what we'll do to build on that and we'll do this next time, and the analysis would pretty much be non existent, I would say. Because that's usually what I pick up when I'm work shopping their stories, it was more 'look I made a dinosaur out of play dough, to support this we're going to make a dinosaur area.'

Rebecca: So you find it disempowering? Its something that's taken away from what you've achieved?

Sam: Yes. A lot

Samanatha (SK) line 187-189

Oh yes, and of course, I also have a greater depth of knowledge in relation to teaching strategies, philosophies and those sorts of things. Which they don't have.

Samanatha (SK) line 195-200

Teacher needs to have good communication skills, both with children and with parents and with other professionals. I think you need to be fairly strong character too, because sometimes, awful things happen and you just have to deal with it. You have to have good leadership skills with your team. Communication really comes down to, understanding who you are talking to, that doesn't make sense, forget that bit.

Samanatha (SK) line 203-207

Alice (LDC) line 264-270	yes, so I have to know, I'm talking to a young mum, a young single mum, you know I would yeah, I might talk to her differently, I mean I do talk to her differently than I might to the school principal.
I think an educator is able to adequacy and meaningfully supervise and engage with children. They are able to observe and document children learning – within a certain extent. They are able to set up learning spaces as well, given direction I would say. I believe they are able to have conversations with families but it is a case-by-case, person-to-person basis as to what conversations would happen. I think they might be able to guide, and plan for the week – but I'm not sure they would be able to critique as much.	Rebecca: or maybe even another family who is a professional family.
	Sam: yes. I think you have to be intuitive. So yeah.
Alice (LDC) line 301-303	Samanatha (SK) line 252 - 261
Rebecca: So would you say then that there the differences between a teacher and an educator would be the focus on behavioural management then?	Rebecca: Yeah, I'm not surprised by that answer, just confirming for myself. And you have no, do you find people ask you a bit about it? Do they ask you if you're a stand-alone kinder teacher, or a long days kinder teacher?
Alice: I would say so.	
Alice (LDC) line 308-309	Sam: aw, no – aw, no. Generally not. But then I'm guilty of saying to them, 'I'm a kindergarten teacher' and if the conversation goes on like that, I will say 'AND I can teach in primary school, but I choose to teach in kindergarten.'
Another difference is for me, an immediate difference is the professional attitude, I	

forgot to touch on that, professional attitude to the workplace.

Alice (LDC) line 334-340

yeah, definitely, you see it at staff meetings as well, conferences, we have an organization wide conference and you see everyone not everyone is too keen with it and interacting with other people and its very, very different. I don't know if that's the same case for someone who is someone who is a teacher graduate and is never worked in any other work place but I'm guessing a lot of the placements that a teacher has to undergo for their training, properly develops that professionalism as well.

Samantha (SK) line 28

aw, actually, not that long ago, probably 5 years ago? Yeah, 5-6 years ago.

Samantha (SK) line 31-33

I feel, as a teacher, and as a mature age teacher who went through a lot to get, to be a teacher. I don't like the term; yeah I don't

Rebecca: yeah, so, in a, yeah explanation kind of way.

Sam: So am I defending my choice? I'm defending my choice to be a kindergarten teacher because I love it.

Samanatha (SK) line 310-312

I actually appreciate the fact that, that I'm given a chance to articulate the thoughts that have been going around and around in my head, and you dare not say them.

Samanatha (SK) line 321-322

Right, because I am a teacher! I want to be known as a teacher! I am proud to be a teacher! I've worked hard to be a teacher! But anyway

Emily (LDC) line 35-48

Sure, it wasn't actually until I arrived in Australia, so in NZ I taught in a kindergarten, and my association I taught for was behind the 100% qualified movement, so in the 5 person teaching team, we were all qualified, and all called teachers, although, if you were unqualified

like the term for teachers. I prefer to be called a teacher. I am a kindergarten teacher.

Samantha (SK) line 40-46

Sue: yes, and I, this might be another one of your questions but I, if we have to use it, no – for a teacher I don't think it should be used. For the other cohorts, I still think, there needs to be some differentiation between a diploma and cert 3

Rebecca: So is that again to do about training for you?

Sue: yes, yes it is. It's about training. I also think that, as people we are all equal, and everyone deserves respect and all of that but I do believe their needs to be a differentiation between the training and what our families perceive us.

Samantha (SK) line 56-60

I feel, how I can I put this? In a way I think its dumbing down. They are trying to make everybody the same. You know, we all have to use the EYLF, so in essence, everything is the same, we all have the same

in the service down the road you were called a teacher, so I'd never really heard for it. So when I arrived here in Australia, and I started hearing it a lot, it's not a term that sits with me very well so not. For example, now at my service we are all called teachers, we are either called cert 3 teachers, diploma teachers or degree teachers. Because it was infuriating having assistant thrown around that was horrible, yeah, educator wasn't a huge fan of that either, carer? All of these things, so when we sat down and said to each other what do we do here? And asked our families what we do, we teach. We are teachers. And it shouldn't matter what your qualification is, I guess, four years ago I became a lot more familiar with the term educator, it still doesn't sit with me that well but I get the reason it get used.

Emily (LDC) line 52-57

I feel that it dumbs you down. I did a teaching degree, so, I would want to be called a teacher. But in the Australian

regulations so everything is the same there, so now it's the same. So now we're educators, so it's all the same.

Samantha (SK) line 65-67

I think that it is passed down, I now work for a cluster management company, the same thing there, we are being dumbed down. We are referred to as educators; so we refer to everyone as an educators so that's the way it is now.

Samantha (SK) line – 71

Co-workers or co educators

Samantha (SK) line 136-138

Rebecca: so that is a similar thing that happens to you, you don't find parents using educator at all?

Sue: No, no. Certainly not in our service.

Samantha (SK) line 150-155

Sue: Yes. Yes it has. I, again for me, its dumbing down. I feel that I worked hard to become a teacher, very, very, very hard.

climate it's used because people feel like they can't call someone with a diploma a teacher. And that made me really think, well, they did a teaching qualification as well, that's qualification is given to them to be a level of teacher, why aren't the given that name as well. And it was like well – I've not done a degree. So I said oh well?

Emily (LDC) line 65-67

yep, the term care is just thrown around so much here, and if you looked up what teaching means across the board right up to a university lecturer, care is always involved.

Emily (LDC) line 72-76

there is, isn't there? Its about, just, working really hard on our language, we only use teacher, we don't use educator at all, I think it helps, we use an online platform called [X] and it only uses teacher as well, which makes sense because it was made in NZ, I think that really helps, all its drop down

And I feel that by everybody being called educator I don't feel that sense of pride.

Rebecca: So you find it disempowering? Its something that's taken away from what you've achieved?

Sam: Yes. A lot

Samanatha (SK) line 168-173

But the term educator in industry per se is good.

Rebecca: Okay, so for you example, if they had gone, say like the British model, which goes educators are diploma and then teachers, so you have teaching professionals and educator professionals you would have been more comfortable in a system like that?

Sam: Yes, defiantly.

Samantha (SK) line 178-186

Well, ah – well in everything you have to have a hierarchy and I admit the buck stops with me, so if something diabolical happens, its my heads for the chop, as apposed to my

tabs, none of them say educator or talk about educator, so year.

Emily (LDC) line 104-115

That's right, and the cool thing now is we don't hear the whole cert 3 thing like that anymore, you are just a teacher, and I might be the kindergarten teacher. However, my collogues are part of the kindergarten teaching team as well. Yeah, the way we differentiate is my names Emma, and my collogue is [x], its not so much down to that education jargon anymore.

Rebecca: I suppose if you've found something you're all comfortable with, it doesn't bring tension.

Emily: it came as part of our philosophy process; we talked about what do want to be called? What do we feel our job is? And it came down to, say aye if you want to be x and that was teacher and everyone wanted to, and that's it. And for me, the term educator just doesn't sound very

cert 3 co worker. I'm the one who is accountable to the parents, they are to a certain degree, but its me and they can make, or say the wrong thing and come to me and dah, dah, dah, dah – but I am the one who has to ring that parent. I am the one who does the reports for the professionals, and speaks to the primary teachers which is what they don't do.

Rebecca: Yeah, so you're talking more around professional responsibilities and legal responsibilities.

Samantha (SK) line 214-221

No, oh they should be, so no, is everything is related back to the EYLF, so they are expected to have a good knowledge of the EYLF, they don't always have, they don't always come and defer to me, so something simple would be that my co-workers will go and do observations and put them on [online platform], I am not expecting them to come to me and say, this is what happened, what outcome do I link that to? They need to be able to do that for themselves, and

professional, and I know that is, I think that's because of where I've come from.

Rebecca: I wonder if that's how you see that. But if your collogues have agreed to that, its interesting, you know what they mean? I'm gathering they aren't all from NZ, so they don't have the same back history as you around that concept.

Emma: I think there was that, even though we're had such varied pasts, I think there was a sense of 'oh, I like that! I like being referred to as a teacher and that sounds like a good plan. Yeah and we've just ended up here. I think it's a nice place to be, families ring and just say, can I speak to the teacher in the babies' classroom.

Rebecca: Do you find then, when speaking to families, do you refer to each other by teacher then or just name? Just before you said that. But when families are speaking to you do they refer to you as teachers as well?

Emily: yes, yes they do.

remembering, and I've said this to them at different times, is that what I see is different from what you see.

Samantha (SK) line 227-247

well, educate the children, do all those sorts of things. Be able to manage behaviours, have behavior management strategies, see my girls, my co-workers do, do a lot. I would still expect them to do a fair bit, I have had to learn to let go of things, due to time constraints I can no longer do it, but I still expect them to do a fair bit.

Rebecca: Do you delegate responsibilities, or when you say let go, you mean properly let go, as in it doesn't get done?

Sam: in that respect, okay, I can give you an example, which may or may not be relevant. Its transition statement time, so [co worker] came up to me, on Monday we had a chat as the 3 of us, as we normally do, and right she said: right now you're doing the transition statements Sam, is it okay, you concentrate on them, and [other co worker] and I will take care of the AGM stuff? Would you like

Rebecca: did you make a conscious choice to communicate that to families?

Emily: when we sent out for consultation within our philosophy, and said we were changing a little bit of the language, and some, well we've also being trying to change the child care situation as well, that one is a little bit harder to shift, however. Most parents are on board, with the use of [online portal], they can't really avoid it – teacher comes up all the time, everything is around the teaching team, or the teachers in the classroom. Those sorts of things, we've managed to get 70% onside. There are some families, who are like what does that mean? Teacher? What do you mean by that? Oh we mean that person has trained towards this qualification and allows them to teach to x level.

Emily (LDC) line 157-166

 aw, not only do I want to correct them, but sometimes I do correct them, it depends. So that exact thing happened, there is 700 of us, and the address, came from someone

us to put together the packages and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah? And when the transition statements are done, we'll collate them from you. Yep that would be great. I've let go, and they're doing that. My other co-worker said do you want me to do the drawings with the children for the transition statement. So does that make sense?

Rebecca: yeah, I would call that delegation of sorts, its them coming and asking you, not you giving it out to them, but you're allowing it to happen when they ask.

Sam: and because we're a team, and have been a team for some time, it works.

Emily (LDC) line 52-57

I feel that it dumbs you down. I did a teaching degree, so, I would want to be called a teacher. But in the Australian climate it's used because people feel like they can't call someone with a diploma a teacher. And that made me really think, well, they did a teaching qualification as well, that's qualification is given to them to be a level of teacher, why aren't the given

high up in our head office, and it was like "its wonderful to see passionate educators, and I sat there thinking, aw, really? You could throw teachers down. So we are, that is what we are. It makes me uncomfortable, because of where I've come from. In my conference in NZ it was a gathering of teachers, and that's what we were. And I see no difference between that gathering and this gathering, yet. There are many teachers, I have found so far who do not, want to be labeled with anyone of the likes with a cert 3 or diploma. So they don't want to share the term teacher.

Emily (LDC) line 187-196

yes, totally and it was very obvious when I first arrived, I hadn't done enough research, not that I regret the move at all, I'm glad I did it. But my first day at my kindergarten to be told that my assistant would do all the paint pot washing and sweep the floor and if a child had vomited or wet their pants, and I said 'oh, well I'll just do that too.' And it was 'no, no, no, no.. That's not your job.'

that name as well. And it was like well – I've not done a degree. So I said oh well?

Emily (LDC) line 81 – 98

So from what I can gather, so I arrived at a time where there was still a lot of angst, so, when would it be? I think it would have been a year, since the framework would have been introduced. So when I arrived, there was a lot of angst around the use of it, so there was a feeling of 'who is this educator?' and its not me because I'm a kindergarten teacher, and its not my assistant, because they are my assistant… what they were endeavoring to do, because when you look up the word educator, it's a very similar meaning to the word teacher, to educate, to teach, they go hand in hand. However, I think what they were trying to do is be inclusive, which is great. Which is why when I really take it back, educator isn't a derogatory word, it only feels like that because I've never been called it before, and I prefer to be called a teacher, and for

And I was like 'oh? What is my job?' and it was 'to teach' and I said part of my job is the holistic view of the child, there is a little bit missing, even though that was a huge part when I was at university, we learnt about birth to 8 years, and it was kind of a shock to be told I wont be doing anything that happens to children at that age, because my assistant would do that. And I was like ew.

Emily (LDC) line 275-293

: yeah, so I mean, for me. When you're teaching in role I see it similar to the holistic view of the child, so think holistically, if I'm teaching, I'm thinking about not only that teaching aspect, but I'm thinking about unity, I'm thinking about, know you, those wider concepts. In NZ its your wider Whanau, your whole process around where you sit, so I might sit here at [x] yet, I have influence, talking to you, and being involved in Joce's research, and being a mentor for other university students, and though on Monday going out to [X

my collogues to be called teachers, because I have strong feelings that is what we do. They were trying to be inclusive because there is a great difference between qualification here in Australia, and so what they were, I'm hoping this was why, that they were giving everyone the feeling of 'you belong', this curriculum is for you and this is for you, no matter what age group you have no matter what qualification you have. So it's not for teachers with 4 year olds, its educators across the broad. I think that's what they were trying to do.

Emily (LDC) line 143 – 150

Emily: yes, I think, right from the get go. Like my mums a teacher and my grandmother, I have a long family history of teacher, and all of my peers and partners and collogues and they refer to the word teacher, so when I'm called something otherwise, I am like, oh actually no, this is my job, my profession, this is where I work, I am a teacher. So I guess you're right, there is something for me, however, if I was called

university] about their teacher education program, where can they go with that? So for me the characteristics of a teacher are kind of that kind of, maypole within the community, you have certain outreach, and that can go as small as you want, or as wide as you enable it to. So effective teaching I would hope, would see the reach quite wide. I guess I was very lucky in my early teaching, to mentor by strong teachers, so the feelings, of well, giving back. And pass it on, and I guess making sure its paid forward, so the next generation of teachers have those positives influences and experiences because what I found while being here, is there have been a lot of poor experiences for beginning teachers especially so they're sort of removed form that teacher feeling, because they've never been made to feel empowered, like that can really take that term teacher and run with it.

Emily (LDC) line 336-349

. So I think you touched on it before, when you're out and about at a party, you would

an educator, I wouldn't mind so much now, I think I've got to the place of understanding of where that comes from. Yeah, you're right. It is something, that, that strengthens myself.

Emily (LDC) line 216-230

yes, I know what you mean. I feel like the term educator, if yeah, it gets used here, to label anyone who doesn't have a degree essentially. So if out and about. I will give an example. My friend messaged me the other week asking if I was going on strike. I said no, that's not the award that covers me, that is the award that covers others. I didn't say teachers or otherwise, I just said others, within the profession. So, I feel like, that was a big thing for 'educators' vs. when I did strike in the first year, I was over here, and previously, as it was teachers who were going on strike. If someone said to me tell me what Joe blogs educator does I would give a very similar job description to what I have, yeah, I don't know. The thing for me for me, as more I'm learning and reading

refer to yourself as a teacher then and make that very clear?

Emily: yep. Always.

Rebecca: so if they were to say to you, oh what kind or what grade do you teach? Do you elaborate?

Emily: yep, the year before they head off to school. Oh cool where about? I am kind of lucky because. Well I'm not lucky because I've been making a fuss about this issue for so long, that even my friends, if a friend asks them, oh what does Emma do? They say, Emma is a kindergarten teacher, infant's room, 5 year olds mainly, yep, before they go to school, yep. They all know the spiel, as they should. And sometimes it's a bit of a deeper conversation depending on the person's knowledge of our profession, it can depend. But I always clarify. Yeah, I've had to do it a lot more here than I ever had to do in NZ, I think. It felt like a massive gap in NZ, but they have no idea, that's nothing to compared to the gap here

that educator, is a world wide language and yet because its used differently throughout the world, in some parts of the world, educator is this great term that just encompasses so many different types of teachers, while here its used to say well you don't have a qualification, because you aren't. I didn't really answer that question very good. Because I'm so entrenched with this teacher thing

Emily (LDC) line 236-245

: yep, and it often comes up. How come you get to go on school holidays? Aw well, good question. Because the award I teach under enables me, to have those conditions, my colleagues are still at work at the moment, as are most of my children. Yeah, those sorts of things. So I guess it comes up a little bit but I am very mindful of the language I use, I know its about conversations particularly about quality, that really influence the community when we are thinking about specific when we're talking about specifics between teacher, vs.

Gail (SK) line 52-54

I think I felt like, am I a teacher? Just, I think I always associated teachers with primary school and you know, but I've become more comfortable with that term as I've gone along.

Gail (SK) line 86-93

well, I think other than perhaps, just being the teacher, that you know, would sometimes informally recognise that you are holding more responsibility, there is no, well other than on the notice board it has my name as the person responsible for the service and things like that. There is no, there is no direct way, I think its done in a more subtle ways, or indirect ways. Like I am the one who will put out notices, on behalf of the whole service, I will put, yeah but then again, but that doesn't mean other staff don't or wont, its just like, but yeah I guess.

Gail (SK) line 96-107

educator vs. carer, long day care vs. child care vs. early learning. So you can really make a real point of addressing some of those small points in language then we can take some bigger steps.

Emily (LDC) line 252-268

I think, yeah, the framework certainly encompasses while I think our role is, and if they swapped out that term educator for teacher well, I understand why they don't do that, and I also that, I am an educator. I educate children, so when I read the framework, the way I take it is similar to the qualification situation. There are people who are reading it at the certificate level, people who are reading it at the diploma level and people reading it at the degree or higher level, and then its like applying, you know you've got your tool box of knowledge and take those tools out and applying them to different contexts or ways of doing things, is how I see it. The term educator within that document just the vehicles to taking the tools you already

its just yeah, the only other thing is when we have, say coming up next week we have our information night for families starting next year, so I will take, like I will sort of host that, I will address the group of parents, the other staff will also be speaking, but I will introduce everyone, I will take on that role. So I guess in those ways we're giving off that, where we are representing to families that I am in that role, but we don't, we don't make a point, because its not like, because the role isn't called director, I think that changes things a little bit. And also, at our services, I've tried to make quite a concretive effort to, because we're a new service and we've only been open for 3 years, and we opened it together, and I've, I've made a point of trying to share the leadership you know, that we all work together and yes that I get a couple more hours a week extra to do admin but we're all here together to get the job done.

Gail (SK) line 118 - 126

yeah. Yes.

have, and the tools I might have, as a bachelor trained teacher, compared to a cert 3 teacher are different, because we have acquired different skills and tools along the way. And find that the framework is for everyone, I think it can be challenging at times to take the in-depth non prescriptive route, which I know is the point of the framework, and I know people scream out for check lists and you know, you must do this, you must do that. But the whole point of the framework is to encapsulate all walks of life, and I guess levels of education, does that make sense?

Gail (SK) line 22-24

yep, yeah, around 2009, 2010. Yeah, in 2010 I started working at an occasional care service and they were um doing some training around the implementation of the framework, the Victorian framework.

Georgia (SK) line 28-36

yeah – I think, it was a good change. I felt that, I liked that it kind of, what's the word? It represented everyone that you know, was

Rebecca: yes? It wasn't part of my original thing, but it has come up numerous times around, how, like as we said, like we just talked about how families know that you are the nominated supervisor but, um, in other ways, do they embrace the language in the same way we might.

Gail: no, no I don't think so, and where we are, the sort of socioeconomic, background you know, and a lot of migrant, with a very different perception of and experience of teachers and schools and how the children are supposed to behave around teachers and schooling institutions, so there is a bit of that, yep.

Gail (SK) line 169-175

I think that, I think that, a teacher has, because of their depth of knowledge that they should have, you know, with the more in depth studies, that they've done a degree, that they should have a move, a broader perspective. You know, what I've noticed, is what tends to happen – not always – but tends to be the case that the teacher might

working, because there is such a range of experience and a range of qualifications and you know? And everyone brings something different. But at the same time, it leveled off that hierarchy a little bit. In a sense, which I liked, because I always worked, had worked, as a room leader or what have you, I had always worked with people who were older and had more experience, or different various things. So I felt that was a positive change that lifted the whole, lifted the professionalization I guess. For everyone.

Gail (SK) line 42-52

no, no, I like to say that then, I think I prefer to say that rather than child care worker, like at the time. That sounded more professional I guess to me, and then, yeah I feel it was a positive step you know, in the right direction I guess.

Rebecca: yeah, but there hasn't been a time since then, so as I said, as time has gone on, you've retrained and all those sorts of things. Has your position stayed the same regarding that?

be able to see, or bring something different to the table that by virtue of having more knowledge or knowing theories in a more deeper way or that kind of thing. But then again I've also met educators with a certificate 3 qualification that are very deep thinkers, and you know, so that's not. That's really, that's a really interesting question. Yeah, nah. That's it.

Gail (SK) line 226-237

Rebecca: okay, so when you're at a party then, and somebody comes up and says "oh Georgia, lovely to meet you, what do you do for a living?" What do you respond with?

Gail: ah, I might say, I teach at kindergarten

Rebecca: and do you find that most people will automatically recognize that and you have no problems with, yeah, I'm guessing that the people you're talking to in that situation don't work in the industry.

Gail: no. They normally say 'oh geez! How do you do that?' or 'oh that sounds like

Gail: yeah, yeah I guess. I think I actually, once I did my bachelor training, and where I actually felt a bit awkward was calling myself teacher. For a little bit, which is different from educator, I don't know why. Yeah, so that was, just out of you know, on reflection that is probably where I felt, more recent, not so recent, but when I first started, you know my training, my degree.

Gail (SK) line 57-66

well, like I said, it was about professionalizing thing, and also to acknowledge that, what people are doing in services and in varying forms you know, long day care, early childhood, you know kindergarten settings – all the different settings. That people are there in a role not just as carers but as educators, and that is integral to the position, you know, to the role and what we're doing, and it was about acknowledging that to the industry, you know? As well to the broader community and this is who we are.

fun.' They immediately know what I'm referring to, I think previously I might have said, before I did my degree I would have said 'I work in child care.'

Rebecca: okay but you wouldn't have said 'I'm an educator'?

Gail: aw, no. I wouldn't have said that.

Gail (SK) line 347-352

it's like this weird parallel universe isn't it? Where this tremendous progression around professionalization, and up skilling everyone and training and that's been fantastic, that's awesome but that hasn't been reflected in the nuts and bolts in how the industry works, in fact its kind of gone backwards because you can't work full time particularly as a kindergarten teacher, you kind of can't. You've got two groups or one and half groups

Tracey (SK) line 138-156

Rebecca: Yes, I've heard a fair bit of 'teaching team' from others I've intereviewed, within rooms and things, so I

Rebecca: and this is where we're at. Fantastic. So now you work in a stand-alone service, do you, how do you refer to the other team members then?

Gail: so yeah, as educators, co-educators, yep.

Gail (SK) line 73-77

probably just use their name, if I'm speaking directly to families. I will use it, like writing something, from you know, from everyone at the service, you know a newsletter or putting something out it will say 'from the educators at [service name] or staff. It sort of interchanges but I don't make a conscious effort to use that term but yeah

Gail (SK) line 133 – 141

yeah, I suppose it was, I feel fine with it now, but it was that initial, that, being in that, you know, in that position, in a new role and you know, how you are embracing it? So I think, I think I came around, and I think as well using the term educator, and teacher, and the whole, all the language the

think that is common practice that is going on. And do you find, one question that has come out of the interviews, do you find that the parents use the term educator when speaking to you? Or do they say things like 'be good for your teachers'.

Tracey: no. they say teachers.

Rebecca: yeah, even though, I'm assuming that at your work, that your co-educator is a diploma or cert 3, but they make no distinguishing difference between the two.

Tracey: no, they would still say teacher, yeah.

Rebecca: yeah, that has been a common theme too, but I just thought I would double check. Okay, so. Do you find, do you feel you need to vary the language sometimes? So would you hesitate to use the term educator if you thought they wouldn't get what you mean?

Tracey: yeah, as we work at a particular service, where you have families from non-english speaking backgrounds, and things

way the framework, how, I really liked it, I was really pleased to see it and see the language because I feel it reflected what I was already doing, already, so it was like yeah. This is putting into words what I, you know, what I hadn't put into words but I recognised it. It was like, oh, oh yes, that is what we do. And it was really good to see that, and presented that way.

Gail (SK) line 147 – 151

yeah, I always felt a great respect for the people I work with, and as I said, from the outset, from varying degrees qualifications that didn't really, it was people's experience, always stood, you know? Stood greater in my perspective I guess. So I always felt that, that didn't change my perspective of others because I felt I already had a good perspective of my team.

Gail (SK) line 159-161

okay, they are resourceful, they are knowledgeable, educators are you know, sensitive, and being in tune with people,

like that. There may be times where I do need to, I may not use the term. But there might be specific situations where I might initially not use educator it depends who I'm talking to. I may start off using it, and if I think the family are not understanding I might change it.

Tracey (SK) line 269-270

was like 'Hi Toni! What do you do for a living?' what do you tell them?

Toni: I tell them I'm a kindergarten teacher.

with children. They are professional, you

know, respectful.

Gail (SK) line 169-175

I think that, I think that, a teacher has,

because of their depth of knowledge that

they should have, you know, with the more

in depth studies, that they've done a degree,

that they should have a move, a broader

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deeper way or that kind of thing. But then

again I've also met educators with a

certificate 3 qualification that are very deep

thinkers, and you know, so that's not. That's

really, that's a really interesting question.

Yeah, nah. That's it.

Gail (SK) line 188-193

well, I think the characteristics I talked

about are in some, are sometimes, its

idealistic of me, but its not always reflected

in practice because people are human beings and they are not, you know, so in terms of what's reflected in the framework, and what I said, that it is reflected.

Rebecca: yeah, but there is a bit of variation based on personal circumstances

Gail: yeah, people have different strengths

Gail (SK) line 199-209

I think, I think it's a really difficult thing, because people are already stretched to the limit as to the role they play and the time they have to do things, so I don't. If anything, if anything I think people should be given more opportunity to practice skills around documentation and to practice on really embedded, but they don't get the opportunity to do that, because the way the industry is structured, there isn't 5 minutes to work on that.

Rebecca: and we're generally time poor.

Gail: yeah, so you know, exactly. So I don't want to be saying 'people should be doing this' because they can't, it would be in an

ideal situation I think, you know, if people have, just, that, depth of knowledge, that comes from, you know, being exposed to different ideas, and you know those sorts of things.

Gail (SK) line 243-245

yeah, I guess. If I was to say I'm an educator, I don't think people would immediately know that, that meant I work in early childhood. Or I might say I work in early childhood or something like that.

Tracey (SK) line 35-52

well I guess, when I started working, I had that term in the back of my head, coming from university? You know? That term was use quite a bit, I never really thought about it until I was working as a director, trying to – you know? The other girls I was working for, or working with, that you know, we were in fact educators, because I felt some of them didn't feel that was their job title.so I guess it would have been – oh god, I've got to count my years, 2000? I've got to think about where I was, so 2000? I was at a

particular service, and I think, it depended on the service, the service I was working at prior to that, it could have been the area I was in but I felt that those staff members did think they were educators, that area was [x], and I guess that area is more affluential than the [x] area where I had moved to. So yeah, that was probably when I had to look at it and encourage my staff, or let them know, that was in fact their title. But in myself, that was always my title

Tracey (SK) line 59-88

: yeah, so it wasn't really, when it was introduced it wasn't anything I wasn't thinking about, so it was just reaffirm – yeah.

Rebecca: yeah, some people I have interviewed, there minds were blown if you know what I mean? It was something completely foreign to them, and they had not encountered prior to that.

Tracey: yeah, I guess for me, I felt, because I had made that change and I was working in the day care system, I felt the day care

system, had a better grasp of it than coming

to the pre-school field.

Rebecca: so you found, as a follow up

question. Did you find then, when you made

the transition across to the stand alone

kinders that there was a step backwards, as

far as those concepts went?

Tracey: exactly, I cant even think of an

example to give you now. I just felt like, I

had to reintroduce things when I started

here, to the staff, I kind of felt like they

weren't up to scratch, with policy with

things like that. As much as I had been

working as a director, I wasn't actually in

the rooms within childcare those last few

years, but when I did move back into a

classroom I suppose, you know, touch base

with the framework and was introduced to

it, but when I started you know, in

preschool, I had to, I felt they were a step

behind. There were things we were doing at

day care, that at preschool they just didn't,

they felt they didn't need to do.

Rebecca: could you give me an example? I'm curious now.

Tracey: got to think about this now, my memory is so bad now! Things like, I guess when it came to the department, I felt that we were visited more frequently in day care, so we were up to scratch with you know, policy and procedures.

Rebecca: so when you say that you mean, staff overall were more knowledgeable or more aware?

Tracey: I felt, yes, staff in day care, defiantly.

Rebecca: okay, just clarifying when you said 'us' you meant the directing staff or us as in all staff. If you know what I mean?

Tracey: yes, us in daycare! Gosh! Phone interviews are pretty tricky.

Tracey (SK) line 94-100

Tracey: no, I guess I feel like there is a little bit more pressure now, then years ago, in terms of, you know, holding that postion. Just with, obviously, as an educator before,

as an kindergarten teacher, I was doing, you know, my programming, you know I was doing the same way for so long. And when the framework was introduced, as much as they were, pretty much, very similar. It was just having to make the changes over to the framework, and a different way of doing things, that was quite challenging. So I did feel some pressure with that.

Tracey (SK) 104-108

exactly, and they kept saying, there was no right or wrong, but I think there still is, there is so much you need to incorporate now.

Rebecca: I think it's a bit like university – there is no wrong answer but we're going to grade you against this rubric.

Tracey: exactly! You know, just yeah, it's a lot more challenging now.

Tracey (SK) 113-116

why did they choose the term educator? Well I guess it depends on what you think the word educator is. I suppose we're here to educate you know? Extend learning, I

guess that's an overall good term for it. I don't know, that's tricky.

Tracey (SK) 125-137

Rebecca: so if a parent was to approach you, and you wanted to refer to someone – no a better example would be, if you were at a conference. If you were talking to other professials at a conference. Would you say, the other educators, or would you say something else?

Tracey: no, I would most likely say the other educators at my service.

Rebecca: okay, that's cool. Okay so you sort of said with families, if it was written communication like a news letters, is there a particular terms you would use or do you just their names for that?

Tracey: ah – sometimes, I do refer to us as staff or [x] team. When making a general a notice from everyone here, I would use the term 'team' [x] team, would be how I'd put it.

Tracey (SK) line 177-190

Tracey: ah, no, I still, obviously, I've had lots of different co-educators, and they have been how do I say? Good at different things. Like all of us, we all have our areas of strength, ah, this is going to sound terrible, but I use them, to how I, I can't even think how to say it. You know, I rely on them to just do things I know they are capable of doing, you know, obviously that doesn't mean I'm not going to push them to try harder, I don't expect them to do things that I feel are impossible for them. If I give them something to do, and they feel they can't do it, then we might come back together and try and do it together. I don't feel my expectations of them have changed.

Rebecca: so you, whats the right phrasing? So you assess their competency based on their abilities and training?

Tracey: yeah! But I still want them to try and do things outside of their comfort zone, but if its something they really aren't comfortable doing, then I wont push them to do.

Tracey (SK) line 197-215 Tracey: um, yes, okay. I will have to think about this, hang on. Okay someone who, shares knowledge, work in a team, god, now I have to think about it, its hard! Rebecca: yes, I know, its different when you're on prompt. Yeah, because you're not thinking about it in every day context. Like such and such is going to do that for me today. Tracey: okay, open minded, flexible, you know, I was thinking about this the other day, because I thought, yep, shes going to ask me questions like this, I had these all these things in my head, and now! Gone! Rebecca: that's okay, we can come back. How about, is there anything that would come under teacher but does not come under educator? Tracey: no, I wouldn't think so. Rebecca: so, well that might help you with your thinking then, is there any	

responsibilities that you would attribute to a teacher.

Toni: no, because it's the same, I would think of it as the same. We're here for the parents, we try and help, you know, as an educator I see myself as a helper, I try and help, anyone as much as possible. Yeah, I feel like a teacher is the same. And as a mother too, I'm sure its not just mothers, as I have others I know and work with who don't have children. But we're responsive to children and quite often, for me myself you often feel like their your own too

Tracey (SK) line 222

oh, absolutely! An educator knows those rules and regulations.

Tracey (SK) 257-258

Tracey: I guess I never really thought about it that way, I guess I didn't see any real difference there.

Educational Leader/Nominated supervisor	Team/Staff
Louise (LDC) Line 133 yes, as an educational leader. Lousie (LDC) Line 138-141 yeah, it's a weird, it is a little bit weird, I refer to myself as a teacher, so if I'm ringing somebody, I will say, Hi I'm Leonie, I'm a teacher at [x], apposed to I'm the educational leader, as that gives more context to most people, what a teacher is, or I might say co-ordinate the kindergarten programs, so its kind of, it's a little familiar to them.	Louise (LDC) line 100-101 aw, various things, I suppose. We refer frequently to the 'team'. Just in general the team

<u>Samantha (SK) line 108-110</u>	
Another term that is coming into practice is, 'nominated supervisor', is relation to stand alone kindergartens yes, nominated supervisor and educational leader is another way of differentiating.	
<u>Sa a tba (SK) line 114-121</u>	
Rebecca: So I suppose in those services would nominated supervisors over larger services.	
Sam: Yes, so now, you get correspondence to the nominated supervisor rather than the teacher, from the cluster.	
Rebecca: do you find that nominated supervisor has taken the place of Directress, or director, the alternate – similar responsibilities but different name?	
Sam: Yes, that's correct. We don't get any money for it, I might add!	
Tracey (SK) line 318-337	
I don't really, for lack of a better term, advertise that is my role. If people sort of	

ask me, I might provide further information and say I'm the nominated supervisor over at [x service], I don't really call myself an educational leader, its not something that really comes to mind.

Rebecca: do you tend to find you naturaly take on those roles and responsibilities, because of your prior work? Its just more natural for you to just include it in your way of working?

Tracey: yeah, totally.

Rebecca: as I said before, though some of the interviews I have found that, people, when the regulations changed over, they suddenly found themselves in those positions, while prior to that, as you said, they might not have really thought of themselves in that role, and to have that responsibility placed quite on them, that found that to be quite challenging. Or they replaced teacher with nominated supervisor or directress with nominated supervisor in stand alone to indicate responsibility.

Tracey: yeah I guess, when I'm speaking to my area manager, quite often, although I don't think she often introduces me to people, but that is the title she gives me: nominated supervisor role. But its not something that I really tend to see myself as, if I'm talking to people I'll say yep, I'm a kindergarten teacher, I don't really, it just don'ts come naturally to me I guess.	
Kindergarten teachers perception of childcare	Qualifications/Skill level
Louise (LDC) line 177-187 I suppose I have, I have a greater appreciation of what education and care services provide, and for families and children and the quality of education they provide, at least in our service. And I'm sure many others as well, as apposed to some other kindergarten teachers who would see themselves as over, over and above what a	Alice (LDC) line 143 – 160 I think having a blanket term is a start. But I feel its, but there is a huge difference between quality interactions between a cert 3 qualified person and a diploma qualified person. Rebecca: and then from the diploma to you? Yes, it's often reflective of training.

children education and care service would provide. You're only in, and we still hear but its only long day care, you know we still hear that, from the mouths of kindergarten teachers who are within our organization. But that's childcare, that's not kindergarten. There is – of course there is – because it will be a very long time before that changes, that perception, but I think that needs to change within the profession itself and I think that's a long way off for some.

Louise (LDC) line 195 – 200

and I think sometimes kindergarten teachers who have worked in long day care as diplomas and have trained up and qualified have some of the worst opinions of what education and care services provide they seem to have you know well, I don't work in long day care anymore, I work in a kindergarten, in a stand alone, a sessional kindergarten as if it is over and above, and provide better.

Samantha (SK) line 267 – 283

Alice: yeah, so what seems to be happening is everyone is expected to operate at this (holds hand up near face) level, but at the same time, no one can get paid at that level, no one. The level of thinking and reflection is not always reflected to be at that level but they want everyone can.

Rebecca: Yes, that appears to be a common trend, they want more for less.

Alice: I had one time, in 2012 where everyone was being pushed to take their diploma, because the NQS to come into place, and there was someone teaching a lot of my workplace, my workplace was sponsoring everyone from diplomas so they were getting this lady to come out, and she said to me. You know, you need to be teaching this – she was looking at my planning. You need to be teaching THIS to your team. And I said, oh that's funny. Because I was under the impression that there was a different expectation of me because I'm teaching at this level, I've got these standards to complete, and she

Sam: yes, I do actually; it's to with sand alone kindergartens. I feel, I feel, we are being pushed into childcare. And I feel in time stand-alone kindergartens will not be around, I think the government is pushing for this, because that's what they want. Because they don't see the value in stand alone kindergartens. They don't understand the really specific work, and, this is going to sound awful but the difference there is between stand-alone kindergarten, a kindergarten in a stand-alone centre, and a kindergarten in a childcare centre. That then leads to, the fact that while kindergarten teachers are not respected, and paid as they should be in the childcare centres, they are not going to get the quality of the teaching.

Rebecca: So, you feel that it is to do with; pay equals quality staff, as often, does it also to do with that you feel the difference between resources and that sort of thing as well?

Sam: yes, I think that many, many of the child care centres are run for profit, and I

responded: no. They need to be working at your level.

Alice (LDC) 167-173

I also refer to them as colleagues. Just to keep it um, I try to avoid staff.

Rebecca: You don't use the qualifications or found that other people do that?

Angela: I think there is some, between room leaders, still using that term 'room leaders' they might meet together to talk about something, or others will look to the room leader to decide on something but at the same time there is this big push to encourage everyone to empower everyone on the team to contribute and think of, everyone can write a learning story.

Alice (LDC) line 177-179

So I've got, I used to call them my assistants, my assistants but I've moved beyond that as well consciously. Its funny I've started a term for myself, the teaching team.

feel that the funding they receive the kindergarten children is not used in the kindergarten rooms, and I just don't think they've got the resources and they don't, and not all of the time, as I know it can be done and can be done properly but, they don't get the quality of the teachers.	Emily (LDC) line 285-299 So effective teaching I would hope, would see the reach quite wide. I guess I was very lucky in my early teaching, to mentor by strong teachers, so the feelings, of well, giving back. And pass it on, and I guess making sure its paid forward, so the next generation of teachers have those positives influences and experiences because what I found while being here, is there have been a lot of poor experiences for beginning teachers especially so they're sort of removed form that teacher feeling, because they've never been made to feel empowered, like that can really take that term teacher and run with it. For example, we have at the moment, including myself 4 people that either have a bachelor, a double or their masters, and I really question as to why they're not off taking their own classrooms. But what I have begun to learn is that they don't think they are good enough to be a teacher, so they have applied for jobs in positions of cert 3 or diploma so

they can get some experience up. It really made me think about what being a teacher or that word really means. It's like a scary word.

Emily (LDC) line 307-333

now, its like. No. I'm way too scared. I don't think, I can do this teacher label. And it seems to be hidden behind this curtain of 'I need to build up my experience first.' And I think 'well what did you pay $14,000 to train? I know I paid that money so I could go into this job.' So on Monday when I do go to this [x university] thing, around what do graduates need to look like now and in the future. I'm going to be talking about a lot of what I'm seeing with graduates regardless of if the come from [x university] but it's coming up all the time. Every single PD I go to, it seems to come back to these funny things. So yeah, that word, I would rather be an educator, then a teacher.

Rebecca: perhaps, do you find its around accountability and responsibility?

| | Emma: definitely, a huge amount, the buck will essentially always stop with me. As I say to my collogues when I'm not here, I expect them to be in that leadership role, however is that a fair expectation outside the hours of 9-2, I'm not in the classroom, I think that it is. I think someone needs to be in the classroom and taking that role seriously, weather they want to be, maybe they feel they cant be called 'the teacher' that's fine, but yeah, but a lot of interesting conversations lately.

Rebecca: yeah, I find that interesting, I think about I would say that your accountability as a room leader regardless, would be on par, would be what they're legally accountable to, would be the same at the end of the day, an accident etc.

Emily and no one wants anything to fall on their shoulders, and I understand that can be a bit daunting. There are varied I guess things that can go wrong to put it simply and no one wants it to go wrong on their watch. And I get that. But at the same time |
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	children are evolving and changing and can create many possible hazards, things you know. But I feel you know, that we're all here for a common enough goal that yeah, that it is a shame. That is a shame.
Primary Sector	
<u>Alice (LDC) line 377-379</u> I have found within the primary sector a properly also lack of use of the term as well, we had a training session a couple of months back and it was between prep teachers and kinder teachers about writing transition reports. <u>Alice (LDC) line 383-387</u> and the person running it said "alright, we'll get the day care people to stay on this side, and the prep teachers to go on this side" and my collogue who is a kinder teacher as well she was next to me "we're all teachers here.." but the lady was from an older generation but I thought, it was a little	

irresponsible to say day care people on this side. Alice (LDC) line 392-394 I would say that, anyone who has their qualification is the last 5 years or so would be much more conscientious about the language then someone who is more traditionally trained. Emily (LDC) line 347-353 But I always clarify. Yeah, I've had to do it a lot more here than I ever had to do in NZ, I think. It felt like a massive gap in NZ, but they have no idea, that's nothing to compared to the gap here. I think we are getting there with all the work with transition, that positive transition to school all of those sorts of things, I think the gap is shortening, but it is still really challenging until we have a curriculum that spans across the two, even though we can use each others we don't. Yeah, work to be done.	
Early Childhood Field/historical factors	Power

Emily (LDC) line 177-183	Emily (LDC) line 198-209
: its so sad, I think the more time I spend, so I refuse to say I work in a long day care, I work in an early learning service, babies right through to children who go to school. And I think the government and our local departments of education have a little bit to answer for, in creating that deep divide between early learning and kindergarten. We are all in early learning right through until the child is 8 year old, that in itself says a lot about who gets to be a teacher and who doesn't.	the hierarchy is big! It's taken a long time; this would be the first year where I felt like my teaching team had finally done away with the hierarchy. Rebecca: yes, they weren't caught up in that, as they would have come from that too. Emily: yes. It took, even one of my collogues said to me 'I clearly remember the first day, when I felt like I could say, oh hold on, I'm just working with this child right now – don't step in because I've got this.' And I said yeah, that's awesome, that's what I would expect. And she said you don't realise how scared I was, that's nothing I would ever been able to do prior, and it just shows you how the hierarchical system can work in our profession. And you'll notice I'll never use the word industry, same thing. It does with the word educator, I feel like they go hand in hand.
Gail (LDC) line 199-209	
I think, I think it's a really difficult thing, because people are already stretched to the limit as to the role they play and the time they have to do things, so I don't. If anything, if anything I think people should be given more opportunity to practice skills around documentation and to practice on really embedded, but they don't get the opportunity to do that, because the way the	Gail (LDC) line 101-114

industry is structured, there isn't 5 minutes

to work on that.

Rebecca: and we're generally time poor.

Gail: yeah, so you know, exactly. So I don't want to be saying 'people should be doing this' because they can't, it would be in an ideal situation I think, you know, if people have, just, that, depth of knowledge, that comes from, you know, being exposed to different ideas, and you know those sorts of things.

Gail (LDC) line 213-222

I think we do loads of PD, and there is plenty of opportunity out there to be honest and people do, do it. But they don't get opportunity to really like, its hard, even in my direct experience as a teacher, I've got a diploma and a cert 3, we can have a conversation around something, but like to get back to it and me follow up diploma person or a cert 3 around their documentation, or what not, that's hard to do that. Because of time constraint and whatever, to really you know. Like say you

but we don't, we don't make a point, because its not like, because the role isn't called director, I think that changes things a little bit. And also, at our services, I've tried to make quite a concretive effort to, because we're a new service and we've only been open for 3 years, and we opened it together, and I've, I've made a point of trying to share the leadership you know, that we all work together and yes that I get a couple more hours a week extra to do admin but we're all here together to get the job done.

Rebecca: which is in, in the spirit of the EYLF, and the NQS I would say.

Gail: Yeah, that collaborative approach and you know.

Rebecca: rather than a more traditional structure that can sometimes happen in stand-alones.

Gail: yeah and I'm also, aside for that, I'm not numerated in any other way, to play that role, and do that, other than a couple of extra hours of work a week, so I don't think

have planning together, and really discuss things you know?

Rebecca: yeah, and not give up something else for yourself

Gail: yeah, or like, if we sit down to have that conversation and do that, something else doesn't get done.

Gail (LDC) line 408-422

yeah that's right, but even still, you know what's really frustrating to me Rebecca is that, you and I might have that value of that home life balance, and you wont take work home because that's your own principle or whatever but someone down the street, but the community doesn't understand that, so they're like, well how come you're not doing that too? To explain that someone outside the industry, its why the whole, very varied around quality, around what people expect and what it should be like and its so varied because, I've worked in services where they like, yeah, they love it. I've talked to people and gone on PD's and they're like 'oh yeah, I took all the transition

its my right to take that, any further if you get my drift.

Gail (LDC) line 255-281

Gail: yeah, fair enough. Ah, I think I kind of touched on it, I think that you know, like I said, its frustrating, I've actually just resigned from the position to go work as director in a long day care centre next year.

Rebecca: oh wow!

Gail: because, part the decision, that I came to, was because I didn't feel I was appropriately recognised for my qualification, in a stand alone kindergarten, in that setting.

Rebecca: what do you mean by that? Can you elaborate on that?

Gail: I think because, because I think that, the expectation as the nominated supervisor and the teacher, is, quite. There is a lot of expectation, and pressure. But there isn't the opportunity to do what's required, like, with time allocated. Like I'm working to the award, and I have to pour a couple of extra

statements home, I did it over the holidays.'
And I'm like, are you for real?

Rebecca: that's my pet peeve! Oh my goodness!

Gail: that's not fair, 'oh but I don't mind' but that's not fair to others, no one should be doing that, you know? If you work at a, I don't know, if you work at a hospital as a nurse, you don't bring your reports home to write them, you don't do that.

Gail (LDC) line 429-435

and it just kills me, you know? I have been with the people I work with, I'm like, listen. I don't expect anyone to take work home, I don't do it, I don't expect anyone else to do it. I will stand by you, if management comes in and asks where is this? Where is that? If you have a good reason why you haven't written up that thing, or that plan hasn't been done because you've actually been writing a kiss application for the last two

hours planning time, because our group went to 33, so I had to go over to the union and do that dance to get extra time, which we were rightfully, which we were supposed but we weren't automatically given the extra time, those kinds of things, I feel like, you're not. The expectations are more so, I'm also educational leader of our service. And, and just don't get opportunity to fulfill those roles even though I'm expected to do so. So what happens is something gives in the equation, because I can't do all of them – if you get my drift, I can't, I don't physically, enough, I'm not paid enough, and I'm not taking work home, because I don't get paid enough to do that. I don't think.

Rebecca: yes, its work life balance isn't it?

Gail: that's right, that's right, so I don't, that was a big part of my decision, because I am actually qualified, and I can be numerated for that, but I have to leave stand alone kindergarten and have to work full time, you know what I mean? To feel that I'm,

weeks – well that's fair enough. That needs to be done.

Gail (LDC) line 454 – 456

exactly! I just feel like that, you do what you can do in the time you've got allocated to do it, because no one is going to understand its not enough time unless everyone does that.

Gail (LDC) line 463-471

and that all comes back to, and its where you're at with your studies and all that but we're people, how the whole thing is viewed and how valued it is, because if we felt more valued, recognised in general, in comparison to you know, like northern European countries where its highly valued, where they've got their masters or at least their degree, you know, everyone understands that, generally speaking so like, it's a very complex thing, and at the end of the day, its your work, and you've got your family and your own life, so you know? You have to draw a line, you have to go, yep, its 3:30, that's right. I've actually

that that is an appropriate level recognition, if that makes sense?

Gail (LDC) line 291-292

no, it's another organization, another cluster management. But it was better conditions.

Gail (LDC) line 301-312

But its been a really difficult decision because I had an amazing group of people I was working with, everyone got along really well as a team, and we've started this new service together the last 3 years. But I just felt like the personally and financially couldn't afford to keep teaching

Rebecca: yeah, because it's a very draining profession.

Gail: yeah, very. Like it was great, with my kids having the annual leave and stuff but my kids are older now, like you know? My circumstances have changed or whatever, but part of it, was just that frustration. You know, of all those expectations, of all those roles. And every time I'd go back to, there would be another meeting and it would be

stayed back an extra 30-45 minutes anyway, because you evidently do Tracey (SK) line 226-229 : yeah, absolutely, I felt like coming here that it was a bit more blasé, they kind of didn't worry about having to do things a certain way. Because, like, the department never comes here. And I was a bit, oh! Okay. Well they will be coming soon Tracey (SK) line 244-245 yeah, totally. Even things like archiving documentation. They didn't feel like they needed to keep it. It was like 'oh-kay'.	'okay as ed leader you need to do this.' Or 'as nominated supervisor we need you to do this, you need to do that.' And it's like 'yep okay.' I'm willing to do it and I feel like I can but then I don't have the time. .